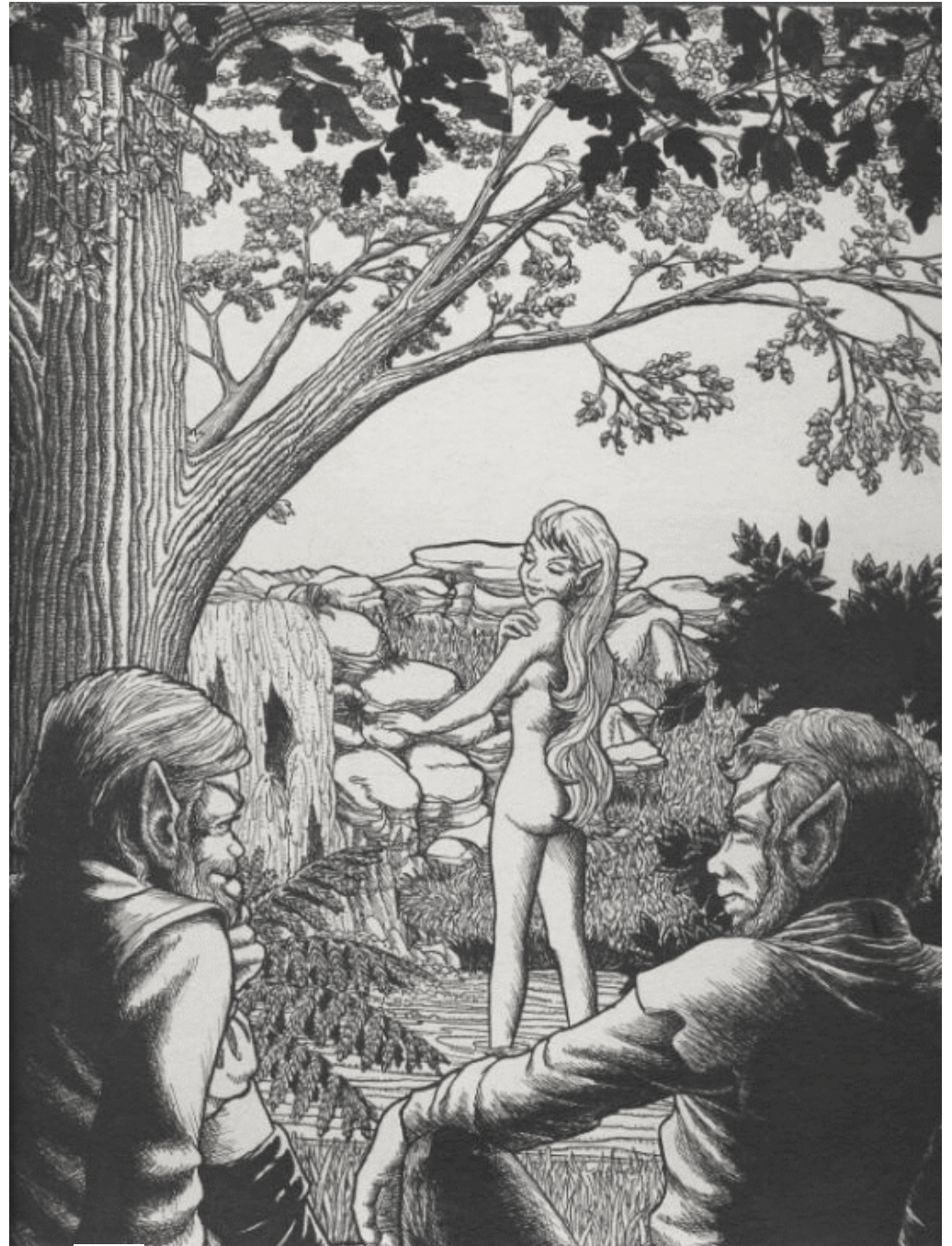


Time and Again #3

May 2008



PIXEL #17/Time and Again #3
May 2008

Editor: **Dave Locke** {slowdjinn at gmail dot com}
Editor Emeritus: **David Burton**
Primary source of inspiration and advice:
Eric Mayer

Schedule: Time and again (and here you thought that was just the title...)



Presentation & Storage channel: with sincere thanks to **Bill Burns**, head wrangler & honcho at eFanzines <<http://www.efanzines.com/>>.

Production notes: Software is primarily Microsoft Publisher, PDFCreator, Gadwin Printscreen, and Irfanview & PhotoFiltre.

Main Text font: Trebuchet MS

Wordwhipping:

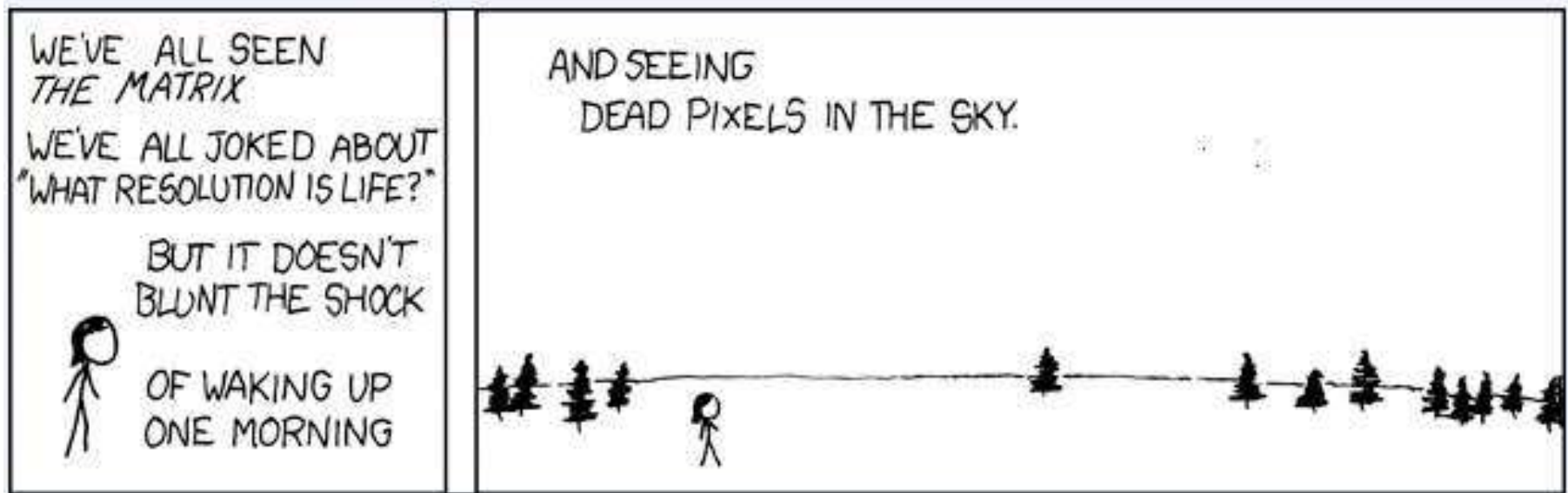
David Burton	<i>Emeritus Stuff</i>	(editorial)	3
Dave Locke	<i>Diabologic</i>	(editorial)	5
Brad Foster	<i>Dave Locke's Dialog With Two Fans, A Chat With Brad Foster</i>	(column)	9
Dave Rowe	<i>Mud In Your Eye - THE B MOVIE CELEBRATION - some thoughts</i>		18
James Bacon	<i>Rambo</i>		21
Lee Lavell	<i>Much Nothings About Ado: What Makes A Good Fanzine?</i>	(column)	24
Curt Phillips	<i>In The Electric Mist With Yankee Dead</i>		26
Eric Mayer	<i>Notes From Byzantium</i>	(column)	33
The Readers	<i>Pure Quill Pixelated</i>	(lettercol)	35

Artwork:

Cover: Jackie Causgrove
2: <http://icanhascheezburger.com/>
3: <http://xkcd.com/> (the net's best webcomic)
8: William Rotsler
10, 13 photo, 32,35 : Brad Foster
18 & 20 photos via IMDb
33: Warren Mayer
34: Nicked from the Net

EMERITUS STUFF

By *David Burton*



Dave Locke has a peculiar effect on fanzines. Fanzines that are published by other people, that is. I'm sure he'll recount his history as a sort of fannish "typhoid Mary" in his editorial - how he's worked and slaved over articles only to

have the fanzines that have accepted them promptly fold before they are ever published. I seem to recall his telling me several times about one particular article that was a sure-fire way to kill a fanzine - he submitted it to a few different

zines, all of which shortly thereafter went belly-up.

I'd been bugging Dave for a couple of years to join me as co-editor of Pixel, both in person and through e-mail, but he always said that his zine publishing days were behind him. I couldn't even get him to write a new article for me - I think he was afraid the Curse was still active - so I republished some of the best of his work stretching back 30-odd years.

Last August, when I announced that I was going to take a six-month break from publishing Pixel, I fully intended to pick up where I'd left off come the first of the year. I'd gotten pretty burned out publishing a monthly zine for nearly two years - putting out Pixel had become more like work than fun, and I needed a rest. But as the year drew to a close, I didn't feel anything like the enthusiasm I'd previously had for Pixel, and I knew my interest had faded. A couple of half-hearted attempts to put the contributions people had sent together into an issue didn't revive it. When I mentioned that Pixel was very likely an ex-fanzine in the three-way e-mail correspondence that Dave and Eric Mayer and I have been carrying on for a couple of years, they both prodded me on. Dave eventually suggested that he would become the co-editor, and to that end he even solicited and edited the bulk of the contributions that you'll see

here. So I made another valiant attempt at getting the next issue out, but it was not to be. In the interim I'd taken over production of the small eight-page weekly Mass bulletin for my church, and that was filling the role (doing something creative) that Pixel had held for me. (When I think about it, it seems odd that I got burned out on doing a monthly fanzine only to take on a weekly bulletin, but they are, as the saying goes, completely different kettles of fish...)

Eric and I then decided to gang-up on Dave and convince him that he should carry on the zine, and the result is what you see here. I don't know where Pixel will be headed under Dave's version, but going by Dave's past zines, I'm certain it'll be interesting. I hope to contribute a few things in the future; Dave and Eric have already suggested some ideas for me to write up.

I would like to thank everyone for the many, many kind words about the first sixteen issues of Pixel. The zine had a better reception than I could ever have imagined when I started it as a FAPA-zine in 2004. Special thanks to all the contributors (artists and writers and letterhacks) who made the zine what it was during my tenure.

Diabologic

Editorial by *Dave Locke*

What Happened?

As a long-time fanwriter I've gotten used to fanzines folding after I've submitted an article. With *Pixel*, for the first time I encountered an editor folding after I joined the editorial staff.

Which doesn't mean that Dave Burton won't be back to pub his ish. I don't know whether he will be or not. More importantly, DaveB doesn't know. We'll have to hang loose and see.

I joined the staff of *Pixel* as Editorial Agent. Other titles were tossed about. Co-editor, Silent Partner, Roving Editor, Solicitor General, Contributing Editor, Horse's Ass. Some might have even been appropriate. Of the things I was to do, the primary task was to gather material. So that's what I started off doing. Much of the material in this issue was the result of that.

But that's when DaveB decided to extend his fanpubbing sabbatical. He was still tired of fanpubbing, and his interest had turned to other things. Worse, after I inquired about the accumulated material, he suggested "why don't you publish it all as a zine, even if it's a one shot?" Eric

Mayer echoed the thought. Which left me with some choices. My first choice was between "why am I listening to my friends?" and "this is a plot".

What I decided won't be too much of a surprise, because you're looking at it. Obviously the decision was "why not?" I could get back into pubbing a genzine again. Not too much to do here in the rural environs of Pownal, Vermont... I'm not Dave Burton, so I shouldn't continue calling this *Pixel*, except in the *Astounding/Analog* title-phaseover I'm using (back in Mar-Sep '60, *Astounding* was in the process of changing its title to ANALOG, having both titles on those issues but, as you can see <<http://www.sfcovers.net/Magazines/ASF/tnpage30.htm>>, gradually phasing out the *Astounding* title while the *Analog* name became more prominent with each issue). I don't see more than 1 or 2 or 3 issues where I'd do that kind of a phaseover from DaveB's title to mine, but the concept appeals to me... In case DaveB gets back to fanpubbing, the *Pixel* name will be available and free if he wants it. If he doesn't, having used *Pixel* in the title will be a nod toward lots of the material and layout styles I'll be using. Thus, the phaseover. Also, while I liked his former title, *Catch-*

penny Gazette, *Pixel* I wasn't too wild about and tried to kid him out of using it. One time I even referred to it as *Pixie*...

Obviously I'm the perfect choice to take over this fanzine. DaveB published 15 issues of *Catchpenny Gazette* and then retitled it and pubbed 16 issues of *Pixel*, from February of 2004 through August of 2007. I published 2 issues of *Time and Again* from May of 1985 through September of 1986... Other genzines I've done? Well, *Pelf* co-edited with David Hulan lasted 14 issues, but we go down from there. *Awry* made it for 10 issues, *The Works* for 4, *Shambles* coedited with Ed Cagle lasted 3 issues, and *Gal-limaufry* with Joni Stopa had 2 issues. I published *Phoenix* in the early 60s but have no idea how many issues there were. Not all that many, I'm sure. Now that I'm vastly much older and have to pace myself better, and don't have the complications of deadtree publishing to contend with, let's see if I can't do better. Everyone hold their breath.

[Who Am I?](#)

Some of you won't know. Who is this guy Locke?

A fan named Mike Shoemaker prepared a unique introductory apazine. He quoted people who at one time or another had occasion to write or say something about him. It didn't serve too well specifically as introduction, unless you tended to believe some people to the exclusion of others, but it was a delightful exercise to read. And an interesting thing to refer back to later, after forming your own impression.

Pleading guilty to theft or lack of originality, here's a shortened version of that approach. You won't recognize

many of the (mostly) fans I'm quoting, but the spirit of the maneuver is there. These quotes span the last almost 50 years.

[What they've been saying through the years:](#)

Earl Kemp: "my association with Dave hasn't always been smooth and nice, but it has always been informative and ultimately for my own good, however transferred and however momentarily perceived."

rich brown: "While I both understand and appreciate what Bill says about his not having always found it easy to be Dave's friend, for my part I have to say I haven't found it particularly hard. But, I'm sure, this is largely because I came to it quite a bit later than Bill, and then after having had to work my way off Dave's Bozo list. He's treated me kindly and generously since."

Jukka Halme: "Your sarcastic wit, curmudgeonlike wisdom and encyclopedic knowledge of All Things has been a pleasure and a privilege to behold and admire from this far away."

Arthur Hlavaty: "The very first zine I ever did was a lot less stupid than it might have been if I hadn't read an article by Dave on what not to do, and we've been friends, on paper, online, and occasionally even in person, ever since."

Mike Glyer: "The recent passing of Buck Coulson naturally brought *Yandro* to mind, and also Dave Locke, the zine's star columnist. Dave had an enviable talent for turning dreadful experiences in doctors' offices into hilarious stories. I always wondered what effect it would have on Dave's writing if all his maladies were cured. Maybe that's the real reason *Yandro* folded? Never mind, my point is this: Dave wasn't merely funny, he wove enough sensory

detail into his prose to make it come uncomfortably alive. And that's a secret of good narrative, not only of good fan-writing."

Pat Virzi: "I used *Awry* also, and learned immediately that as soon as I think of a clever fanzine title I must immediately abandon it, as Dave Locke has no doubt already wrung out the last dregs of its fannish essence in the distant past."

Dave Burton: "Dave in person happily turned out to be just like he is in our fairly voluminous e-mail correspondence; this hasn't always turned out to be the case when I've met face-to-face other people I've known only through the printed word."

David Hulan: "Whatever the opposite of serious is, you're it."

Jackie Causgrove: "You're not pointed, you're deadly."

Bruce Pelz: "Iconoclastic humorist."

Andy Offutt: "...very clever ... might well save the nation."

Jodie Offutt: "Dave Locke is a grump."

Gary Grady: "Dave, in fact, controls the proprietary standard for grumpy."

Lloyd Biggle, Jr.: "A rebel."

Ed Cagle: "...an aloof turkey on first meeting."

Jane Carroll, my H.S. English teacher: "Unless you've been a teacher with hundreds (thousands) of faceless, nameless, rubber stamps of their parents assembly-lining through your classroom, you can't know what fun it is to meet an original."

Guy Lillian: "A steadying influence."

Joyce Scrivner: "...calming influence."

Dave Langford: "...sounded acrimonious while you sounded so tolerant and avuncular as almost to be an in-

citement to rebellion..."

Don Markstein: "An asshole."

Marion Zimmer Bradley: "Bastard."

Colin Hinz: "Well, I can take swipes from the likes of Ted White and Dave Locke (and have, on multiple occasions) so anything I run into on rasff is unlikely to scare me away. I mean, really."

Curt Phillips: "To ignore Dave Locke is a mistake. I've had my comfortable little world upset by Dave a time or two myself, but the vertigo passes quickly and now and then I find that I've been informed, educated, or entertained by something Dave has said. I really don't think it's even possible to ignore Dave; overall he's much too interesting for that."

Don Fitch: "...restraint" might better describe the quality I think Dave sometimes conspicuously does not display. Not that I strongly object to this, mind you -- it's actually kinda ~~nice~~ rewarding to have people around who make life a little more Interesting & Uninhibited."

Lon Atkins: "It's always a pleasure to play against a man who understands the game and never lets mere ethical or moral considerations stand in the way of razor-keen Hearts practice."

Mike Glycer: "The trouble with fandom is people who take your columns seriously."

Arthur Hlavaty: "Young fen should read him, but not emulate him."

Gil Gaier [early '80s]: "Dave Locke: geometric designs, pain stolen from passion, computer, Lenny Bruce mimed, poems hidden in a drawer."

Christine Lowentrout: "... faintly sweet and fresh ... cool ... light ... not unlike an old mead, but slightly herbal in flavor. Dark amber color ... definitely not synthetic."

Taral Wayne: "A midwestern Beautiful Person."

Gary Grady: "...that cloud of smoke that accompanies him like some Lovecraftian creature of the night."

Mike Glicksohn: "For someone who takes fandom a lot more lightly than many of us you certainly have it thoroughly staked out and pegged down."

Mike Glicksohn: "...it's a scarifying thing to contemplate what Dave Locke might do if he ever took himself seriously as a writer."

June Moffatt: "That's Dave Locke for you: Genius upon request."

Richard Bergeron: "Ermangarde Fiske attitude."

Buck Coulson: "...various treacherous old bastards of my acquaintance. I figured you qualified."

Roy Tackett: "I think Coulson and you and I probably have a lot in common in that we don't put up with foolishness and tend to find that all of those terribly important things in fandom are not terribly important at all."

Tina Hensel: "Everything you say is terribly appropos, but doesn't have anything to do with what we're talking about."

Bill Bowers: "Dave Locke is a bit weird at times, folks!"

Ethel Lindsay: "Urbane."

Ted White: "Who the hell do you think you are, some sort of Olympian?"

Bill Bowers: "...someone who can bullshit mundanes."

Jane Yolen: "...you provide a bubbling effect ... a kind of mental fizz, which I have enjoyed ... You have become in my mind a charged particle."

Paula Sigman Lowrey: "...the mailings will be less fun without you ... I think your spirit will be felt in the apa's pages for a long time."

Bruce Coville: "I shall miss your quirky, idiosyncratic,

sometimes cranky and always amusing contributions."

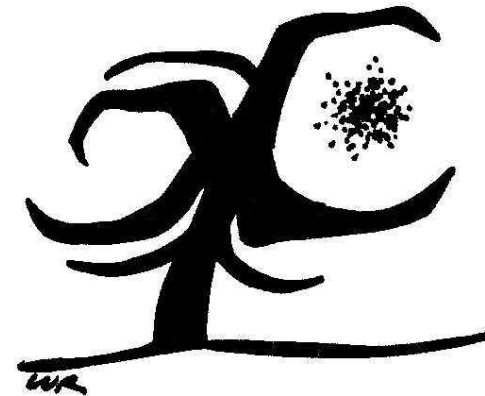
Donya White: "I really like your outspoken wit."

Jymn Magon: "Sorry you're not around to harass me anymore."

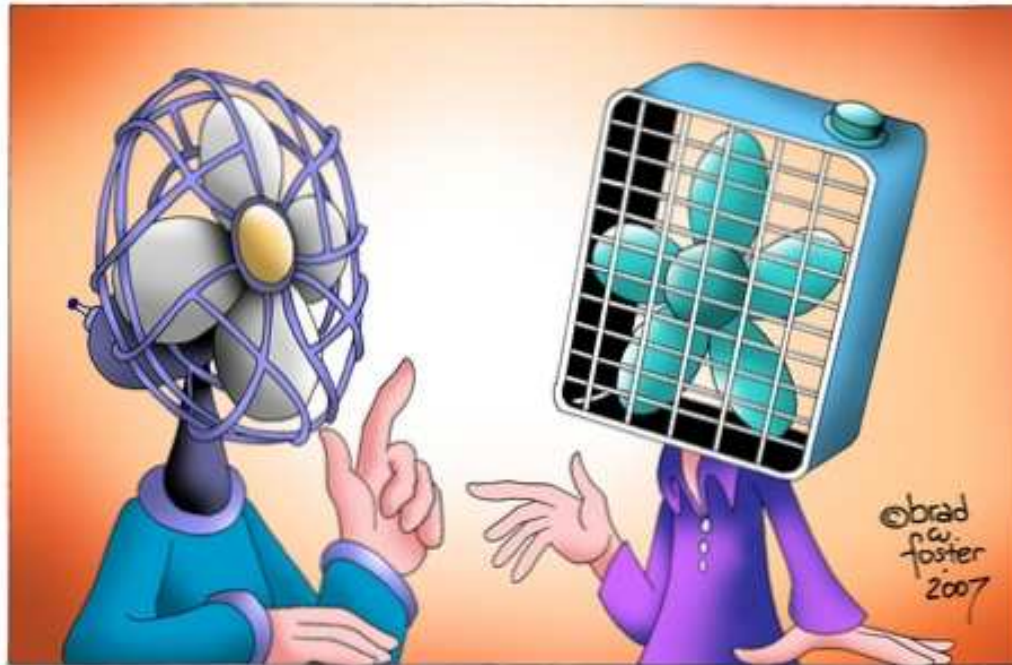
Al Curry: "You're a troublemaker, Locke. You were born a troublemaker. You'll die a troublemaker. I like that in a person."

My personal style leans heavily to persiflage, showing a true bent for the pursuit of amusing diversions. I take the view that it's tough to be a virgin in confronting awareness and hazardous to equanimity to be overly promiscuous with reality. I tread the path best by gradually giving up old games acquired over a lifetime and possessing an almost tenacious sentience, and adopting new ones which have the attributes of being amusing and not requiring a serious defense. Your typical fool, in other words.

That's definitely enough editorial horsecrap for one editorial. More horsecrap next time.



Dave Locke's Dialog With Two Fans
a chat with Brad Foster



Well, I think we probably all know who Brad Foster is. Look around. In here, I mean. His art decorates this *Dialog* series, and appears throughout *Pixel*. Look in other fanzines, as well. You'll probably find him in there.

Brad, and Tim Kirk, are the only five-time winners of the Hugo for Best Fan Artist. Brad also copped himself a Chesley Award, and is a Rotsler Award winner, and ... well ... he's won a bunch of others. He's been the Fan GoH, and the Artist GoH, at numerous cons. He's had artwork in more than a thousand fanzines, including covers

for all progress reports for the 1997 Worldcon, Lonestarcon 2.

Let's wander over and see what else we can find out about him.

[Dave Locke](#)

Prior to your interest in doing fan art, when did you get into art in the first place and what prompted you to get started?

Brad Foster

I've been drawing ever since I could pick up a pen. In fact, I'm no different than anyone else in that respect, as every kid gets markers and crayons and colors to play with. It's just that, in my case, I really got to enjoy the whole process of making drawings. I'll start to doodle on any scrap of paper around if there is nothing else, even if I know I'll end up throwing it away later. It's the process of physically making a drawing, of moving my hand and being surprised half the time by what appears on the page, which seems to have been locked into my brain. I guess you could say I was truly "born to draw", as I don't recall any conscious thought on my part in that direction, just this need to do it.

Dave Locke

I think I still *write* with crayons, sometimes. Particularly as I get older.

Along the way did any artists inspire you, and did you like their work to the point where certain aspects of it began to affect your own style?

Brad Foster

It might be easier to say who "didn't" inspire me, as every time I've tried to come up with an answer to this question (and every artist gets asked this at some point), the list gets longer and longer, and later I keep thinking of other artists whose work I was, and still am, amazed by. Early on when I was absorbing all sorts of art, I often had no idea who the artist was, just enjoyed the art, and only later was able to put a name to the work. These days I've come up with this answer to the question of influences: I've got all kinds of fine arts background study, and was

particularly taken by works of the Art Nouveau and Art Deco school. But I also grew up loving comics and, more specifically, underground comix. Mix all of that together and you end up, I guess, with what I do now.

Dave Locke

So how did you gravitate into the arena of doing fan art?

Brad Foster

This is a tough one to answer, as I don't recall any specific moment, or even how I started getting fanzines in the first place. I seem to have discovered all kinds of small publishing around the same time in the early seventies, and was getting into comics, sf, and "whatnot" 'zines all together. I think it was the idea of self and/or small publishing that really caught my attention. That, and the fact that I could get magazines in exchange for sending drawings. My friend Edd Vick, himself someone who has been all over the place in publishing, once mentioned in an article that I was "an artist who'd contribute to anything that sat still long enough..." I've always loved that, and I think it's still true to this day. I can tell you that my very first published work was in 1972 in a Canadian zine called "... With Pen and Brush", then a bit of a gap in time until the mid seventies when suddenly I seemed to be contributing to all kinds of things.

Dave Locke

"*with Pen and Brush*". Wasn't that Jim Valentino?

Brad Foster

No, this was still several years before I got into the whole

"newave minicomix" thing, which is where I first met up with Jim. I had to go dig up my copy of that one, and it turns out to have been an odd little pub. It seems to have its base in mainstream comicbook fandom (not comix, as the newave stuff I later go into was coming out of). But it was in the minicomix, 4 1/4" x 5 1/2" format that got so big in newave. It was also a collection of, for the most part, original art pieces, not just a collection of drawings of established comic characters as was usually the case. Seems to have foreshadowed much of what I would later be getting into in small press pubs.

Dave Locke

The early '70s was about when I began to notice your work. From these last 30+ years, name a few fanartists whose work you've particularly been taken with, and comment on whether or not any fanartist has had an effect on your own style or approach to handling fanart.

Brad Foster

Another case where I am nervous to start a list, afraid I'll end up forgetting someone and causing offense. Everyone has had a different individual style or look to make them stand out from the others, which has been great. I can tell you that I was totally blown away by the drawings of Tim Kirk, who was already stopping his fannish activity about the time I was starting up. I've joked for years that, since Kirk had the most Fan Artist Hugo awards at five, I wanted to win six. That would then force Kirk to return to doing fan art so that he could win two more (which he obviously and easily would!) thus regaining his crown, and giving ME more great Kirk art to enjoy! Being able to actually get him to contribute to my recent zine LOCS was a

major high point for my own personal fannish career.

Dave Locke

Magnificent fanartist. David Hulan and I used his artwork in the fanzine *Pelf*, and at one time David had almost every wall in his apartment decorated with Kirk paintings. At one convention I took a shine to one of his paintings in the artshow, and bid myself silly trying to get it. Unfortunately, I was outbid by Len & June Moffatt, who had the effrontery to send me a Polaroid snapshot of it on my birthday...

You've been to many conventions. Does your wife attend, or is that primarily your interest?

Brad Foster

Cindy and I are basically joined at the hip. We even met when introduced by a mutual friend at a convention. Cindy was a fan, well read in sf, going to conventions and such, long before we got together. It was only a few years ago that I realized how rare that seems to be in couples. We were talking to some writer and artist friends at a convention, and it just hit me that we were the only couple. For most of these folks, if the spouse is there, it is to support them, but they have no real interest in what is going on. Cindy loves all the weirdness as much as I do.

She also makes me look much better in person. I am very much a paper fan. I draw pictures, write letters, send stuff off, get 'zines and letters back, etc. I am horrible at remembering names, and so love the whole fannish pubbing thing, where I can look someone up in my files, check lists, etc., and not have much face to face contact. I've met people at conventions that I had been corresponding with for years, and drew a complete blank when they said

their names. Without meaning to, I'm sure I probably insulted them by my utterly blank look. So I try to avoid that situation. Cindy, on the other hand...

Well, I've actually over the years put down how she and I differ into this story:

We are both at a convention. I am, as usual, trying to keep her as close to me as possible to cover up my lack of social skills. We are approached by another couple. I might possibly recognize their faces. I've no idea what their names are, although it is likely we have had long conversations with them for hours, and over years of conventions.

I will smile and start to talk about myself, my favorite subject. No, not my favorite: simply the only thing I ever seem to think about. When I run out of stuff (this could take hours) I stop.

They might then say something. If it relates to me personally, it might even penetrate my brain. I will smile and be pleasant, as I know that is what you do in public.

Cindy will then ask them something like "So, how is your grandmother doing?" or a similar personal inquiry about their lives. This will usually be a question relating to something that they said as a throwaway comment several years before. She not only remembers such things, but she honestly, deeply cares about other people.

Cindy and this couple will then converse for a while about all kinds of things that don't have the word "Brad" in them. I will continue to smile and nod.

Their conversation comes to an end, and as we separate, I hear one of them say to the other "What a sweet couple."

So, people seem to -think- that I am a nice guy, but it is only because I happen to have been lucky enough to married one of the sweetest women on the planet.

Hmmm, that went on for a while. Can you tell I am slightly in love with, and amazed by, my wife?

Dave Locke

I have a few parallels to that. I'll be told something like "but you've met him/her at half a dozen conventions". And will respond "there are a lot of convention attendees I don't know. Were we introduced?" If you add that my eyesight is bad and that many fans don't make the names on their nametags large enough or clear enough, then the chance of my meeting someone I've only heard of is often slim.

Brad Foster

Yeah, the nametag problem. You'd think after over half a century of conventions, this wouldn't be a problem anymore. But conventions still seem to insist on making the name of the con (the information we need the least at that point) the biggest thing on the badge, while the name of the person wearing it (info we need the most right then!) will be small and difficult to read. ...sigh...

Dave Locke

The conventions make certain we know the name of the con, and the dates that we're there, and of course the city that we're in. I suspect they're not all that interested in non-obvious things like who we are. Not just because of the postage-stamp space they allot for a name on the badges, but also because they usually have only a supply of blunt-nosed magic markers to write in the name. You're right about this being too often a problem for "*over half a century*". Or at least close enough. I've seen the problem for the last 47 years personally. Of course, while

we're here, let me make a note to those few who do provide adequate badge space and decent writing implements: We love you. To all others: It's possible you'll spend eternity in Hell being jabbed in the ass with pitchforks, just for the sin of overlooking the obvious. Nothing personal.

While we're going on about conventions, tell me about your involvement with them. First, do you prefer the larger or smaller cons? And, what do you primarily get involved with at cons? I would assume you display and sell your art but, since your words pop up right here on my laptop monitor, I'll ask. Are you into panels, masquerades, room parties, huckster rooms, hanging out in the consuite or otherwise sitting around and yakking (my personal favorite...), being part of a gang to check out some local restaurants?

Brad Foster

I actually prefer larger cons, though I have enjoyed a lot of the small local ones as well. I think I like big ones since there is more opportunity to be exposed to something I'd not been aware of before: books, films, toys, music, whatever. Plus there's more opportunity to expose my own work to people who might not go to some of the smaller cons. The more the merrier is fine by me! As well, it is easier to just blend into the background in the big crowds, thus making it easier to avoid that "sorry, don't recall you" horror stuff I spoke of above.

We've very rarely been able to attend any conventions in the past

decade or so where I don't have some sort of set up in the dealer's room. It's not like I'm looking to make any great profits (and that's a good thing, since I rarely do!), but I do hope to sell enough art, zines and other nonsense that I can at least cover most of the costs of the convention.

I've also tried to get at least a single panel in the art show to put up work, though it is rare I sell anything in there. My black and white work just doesn't grab the eye like all those flashy full-color artists all around. sigh. I remember the first convention where I actually did sell a small piece. I'd gone into the art show on Sunday to look around again at some favorites, and saw a blank spot in my own display. I headed for the desk up front to complain that I had had a piece of art stolen. It honestly did not occur to me to think it had been sold!

Cindy and I will check out the program schedule as soon as we arrive. We'll figure which panels we'd both like to see, and which only one of us would be interested in, then schedule our time to try to keep the table open as much as possible. If there's something we both really want to see, I've no problem tossing a sheet over the table with a "Be back at" sign on it. I've heard (well, read) a lot in fanzine fandom about skipping programming, but I've

heard a lot of fun stories, and learned a lot of new things, and am always back for more. We've found it's also handy to have a presence in the dealer's room, since it makes it easy for people to track us down at any time during the con. We've become an impromptu message board and storage area for lots of our friends



that way. Folks will drop off and pick up packages from behind/under our table without having to run to their rooms all day. It's just one of the services we offer!

In my bachelor days, I was so anti-social (less in the "I don't like people" and more in the "I'm too shy to think anyone would want to talk to me" way) that once the dealer's room had shut down, I'd just grab a bag of fast food somewhere and retire to my hotel room to draw all night. When Cindy and I got married, she actually started taking me around to room parties at night. She had told me that people had missed seeing me there. My reply was that was impossible as, having never *been* to any parties, no one could *miss* me in the first place. She rightfully ignored me, and made me do the right thing. So, these days when the dealer's room closes, I just ask her what the plans are for the night. ANY sort of social connections I might have made are solely her doing. Again, it's not that I'm anti-social or anything. I like talking to people. Drop by my table and we can gab forever. (Cindy says I should wear a button that says "Just walk away, 'cause he won't shut up.") But I've still, after half a century, got this little voice in my head that says no one is *really* interested in anything I might have to say. So I don't tend to join in on conversations, but have to be dragged into them. I draw my little pictures, and beyond that... well, there's not much more, unfortunately.

It's been the same way the times I've been fortunate enough to be invited as the Artist Guest of Honor to several conventions over the years. This is, of course, different from being one of the group of dozens of writers and artists who are given free memberships to show up on a couple of panels. That's nice, but there is not a whole lot expected of you. But when I get the GoH treatment, with

all the extra perks and attention, I feel a huge wave of guilt that I must do whatever I can to make the committee not regret inviting me. I'm more than willing to do new art for the program book cover, to do badge designs, and any other art they might need. I try to bring along some of the rarer and/or larger pieces of my art for the art show. I try to make myself available during the entire con. I am more than happy to be on all the panels they want to put me on. I will do slide shows, portfolio reviews, design discussions, judge the art show or masquerade, etc etc. About the only thing I ask is that I *not* be required to speak at the opening or closing ceremonies. If they schedule a block of time to "Meet the Artist Guest of Honor" I can talk my head off about the only subject I know: me. I figure everyone in the room had been clearly warned that it would be me in there. But, during the opening ceremonies of every convention I've been a GoH at, that little voice in my head has always started up, telling me how everyone there is *only* there to see the other major guests. And that the only reason *I* was there was some sort of pure luck on having one member of the committee taking pity on me, and asking me to come. I lock up completely, and feel like a total fake. Heck, *I'm* much more interested in hearing what the writer and editor and what-not other Guests of Honor have to say than anything I might mumble.

[Dave Locke](#)

Have you ever done any fanwriting? Say, for instance, have you been motivated to write any letters of comment?

[Brad Foster](#)

I've written a ton of letters of comment, and some faneds have even been nice enough to print some, though

I'm not sure of what value they have been. I've always had this slightly guilty feeling about getting free fanzines in the mail. I feel I should be doing something to make it worth the while of the editor to send it to me. So I write locs, but I never have felt those were really worth the exchange. So I send drawings. I feel better when I get a 'zine with a drawing of mine in it, because then I can feel that I truly did contribute in a real way. If I get a couple of issues in a row of a 'zine without a contribution, the guilt kicks in and I'll probably send them even more unsolicited artwork. Of course, after a while it sinks in that they don't WANT any of that stuff, since they aren't printing any of it. But they also continue to send me this wonderful free 'zine they've spent all this time and money to create. So now I feel even *more* guilty about it. It's a vicious circle.

I have written one long piece intended for publication as an article in a 'zine, but the next issue has yet to appear. So, of course, I feel guilty about that, too.

Dave Locke

I've submitted articles to many zines which have then decided to fold or go on hiatus. Sooner or later, most of them saw print somewhere. Out of the hundreds I've written, only two haven't. One I don't have a copy of. The other is something the editor would not want to see in print (nor me either, for that matter...).

Brad Foster

Last time I checked, there are a couple of hundred little fillos and larger drawings that I've sent out over the years that still are waiting to see print. Going by the publishing schedule of fanzines, unless I get a definite word from an editor that they have decided to stop pubbing, it's

hard to know how long to wait until trying to find a new home for the illo.

Dave Locke

Are you in correspondence with anyone met through fandom?

Brad Foster

There are some folks I exchange a letter or email with now and then outside of actually talking about a fanzine, or other fannish biz. But for the most part I've noticed all my relationships (i.e., talking, writing, etc.) with people tend to be strongest when we are involved in some sort of creative endeavor. Otherwise, folks quickly find I'm a boring guy without much to say, beyond talking about what projects I am working on. Sort of like this interview: I get to talk about myself!

Dave Locke

Well, that's muchly why we're here...

How did your interest in science fiction get kicked off, and what shape is your interest in these days?

Brad Foster

My earliest recollection of books at all is working my way through the "kids science fiction" section in the local bookmobile when I was in maybe third or fourth grade, and working my way from one end to the other. I remember pulling a fat edition of Jules Verne's "Mysterious Island" off the shelf, surprised I was even considering something so thick. I remember reading a Bradbury collection and, at the end, closing the book and just laying there thinking about it all, of being truly touched and moved by the stories. I found that science fiction and fantasy were full of

wonderful new ideas, and the thought that every book could be something totally different, could take off in completely different directions than all the others, is what drove me to want to read them all.

Dave Locke

If that Bradbury collection was *The October Country*, then it had the same effect on me at that same stage in my misspent youth. And these days?

Brad Foster

My reading interests these days? I read all over the map. I wish I had the money to simply buy new books as I want. There are a lot of great titles I have on my "find" list. But my method of acquisition involves hunting around in used book stores, hoping to find a few items on the list, and often picking up on books I never had heard of before. Especially the \$1 closeout bins. I've found all kinds of wonderful books there. You can check out exactly what I've read for the past seven years or so on my website at <http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com/readlist.html>.

Like my lack of memory for people, I also have a hard time recalling books I've read. I'll find one in a store and wonder if I remember it because I read it, or because I heard about it, or just because I've seen it several times before without purchasing it. So I started the list as another way to be able to track my own life.

Looking back over just the last few years, it seems my reading is all over the map, though sf is still very much a strong part of it all. I do note a preponderance of humor, but then I love funny stuff. I also love the odd quirky novel. Things that take one strong fantasy idea, (What if the Minotaur was a real person, and had a job as a short

order cook in the southern U.S. in the present day?) then work around that. Often these are simply in the all-encompassing "novel" or "literature" or "fiction" sections, rather than in "fantasy". Strange one-off books by authors I never heard of, and who seem to have done just the one book and no more. Finding those gems now and then make the search all worth while.

Dave Locke

I started a books-read list back in 1983, and I'm glad I did. Useful for a great number of purposes, including going after books I haven't read by a particular author.

Basically, as far as sourcing goes, if I want the thrill of serendipity, I love to graze the shelves of a used-book store. If I know pretty much what or who I want, I'll go online.

What does this particular artist like to watch when it comes to TV or movies?

Brad Foster

Well, this particular artist sitting here is usually tuning in comedies or such. It's the kind of thing you can treat like radio. That is, there is no need to stare at the tube, can simply listen while I get other work done. Aside from sitcoms (scripted comedy rules - "reality" shows suck!), if I'm just looking around for something to have on in the background, my usual line of channels to click through would be Comedy Central, Cartoon Network, Discovery, History, Turner Classic Movies, and then just see what's around elsewhere. If I really need to concentrate on my work, I'll put on the radio, usually to NPR. Have a large record collection ("records" are analog versions of CD's for all you young folks out there!), which I also like to haul out

now and then and play all the way through.

As for movies, I'm assuming this would be regarding the ones I actually get out of the house to see, which due to the cost of tickets is maybe two or three movies a year. So when we do pick a movie, it will usually be something with big special affects that we want to get the best big-screen view of. Last year I think we saw "*Pan's Labyrinth*", both for affects and because of the wonderful reviews it was getting. This year we've been to see "*Ratatouille*" and "*The Golden Compass*". We did get some free tickets from 'Coke Rewards' (I knew drinking those dozen Diet Coke's a day would eventually pay off!) so might get to see a few more this next year. (Oh, and *just* got back from "*Cloverfield*". What an amazingly cool new take on the monster movie!) But most movies are seen either when they finally get around to appearing on television, or if friends invite us over to check it out via DVD on their big screens. It's good to have good friends!

Dave Locke

Well, yes. It are. And it's good to not walk in cinemuck. And not listen to kids running around and screaming, idiots talking to their seatmate ("say, isn't that Brad Pitt?") or to people not there when their cell phone rings. And to avoid the megasound of the thundering speakers. What? Well, yeah, I see fewer "*out of the house*" movies than you do... I appreciate the Rewind, Pause, and Save-For-Later buttons on the DVR for inconsequential matters like restroom breaks, ringing telephones, and doorbells.

Brad Foster

I've never really had a problem with the movie theater experience. It's purely a matter of finances that keeps us

from going to more. When I watch movies/tv at home, it's usually on the tv set up in my studio, and thus it is usually with one eye, while I work on something at my desk. I tend to get more done, but I'm not giving the movie my full attention, which is kind of slighting the efforts of the folks who made it. The theater experience is full immersion and I think you can get more out of it that way. As I'm usually always behind on a half dozen projects, probably a good thing I don't get out more often to "waste" my time.

I do agree totally on the DVR options. Being able to control the viewing experience like that is incredibly helpful. I'm so used to that now I've found that, when listening to the radio, I'll often reach over to it to want to run it back slightly to re-hear something, forgetting I don't have the DVR options on radio. darn!

Dave Locke

Sometimes this question works well, and often it falls flat. If there were something you'd like me to prompt you about, some question or topic you'd like to get into simply because your druthers would be tweaked by it, what would you have me ask you?

Brad Foster

You might ask "Is there anything your legions of fans could do to help make your own life easier in any way?" to which I might answer "Gifts of large amounts of cash or toy robots would always be nice." Beyond that, there's not much left to say. I'd better just get back to my drawing board!

Dave Locke

And I should let you go do that. Thanks for chatting. It's been a pleasure.



MUD IN YOUR EYE

THE B MOVIE CELEBRATION - some thoughts, by Dave Rowe

The following is a slightly rewritten collection of notes that was sent to friends about the B Movie Celebration in Franklin, Indiana, last August...

I planned only to go to one of the *Celebration's* movies but got "volunteered" to help for two of the three days by a certain

spouse.

Met the celebrations organizer, Bill Devers, two weeks before the celebration was due to start. Bill was pleasant and friendly but he was worried. They had enough to break even but not to make a profit. He felt more publicity was needed but as soon as things got underway everybody from the directors on up were personable and informal. Didn't encounter an obnoxious ego all weekend long. Made several new friends.

Jim Wynorski (who directed such bummers as *Return Of The Swamp Thing*) is now making films for the *Sci-Fi chan-*

nel and complaining about their *cookie-cutter* policy. No film must start with a dark scene (the viewers will switch over), never shoot scenes in corridors and (you'll love this one) the monster must be seen in the first five minutes!

Lloyd Kaufman premiered *Poultrygeist* there but admitted in conversation that the title was a mistake. Most of it was filmed in a disused *MacDonald's* in Buffalo, NY. He could film all the blood, guts, gore and vomit there (how appropriate for *MacDonald's*) but the owners stipulated no nude scenes in a deconsecrated *MacDonald's*.

So those were shot in the basement of a disused church. Honest!.

The Saturday afternoon found us sitting at a table at the *Willard Bar* (which became the unofficial watering hole of the *Celebration*) with a handful of B-movie direc-

tors. The conversation quickly turned to John Huff's *Cyxork 7* which had just premiered as part of the festivities. It stars Ray Wise (of *Twin Peaks*, *24* and *The Reaper* fame) who signed on at the *Screen Actors Guild's* lowest rate and once he did a small-studio-load of good actors came on board. Everybody agreed it was a great little film and everybody agreed there was one small detail that destroyed the whole movie. The title. It doesn't say what it is or what it's about. The general consensus was it needed a two word title that did that. Try creating a two word title about the making of the seventh in a series of SF movies that have got so bad and so under-funded that the over-egoed cast and crew go to the expected epicenter of a predicted earthquake so they can use it for special effects!

The opinions were so strong that John went back to his hotel and instead of resting (as planned) spent his time phoning his partners and business associates informing them they definitely needed a new title. This was humble pie for John as he was the one who constantly insisted on that title throughout production.

The current *buzz* is that it's still going out as *Cyxork 7* and *Troma* is distributing.

John is a knowledgeable person with a clear and well trained voice. Not surprisingly, he works weekends as Dee Jay.

He has an infectious love of film and the English language. One film he advises to everyone is *Sweet Smell Of Success* for it's astute use of hip New York colloquialisms. It was a pleasure to spend time with him.

Conrad Brooks (of *Plan 9 From Outer Space* infamy)

turned out to be a really affable friend. He has a New York accent and even on first meeting he refers to you informally. "O.K. Champ, I'm about ready." "Where we going, Champ?" "Hey, you got it all in hand, Champ." "You're the champ."

He certainly likes his drink but he was never drunk.

He knows he's a bad actor and *Plan 9 From Outer Space* was bad film but he's enjoying life too much to let either get him down and he'll milk both for as long as they pay in smiles (and money). Seventy-seven years old and he's still not beyond benignly flirting with young women.

He said that back in 1958 everyone wanted color and if *Plan 9* had been made that way it would have been bought (as a B-feature), screened and promptly forgotten about but being black and white it did not sell, it was only seen by a few and after it topped *The Golden Turkey Awards* every film fanatic wanted to see it.

Asked about how true Johnny Depp's portrayal of Ed Wood was, Conrad pulsed for a moment and said "There was only one Ed Wood."

Of the film *Ed Wood* (in which Conrad appears as a bartender) he said Johnny Depp and Tim Burton hardly said a word to anyone, "They were all business."

Bela Lugosi *never* swore. "He was a gentleman."

Ed and his future wife, Kathy, did not meet in the waiting room of the L.A. Psychiatric Hospital. "They met in a bar. They were both drunk."

Sara Dunn's persona is *The Queen Of Trash* who helps present *Cinema Insomnia* (a late-night TV B-film series that doesn't play in this area, not even on satellite). She's over six feet tall and her character wears six-inch heels

and a dominatrix outfit with a bra that forces her breasts together and up to such an acute level that you'd expect at any moment they'd spring out and pummel her chin.

Had to be careful when driving with her seated in the front passenger seat. Every time the right mirror needed checking or there was a right turn it meant looking directly across her breasts.

In her outfit she told of being afraid of bugs when she was a child, which seemed incongruous coming from an exceptional tall woman dressed as a dominatrix.

Got to sit down and talk with her when she was in her street clothes and she's a very nice lady albeit given to a little swearing.

OK. So look who's calling the kettle black.

The celebration was an instant success. Everyone raved about it. The main criticism was that it was "so spread out" (the two main venues were a quarter of a mile apart) but everyone loved the small town informality and the community was definitely behind it all the way so much so that Lloyd Kaufmann will be holding two *TromaDance Film Festivals* in 2008, with one in Franklin alongside *The B Movie Celebration*. Sara Dunn, who has been going to a calendarful of these events each year, said this was the best she'd ever been to.

Certainly the weather helped too, clear and warm all weekend long.

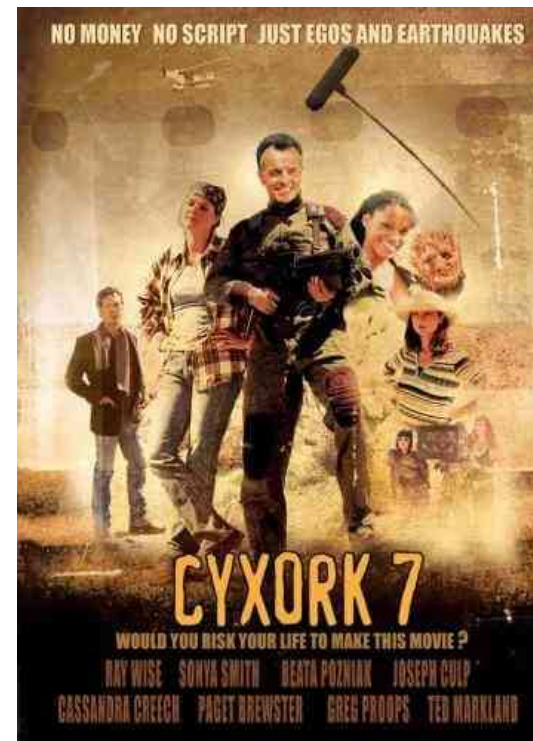
So Bill got it right in one.

The two flies in the ointment are 1] that it only broke even because of sponsorships, some of which will not always repeat and 2] Bill wants to expand the celebration attendance from 200 to 2000 and keep it in Franklin. Cer-

tainly 2000 will make it pay but it will just as certainly destroy the informality and Franklin hardly has the facilities for 2000 attendees yet it was the *small town* itself that helped make it work so well.

What will happen? Only time will tell.

But if you're interested the next celebration is September 26 to 28, 2008. For all the details log on to <www.bmoviecelebration.com>.



Rambo

James Bacon

Oxford English Dictionary; Rambo (noun) an extremely tough and aggressive man.

Encarta English Dictionary: Rambo (noun) Violent Person an aggressive or violent person who breaks rules or laws to achieve what he or she believes to be right

I was rather young when *First Blood* arrived onto the video store shelves. It must have been around 1984, as the movie would have come and gone, and those were the days when there were huge delays for US movies being screened in Europe, let alone being made available to hire and watch at home on Pal VHS video.

It was a big deal though. Dad hired the movie and I remember that my nana, my maternal grandmother, was also gathered to see the movie along with Mom and my

younger brother. I would have been about nine. We were positioned either side of dad, he would sprawl with his arms around our shoulders, allowing for quick covering of eyes parental censorship. We had to agree to this, in order to watch a movie rated well beyond our years.

My father's attitude towards censorship, was derisory. He felt he should decide for himself what he should watch as an adult and even more so for the children that were his burden and whom he had responsibility for. Ireland in the sixties and seventies of his youth was a church run place, with books such *Brave New world*, *Grapes of Wrath*, *Live and Let die* and the *Spy Who Loved Me* all being at varying times on the huge censors list. *The Life of Brian* was banned as well, so nothing changed as time progressed.



It was the same with *Jaws*. We had censor dad, although we actually turned away for the gruesome bits, to be honest. To dad, *Rambo* was a post Vietnam war movie and we were growing up on a mix of TV and Movies which included many classic war movies, *The Bridge Over Remegan*, *The Great Escape* and *The Dam Busters* being firm re-watched favourites.

The A-team of course were tagged as Vietnam vets, who seemed to be modern day Robin Hoods, always fighting for what was right when the authorities let ordinary folk down. Mercenaries with a conscience. And that was regular Saturday afternoon, chips & burgers with dad fare.

So we sat and watched Rambo.

I felt it was a sad movie. Years as a war comics reader gave me some perspective, and even at that early age I didn't focus on the violence alone and took the message that was coming across as: surely that this vet hadn't actually done anything wrong, in actual fact wasn't he treated quite badly by the sheriff and his men.

I enjoyed the movie, it was at times quite exciting and the violence was considerably graphic for the time, mild in comparison to what we get on TV now though. The ending was sad, though. I felt at that time that so much of the violence was the sheriff's own fault, he and his men were a catalyst for their own demise, and despite opportunities to resolve the situation, they just escalated the problem

with their own stubbornness.

I felt sad for Rambo.

So it may come as no surprise that I am often irked by the use of the term 'Rambo' as some sort of noun to describe an aggressive macho and senseless violent anger. I have on a number of times asked people what they mean, and they talk about the M-60 and the knife and how Rambo is a killer, hardened and pumped. I have only once or twice, based on the person who was speaking, challenged further. Along the lines of "*but wasn't Rambo a vet who was beaten up and effectively excommunicated from a small town of narrow minded bully's because he looked scruffy?*"

This has on one occasion elicited a deep and thoughtful conversation, mostly because my colleague is an intelligent and literate person. He has borrowed *V for Vendetta* from me but, to be honest, otherwise there has been no real recognition of the bastardisation of name into a slang term for something that is quite paradoxical.

Rambo, a veteran with eight years service and time in a POW camp is the victim in the movie. Provocation is a big factor in his story. He is obviously damaged goods, the man has suffered torture, and having spoken to a lady who is a torture counsellor one has no true comprehension of what it is to endure such cruelty and pain and the depth of scars that it leaves emotionally.

Officers talk about military discipline, and I understand

that to be able to turn on and off the ability to cold bloodedly kill another person as required by ones superiors. It's not really a pleasant thought. I personally wonder how easy it is to control the instinct that must ferment in a person for survival, when they are met with the real world.

Denying a man's request to find a place to eat, and forcefully ejecting him from a town because the townsfolk 'don't appreciate people of his kind', shows a form of segregation and discrimination that is surely intolerable in any civilised country.

To then be beaten brutally at the hands of law enforcers and have a straight edge blade brandished in ones face, would be quite an upsetting life event for any individual. If one escapes such a situation, it is not unreasonable that a person would attempt to evade capture. In the movie, Rambo doesn't kill people. He injures them badly, and it's quite vivid in the movie, but most injuries are no worse than what many London Hospitals would see on a Saturday night. A deputy does get killed, due to an action by Rambo, so he can be classed at that stage as a murderer. I understand but, even so, it was unintentional. He threw a rock at a helicopter, not a ballistic missile.

As the situation escalates, and despite Rambo offering the sheriff an opportunity to stop, the national guard are brought in and are used to hunt down and supposedly kill Rambo.

At this stage he is angry, and he vents his anger by doing considerable damage to the town of Hope. But he doesn't kill the sheriff. His old commanding officer talks him down, as he had wanted to do for some time, and Rambo is arrested. The anger and violence at this stage of the movie is all that people seem to associate with the word Rambo.

Like so many things, headlines and assumptions, there is much more to the word Rambo than this simple understanding.

I have read David Morrells novel, *First Blood* and it is not at all like the movie. I found that it wasn't subtle differences, like in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's nest* where sympathies are managed in a different way. Rather, with *Rambo* it was quite overtly different, with the Rambo Character being portrayed in a very harsh light.

I understand that Stallone himself had input into the script and the way that Rambo is perceived, portrayed in a manner that allow one to be sympathetic to the character. He is indeed a clever man, and despite the manner in which he seems to be lampooned by the likes of *Mad Magazine*, his part in *Copland* for me showed that he is a diverse and thoughtful actor.

That thought is evident in *RAMBO*, once the viewer also applies some brain work to the movie. Unfortunately, it is not quite so evident in modern usage of the term.

Much Nothings About Ado

Lee Lavell

- What Makes A Good Fanzine?

At least in my opinion, anyway, what makes a good fanzine.

First of all, one must think *what exactly is a fanzine?* Obviously, it is a fan, or amateur magazine, and the operative word there is magazine. It should have the ingredients of a magazine in appearance and content. In fandom the content formerly was kind of classified as fan fiction, news, letters, and articles. Since the advent of the computer the personal zine has now more frequently migrated to the blog. Newszines have mainly become reportage of conventions or are just sites. (I really miss trufen.net!) One other category exists and it is the one I prefer, and that is the genzine or a fanzine that contains more than one of the above categories.

Whatever the type zine, one should strive for readability and literacy. Everyone has their own quirky writing style and I am ok with that, but obvious lapses in grammar should be avoided because that can turn a reader off. For

instance, I get very irritated with someone who misuses the preposition *between* as in “Between you and I.” People say “Between us” with no problem, but when it gets to the singular that damn “I” creeps in instead of “me.” It always stops me dead and to an extent spoils the rest of the piece. I’m sure other people have other quirks that irritate them as well. The same goes with spelling, and with the spell-check features on a computer there really is little excuse for a misspelled word. Then, of course, there is proofreading. One can always tell if something has been carefully proofread. Words can be left out. Sometimes spell-check doesn’t catch a misspelled word if it comes out the same as a legitimate word. Having someone else around to do the proofreading is really helpful. New eyes can see things.

Next is layout. I look for things that are easy to read, to follow and are attractive in appearance. Layout rules are really very simple and make a lot of common sense. Illos should face the interior of the page because that is where

the eye follows, so, for instance, a profile of a person looking to the right should be placed on the left hand side of the page. Columns of print should be easy to follow and generally continuous. This seems to have become a problem with the ezine which often entails scrolling up and down to keep track of the content of an article. (Where the hell did it go this time syndrome) The use of color is nice but not always practical with the printzine, but black and whites are quite acceptable and give the eye a rest from the all-nothing-but-print page. Color has become rampant in the ezine and is wonderful if displayed properly. One thing that really irritates me in the use of photographs is the lack of identification of the people in them. I may not know a lot of these people and looking at a lot of “anonymouses” is annoying.

Space is our friend! Don't crowd things just to get them in. Either make the issue larger or hold something back for a future issue. I remember back in them thar olden days when I was printing a fanzine, I would simultaneously get complements on its appearance and at the same time be berated for wasting so much space, without the person being aware that the appearance was dependant upon the space. Some zines are so crowded that they become virtually unreadable.

I also like to see an editorial, mainly just to put a face, so to speak, on the magazine. It stops being just a bunch of words and pictures and becomes the vision of a *person*.

There is one other thing which I feel is particularly important and that is the contents page. First of all, if there is a variety of material a contents page should be included.

It should indicate the title, the author (or authors), the type of material (article, column, reviews, etc.) and the page number on which it first appears. It should be placed at the beginning of the magazine. I do not understand the reasoning of an editor who places it at the end. By the time I get there I already know what is in the zine, so of what use is it then?

Now let's discuss a letter column, and I feel that all fanzines should have one. A letter column can be either formal or informal. If it is formal, the editor, if he so chooses, can place his comments at the end of the letter. If it is informal the comments can be inserted within the letter, preferably at the end of a paragraph. In either case the comments should be differentiated from the letter in some way. If it is a print zine, different styles of type could do, or maybe placing the comments within parentheses or brackets. If it is an on-line zine color or print style or both could be used. Just so it's clear who is doing the writing.

If fanzines are being reviewed, be sure to inform the reader how they can be received. Look for reviewers who can do something more than just list the contents of the zine, but rather can do a critique of at least one. The same goes for any other type of review.

Good covers are nice, too.

So, I guess what I am saying is that what I look for in a fanzine (other than subject matter) is literacy, readability and attractiveness and organization.

IN THE ELECTRIC MIST WITH YANKEE DEAD*

Curt Phillips

Article engineered from Trufen mailing list posts and a personal letter. *Title rendered with apologies to James Lee Burke's excellent novel *In The Electric Mist With Confederate Dead*

I'm a reenactor. World War II, Civil War. The purpose here isn't to tell you why we're after our particular mode of camaraderie. After all, as Dogbert said in the *Dilbert* cartoon, "it wouldn't be a hobby if it had a reason."

How We Handle The Crazyies

Those of us who reenact Civil War or WWII battles hear the criticism now and then that games featuring mayhem can be dehumanizing to those who play them, and these people are being entertained by something that more ideally would invoke dismay or disgust. Truthfully I suspect that some reenactors get off on "just" the violence and mayhem.

There certainly are some folks who are attracted to the hobby by the "blood and guts" aspect. We tend to weed them out fairly quickly and send them on their way. When we have a few thousand "soldiers" on the field carrying real muskets (and all of them are completely functional firearms just as capable of killing someone as the antiques they're patterned after) and real bayonets, we don't want any idiots on the field with us. We have a very low toler-

ance for stupidity, and screw-ups don't get a second chance. So those "blood & guts" guys are off playing other games. By and large, they're not marching with us.

At one event I encountered an apparently out-of-control Confederate soldier during an infantry charge. He had a bayonet on his musket - which we do use in scripted battles done for the public, but never in hand-to-hand battles. I watched this fellow charge a federal soldier with his bayonet pointed straight at his chest. The Johnny Reb was screaming a full "rebel yell" and running full out. The "Yank" he was charging fell or took a hit but the "Reb" kept charging and yelling. When they got within 10 or 12 feet I stepped in from the side and popped Johnny Reb in the gut with the butt of my rifle. This stopped the yelling and the charge, and then I took the guy's musket away and sat on him till he got his breath back and calmed down. He was thoroughly pissed off and insisted that he had just been acting, but both my commanding officer and his had seen the whole thing and agreed that the guy had acted like a jerk and needed to be restrained. He was a new reenactor and this had been his 2nd event. I've never seen him since so I expect he got told to get lost by his Confederate unit.

I did a similar thing once to one of my own troops. We had a new recruit with us at his first battle. He had taken a hit between the lines during a charge as had I and I was

just lying there listening to the battle rage around me. Suddenly I heard some angry shouts from the Confederate trench. The new guy had pulled his bayonet and crawled towards the Confederate line as though he were planning to stab somebody with it. Totally forbidden by our rules and Very Bad Form. I was closest so I jumped up, ran over to him and stood on his arm. He gawped up at me in surprise. "Whatnthahellareyoudoing?" he shot out. "Let go of that bayonet," I replied. He did, and I picked it up, then picked him up and escorted him behind our lines. An hour later back in camp, he was dismissed from the unit and ordered off the field. All this may sound rude, harsh, needlessly violent, and so forth, but we who take the reenacting hobby seriously allow no margin for stupid behavior. We figure that we have to or someday one of us will get killed by someone's stupidity.

And you know what? It works pretty well. There are many thousands of reenactors in the US and all of them carry very real and very lethal weapons and know how to use them. Yet I know of only one battlefield death that was clearly due to stupid behavior (an artillery recruit had his arm shot off at the shoulder at an event in the 80's and died from blood loss before he could be taken to the hospital. I know of bunches of reenacting injuries - many demonstrating exceptional stupidity - and a few accidental deaths (a fellow froze to death at a winter event, and deaths due to heart attacks. In 1996 a friend of mine suffered a heart attack at a company drill and died 20 minutes later as we transported him to the hospital. It was his death that led directly to me taking my first EMT class and joining the Fire Department).

I feel that being exposed to the violence of my hobby has, if anything, vastly increased my own respect for hu-

man life and dignity. A very different thing from the impersonal violence of movies, TV, and video games. I tend to think that those things *do* dehumanize people and promote the degradation of human empathy.

Thinking Back

World War II reenacting this time, and I was at Ft. Indiantown Gap, PA (a former infantry training facility during WWII, and a National Guard camp today) at a reenactment of the Battle of the Bulge. There were only 3000 of us and we had decided to focus on some infantry/tank operations that happened north of Bastogne. We had "battled" since 0500 in a series of running actions and had settled down to hold a line on a hillside where we were to be attacked that afternoon. I and three friends were doing American infantry (100th Inf. Div. to be precise) and we had found an old foxhole that we were improving to be a "shell hole" that we could use to fight from during the battle. We were taking a break and sitting on the edge of the hole eating lunch when we noticed an older fellow in a blue jacket watching us from a little distance. He was wearing a baseball cap that indicated that he was one of the 200 or so WWII veterans who had come in on a tour group to watch our battles. We called him to come over and visit and after some visible hesitation he did. We introduced ourselves all around and naturally asked him about his experience in WWII. Some veterans like to talk about their war days, and some don't. Some *can't* talk about it, and I've learned not to pry too much when a veteran seems reluctant to talk to me about those times. I certainly value hearing the stories these fellows can tell, and I've found that they can put a human face to my understanding of history that I could never get from reading history books

alone. This guy was one of the in-betweeners. I sensed that he wanted to talk about something but was having a hard time doing so. My friends and I glanced at each other and silently agreed to let the man be. He sat there with us in that replica foxhole as we finished our lunch and talked of little things. We started joking about how digging a foxhole wasn't as easy as it looked in the movies. One of my buddies pulled out a Thermos of coffee and started passing cups around. These were G.I. canteen cups with the fold-out handle and, without asking, we handed one to our visitor. He held it silently for a moment and then started telling us what had evidently been bothering him.

He'd been a draftee soldier and was present at the real Battle of the Bulge in December of 1944. He had been 18 at the time and assigned to his company in the summer of '44 at Camp Yaphank in New York. Didn't know anyone there and most of the other soldiers in the company ignored him. Then he discovered that one of the boys was from the same county in North Carolina as he was, and he made friends with him and two of that guy's friends. They "showed him the ropes" and the four of them became close buddies. They went overseas and shuffled into an infantry regiment. Then came the German breakthrough and his company was moved up into battle in the thick forests near Bastogne. He told us about moving silently through the woods with snowdrifts up to his chest. He could hear what sounded like other soldiers moving near him but wasn't able to see them. Sometimes they would shoot at those noises without ever knowing if they were hitting anyone or not. His memories of the first few days of that battle consisted mostly of being cold and confused and never being able to keep his feet dry because he didn't have the right kind of boots.

And then he talked about his 3 buddies. He told us their names and what their hometowns were. One of them had a steady girlfriend and one had been married just after he finished basic training. One fellow liked comic books and carried three around with him reading them over and over. One had caught a cold and had a runny nose all the time. The way he told us about his three buddies made it seem as though they were around somewhere at our reenactment and he expected to meet up with them in a little while. Old buddies from the war. And then he told us about the last time he had been in a shell hole, like he was doing there with us. His company had moved to the edge of the woods near a cleared area that had been shelled recently and he and his buddies had taken cover in a shell hole. They had been there for a few hours when word was passed up that hot coffee had been brought up. It was his turn to run errands for the group so he gathered everyone's canteens and made his way back to where, sure enough, hot coffee had been brought up in huge Army Thermos jugs. While he was there, the Germans tanks started shelling the area again. Later he made his way back to the shell hole where he'd left his friends and found that they'd all been killed by enemy fire.

And then this fellow, this 70 year old soldier, stood, took out his wallet, and pulled out a cracked and faded snapshot of 4 impossibly young boys in soldier suits taken shortly before they'd come overseas. I'd love to tell you that we then said profound things that turned this encounter into some kind of happy ending, but the truth is that I couldn't think of anything at all to say and neither could my own three buddies. I took the photo as it was passed around and finally broke the silence by asking him to identify who was who in the shot. We talked a bit more, and

then he stood to go. We stood too and shook his hand. One of my buddies stood to attention and snapped him a salute and the rest of us followed suit. He laughed at that and waved one back at us and then wondered off.

You know, I can't really remember now what that fellow looked like, but I can still see that faded photograph of those 4 casualties of war just as if I were holding it here in front of me. And I think about that afternoon on that Pennsylvania hillside now and then, and wonder if I really know what I'm doing when I try to look at history with honest eyes.

And It's Tiring

By "boscage" I mean the yards thick-growth of brush and thickets that border the old farm fields in France. In advancing inland after D-Day, Allied troops found these growths to be significant barriers to troop movements because of their size and thickness. Additionally, while our soldiers were seeing those obstacles for the first time the occupying German troops had explored them thoroughly and had placed booby traps and machine gun nests in them in anticipation of Allied invasion. They had made the boscage a part of their war plans while we had not.

I got back from a fascinating and exhausting little exercise on a large abandoned farm in Sullivan County, Tennessee where about 50 WWII reenactors gathered to practice squad-level infantry tactics of WWII with a focus on operating in and around boscage as found in France. It would certainly have been better and more fun to do this *in* France, but we only had one day to get everyone together so it had to be here in Tennessee. Some of the boys camped out Friday night but I live about a 45 minute drive away so I left home about a half-hour before dawn and

drove over the mountain to the site. It had snowed about a half-inch on Friday night - which seriously interfered with the illusion of late-summer France in 1944, but we made do. We had as a special guest speaker former Sgt. Jay Richardson who was a Combat Engineer with the Army in WWII and who had first hand experience in dealing with the French boscage. According to Sgt Richardson, the Allies knew from aerial photos and reports from Frenchmen in the UK that the boscage was there in our way, but no one in military planning took it seriously enough as an impediment. It was assumed that a Sherman Tank would make short work of a few bushes, but as it turned out the stuff was so thick that after a few yards even a tank would bog down. There were natural openings at various places, but of course the Germans knew where all those places were and had artillery and machine guns zeroed in on them. The Germans had even had time to hack out rather comfortable positions for machine gun nests within the boscage; all perfectly camouflaged and sandbagged. Very tough to deal with when you had to attack those positions. As he described it, the Standard Army Answer for dealing with the boscage was a Banglor Torpedo. This was a set of long metal tubes about 3 inches in diameter packed with high explosive that could be poked through the boscage. You simply kept attaching additional sections and poking the torpedo on through until it reached the other side. Then you attached wires, ran them back to a detonator, and push the plunger. "BOOM!" goes the torpedo, but though the blast might have made a lot of noise and smoke, it didn't make much of a hole in the boscage. The force of the blast was dissipated within the brush. Eventually they found that the most effective thing they could do was to mount a sort of big saw blade on the front of a tank

and cut a path through with it. Sgt. Richardson told us that this was something that they improvised on the spot. "Wasn't pretty", he said, "but it worked".

Not having tanks to play with on Saturday, we used a bulldozer. The farm we were on had had the timber cut off about 15 years earlier and not touched since then. The underbrush was thick and impassable so at our request the landowner - who owned a bulldozer - had cut several wide paths in the brush to simulate the French boscage. A group of German reenactors came and brought a machine gun and they'd spent a chilly Friday hacking out a nest for themselves in the brush. They reported that even though it got very cold and snowy, they were reasonably comfortable in their position that night. Better than me. I'm too old for that sort of thing anymore. HQ was in a barn where we'd set up a field kitchen and while we ate a breakfast of scrambled eggs with chipped beef in gravy on toast - and the strongest coffee I've ever tasted - Sgt Richardson talked with us about his memories of the invasion of June, 1944 and his operations following D-Day. He had some great stories to tell and we'd have kept him there all morning but the cold was clearly starting to affect him and his son wanted to get him back home so we all came to attention and gave him a salute, which he returned with a grin and we cleaned up our mess kits and went off to play in the mud.

Under the direction of a Captain from North Carolina whose name I can't recall, we broke up into three squads and practiced field evolutions for a while and then practiced deploying to assault the machine gun nest several times. It was a lot more complicated than we'd expected since we relied on "grenades" for that sort of work and we had a lot of trouble getting our simulated grenades

through the brush. And the "Germans" had prepared their lines of communication well so that if we concentrated our fire on one position they could quickly shift their location to another spot to again put us under fire. We had about 40 Allies and about 10 Germans, but their position was so strong that we could only take it by a mass attack that - according to our appointed judge - resulted in near 100% casualties for the Allies without clearly destroying the enemy position. A sobering and disappointing analysis that even surprised the "Germans".

So that was the bulk of my weekend. Got home and was sore in several new places. Still had to clean my boots and other gear and that would take the best part of the next day. I have to admit it; my hobby involving pulps and books is a lot cleaner, less work, and far easier on my back.

How Us Crazies Get Handled

A few years ago I received an email from someone who knows that I'm a Civil War reenactor. What he sent was a link to an article entitled "Did ghostly soldiers pay reenactors a courtesy call?" Not that I thought he believed the story, nor did I think he had any notion that I would believe it.

I thanked him for the link, but noted anyway that I didn't think I'd put too much stock into this since next to running around in wool uniforms going "ye-ha", one of the things we reenactors like to do best is to tell outrageous lies to tourists about Civil War ghost stories. We sit around the campfire at night making up new ones all the time and I've heard some good ones.

I told him: The one you quoted is pretty typical. Some reporter probably overheard it, tracked these boys down

and quite naturally they played it as straight as they possibly could. That's exactly what I'd have done in their place, anyway. You'd be amazed at how the tourists will hang on our every word just because we wear Civil War uniforms.

A few years ago I got caught up in starting a CW ghost story quite by accident. I and a friend had been touring the battlefield at Gettysburg and wanted to stay late and see the field at twilight. We weren't carrying our weapons (Park Service regulations won't allow us to do that) but we were wearing the rest of our uniforms and had our canteens and haversacks (the knapsack that we carry food and other essentials - like toilet paper - in) so we decided to sneak into the woods behind Little Round Top and spend the night. That sounds more rustic than it really was since we were both quite used to sleeping out in the open with minimal supplies, and besides; it was a great adventure to us. We figured that it was also against Park Service regulations so we took some effort to disappear into a thick section of woods and stay out of sight. Gettysburg is a very large and completely wide open park, so we thought we could get away with it.

Sometime later that night we were wakened by the noise of people crashing through the underbrush towards us. Figuring that the Park Rangers had spotted us after all (they patrol the park at night with night vision goggles to catch people trying to dig up relics) we got up and made ready to go along peacefully. Thinking to have a little fun, my buddy waited till the sound of their progress indicated that they were right upon us and he then stepped out from behind a tree, waved his hands in the air and shrieked "EEEE-YOWWW!" Only then did we see that the noises we'd heard were actually made by two tourist couples who had evidently driven in to the park and wanted to climb

Little Round Top from the other side where tourists usually didn't go. They screamed, one flashed a flashlight on and was rewarded with the sight of two bearded, unkempt fellows in Yankee uniforms arising seemingly out of the ground on a hillside where a great many Yankee soldiers once fought and died. Then they quit fooling around and started doing some really serious screaming.

They didn't wait around to ask us our business, and we suddenly became very interested in seeing what was going on in some other part of the battlefield so we left too.

Next day - uniforms safely packed in the car - we were sitting at the McDonald's in downtown Gettysburg when we heard 4 Park Rangers sitting near us talking about the latest hysterical tourists who had reported seeing ghosts on Little Round Top the night before.

Two years later I was sitting at home when the phone rang. It was my same friend from the Gettysburg trip. "Quick", he said. "Turn on the TV to *"Unsolved Mysteries"*. I did so, just in time to catch the last of that night's story about 4 tourists who had been wandering around on Little Round Top a couple of years previously and had been chased by the ghosts of Yankee soldiers. "They kept screaming," one lady said with a quivering voice. "It was as though they'd been dying for 130 years and were begging for release." Of course I hadn't gotten a very good look at those folks, but then they hadn't gotten all that good a look at me either, thank goodness. The man who spoke talked about how ugly one of them was; "his face was bearded and pasty white, and looked as though it had been half shot away."

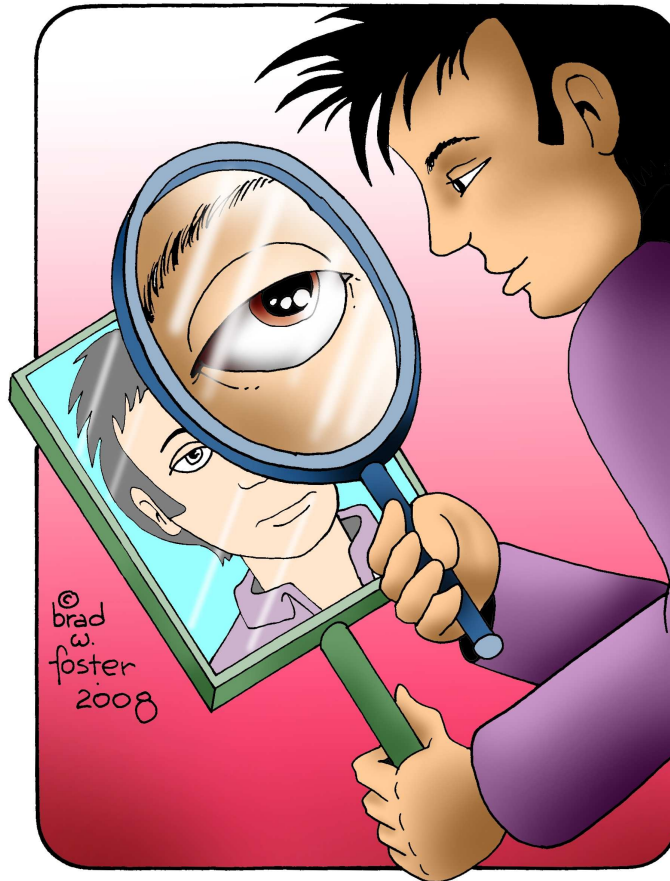
I tell myself that he must have been talking about the friend I was with that night, who **is** a little on the rough-hewn side at that, but I don't know...

Notes From Byzantium

Perhaps because of fandom's aging, there seems to have developed a cottage industry devoted to packaging fans who are dead, or gone, into articles and histories. Reading accounts of fans from the past usually makes me uncomfortable. I can't help wondering what the subjects would have to say for themselves and to what extent the author's motivations colored the story.

Such misgivings might sound strange to anyone who remembers me filling up reams of duplicator paper and twiltone with stories about my family, friends and acquaintances. But I seldom write character studies these days. In the past twenty years I've come to understand that other people deserve better than to be used as fanzine fodder.

I never intended intend to exploit others. I'd been inspired by James Thurber who put his own eccentric family to brilliant use in classics such as "The Night the Bed Fell Down." Like Thurber's essays (or so I imagine) mine usually contained a few facts, wildly embroidered. Reality was lit-



Eric Mayer

tle more than a starting point. My brother, who was present for much of what I recounted, remarked that when he read the loccol of my perszine Groggy, it amused him how readers tended to suspect me of fabricating events which were not exaggerated in the least while accepting as true things which I had pretty much made up whole.

Fictionalized as they were, all those essays had some basis in facts. Facts that maybe didn't belong in fanzines, or in print. Or which, possibly, were not facts, but just personal observations I had

mistaken for facts.

Writing about other people is perilous. It took a flood to teach me that.

In 1972 Hurricane Agnes dropped a foot of rain on Northeastern Pennsylvania where I was living with my parents. The morning the Susquehanna breached the dikes, flooding Wilkes-Barre and the rest of the Wyoming Valley ten miles to the south, my father's friend Mr. C (I will call him) showed up at our back door, waving his Leica. He was

off to take photographs! Who wanted to come along?

The adults in the household sensibly declined. I found the prospect of coming face to face with disaster irresistible. Mr C headed south, piloting his Lincoln Continental down the narrow river-side highway which no one had got around to closing yet. He parked at the edge of inundated areas, where he fussed over f-stops and cursed the lack of light, while the escaped river nipped at his wing tips. Once, while we strolled around on the wrong side of some yellow emergency tape, a police car pulled up, sending red and blue lights whirling across the gray water. "It's all



right," Mr C called out. "I'm an artist."

Whether any of Mr. C's photographs of half-submerged houses actually resulted in paintings I can't say, but our journey that morning formed the basis for a fanzine article I wrote a decade afterwards (for one of Brian Brown's fanzines, if I remember correctly) called "Agnes and the Artist." Later, when I had largely given up fandom to concentrate on mini-comics and magazine writing, I sold a version of the essay to a magazine called *Weatherwise*. The editor wanted a release from Mr C. Although I had not used the man's real name, the flood incident was the centerpiece for a recognizable character study.

By then I'd left Pennsylvania. After I mailed Mr C the essay and release, and spoke to him on the phone several times, he gave his okay and I got my by-line. He didn't seem to be his usual enthusiastic self, though. He wasn't in any hurry to get the release signed. At my behest, my father reminded him.

"He wasn't very happy about it," my father told me.

"But why?" I wondered. "It was an accurate portrait, wasn't it?"

"Maybe it was too accurate."

I had detailed a lot of Mr C's quirks which I found either admirable or, at worst, amusing. Thinking about it, I realized that not every reader would see Mr C from my perspective. The fact that his taste in automobiles exceeded his income might strike some as irresponsible. His practice of removing from patrons' walls portraits he'd sold to them because he had suddenly decided the mouth still wasn't quite right and needed retouching, could be bad for business. It probably pained him to read how he'd make pilgrimages to the New York City galleries and return to the sticks, fired by inspiration, to paint according to the latest

trends, but forever doomed to obscurity because the trend setters were already working on the next big -- completely different -- thing in their Tribeca lofts.

Besides, he probably didn't see any of it that way anyhow. I could have got things wrong. We might think we're writing the unvarnished truth, but when it comes down to it, we're all full of varnish.

Mr C had only given his permission because, after all, he was an artist. How could he stand in the way of a young artist making a sale?

I had hurt and embarrassed a man I admired. For a byline.

I resolved not to make that kind of mistake again.

Writers who seem to think they ought to be congratulated for their supposed candor about other people, particularly those who are no longer around to give their side of the story, do not impress me. I may not be a brilliant

and insightful author but I have at least learned that the words I type onto a screen and my writing reputation are not more important than other human beings.

During the past fifteen years I've largely given up essays to write short stories and novels. I decided that if I want to delve into people's motivations and mental processes and other matters of which I can have no real knowledge it is best to be honest and give my creations fictional names rather than appending the names of real human beings to them. When I am gripped with the urge to demonstrate psychological insight or explore the human condition in essay form, I follow the example of Montaigne, Rousseau and Thoreau and take myself for the subject of my study.

Since I am no nearer to understanding myself than I was fifty years ago, I still have enough material to keep me in essays for a long time.



PURE QUILL bwf



Just to make life excessively simple for you here in *Pure Quill Pixelated*, your comments are in black and that editor Locke's comments are in blue. And to make life simpler for the editor, he's hat-in-hand requesting that letters of comment be submitted in either RTF or email, which everyone has regardless of their computer's operating system. Please, no MS Word LoCs.

Lloyd Penney <penneys at allstream dot net>

I am a little late off the mark with comments on Pixel 16, but given that you've taken the rest of the year off to recharge the mental batteries, a very good idea for anyone IMHO, I thought I could take some time to respond properly.

You could actually consider your LoC to be, instead of a little late, astonishingly early. But that's because David is still charging, and because it takes me a while to overcome inertia. And, so, here we are.

Lee Lavell, we must not forget our roots indeed, and SF histories and fanhistories are more and more important by the year. The obit column in Locus, Ansible and other publications are constant reminders that we are aging, and

that those of us who have stood by our SF to enjoy it and preserve it must now step forward to not only preserve it further, but to revive it and make their own mark to make it relevant once again.

I certainly agree that letterhacking is an artform. I try to make each letter relevant and complementary to what is said in the fanzine, and an attempt to make the zine start the conversation, and have the loc carry it on. With time constraints, sometimes the remarks are off the top of the head, but I do attempt some thought and reflection, plus some news, personal news and perhaps a bit of humour or irony. Some would say a very little bit.

Spoilsports, all of them. We do what we can do, and what pops up is that we're fine with that. If there are criticisms, okay, but they taste better if shaped with a bit of wit.

Christopher J. Garcia - An Alien Conspiracy? Intrepid reporter John Purcell looks into this strange phenomenon, and reveals hidden facts about this strangest of the strange...details at 11 after the football game...

All done for the nonce. Enjoy your fall and winter and Christmas and New Year, David, and I look forward to seeing you recharged and seeing what sparks fall onto *Pixel* 17. Take care, and I look forward to your return.

The sparks have fallen on *Pixel* 17, and it really sparkles. I'm not certain what's sparkling, but it might be that it's on fire.

Janine Stinson <tropicsf at earthlink dot net>

I've had Pixels 10-15 sitting on my hard drive for months now. Many apologies for not locking sooner.

#10: Thanks for running my response to the Redmond Affaire with Ted's column. Also appreciated Peter Sullivan's mention of PN for the FAAn Awards for 2006, but there are better fanzines than mine, as the results showed.

I view the way it works this way: You're happy with what you do, and obviously other fans are, also. Anything else is a natural byproduct of review and criticism and the annual popularity contest (which all, by rights, should in theory ultimately serve to modestly help upgrade the overall quality), and in a distant third for attention if those two ... uh ... happy factors are in place. And let's cast a statue in bronze to honor Diversity. Fanzines coming from all over. Good finds are everywhere. The sky's the limit. Throw the canary another seed.

#11: Lee Lovell voices several of the things I've wondered about. When driving, I'm apt to speak to tailgaters of my car (even though the drivers can't hear me) with advice such as, "Mister, if you're in that much of a hurry, you shoulda left 20 minutes ago" or "Wench, get off my bumper or you're get to see me a lot closer than you want to!" Other, less polite mutterings have been uttered as well, to stupid people doing dangerous things with large metal objects on wheels. But I must also constantly remind myself that rushing about is bad for my health. So, some get caught up in others' mad dashes, I'd say. Thanks for the reminder.

Eric Mayer's cat physics was not only greatly amusing to read, but I much admire Brad Foster's illustration of them. Sigh. One of these days, when I have more \$\$, I'll have to buy a Foster original. His computer-aided art just gets better and better.

#13: Lee Lavell: I have no idea how you could have written that article about your eye surgery with your head down. Did you dictate it to someone who typed it up? I do hope the bubble has dispersed by now and you've got no lasting cricks in your neck. And that chair does look damned uncomfy.

RE: "Wither Fandom?" -- Ted White quotes from the conversation between Dave Locke and Eric Mayer, "Writing faanish articles isn't good practice for writing anything other than faanish articles -- in fact, if you have in the back of your mind any ambition to write professionally, fanwriting is almost certainly a bad idea."

Yet in John Purcell's Askance 3, Eric comments in a loc about that Locke-Mayer conversation, "... I got a little sloppy talking about fanwriting and was saying how I didn't think fanwriting was good practice for other sorts of writ-

ing, but in that regard I was primarily thinking about the sort of fanwriting that uses jargon or aims at faanish interests in particular." Eric then goes on to describe how he recycled several of the articles he wrote originally for fanzines -- articles about his mundane life -- and sold them to mundane magazines. Since Eric's loc appeared two months after Ted's column, perhaps what Ted wrote had something to do with Eric's *Askance* loc?

Possibly, but when Eric's letter or Ted's column were composed might not have much to do with when they appeared.

Chris Garcia sure is living the life of Riley: plays cards with his co-workers, does his fanzine at work, sharpens his verbal sniping skills on colleagues and friends. I understand there's a certain attraction to the kind of verbal sparring he recounts, and I guess I'm just too sensitive to appreciate its more razor-like examples.

#14: "Notes from Byzantium" -- I've done my share of falling down in the last few years, mostly due to exhaustion when I didn't know I had it or uneven patches of soil in my back yard. I would love for someone to invent a suspensor field generator like the one Frank Herbert invented for the Baron Harkonnen in *_Dune_*. Sort of a baby walker for older folk, but without the tray and wheels. The disappearance of honeybees has a name now (CCD) but I can't remember what the breakout is, only that it's something like Chronic Colony Disease. I've seen lots of honeybees in my yard this summer, which is a heartening thing, and I let my yard grow pretty much what it chooses to grow, which includes a lot of plants others would call weeds but which the honeybees seem to like a lot.

Lee Lavell: Your argument about skin pigment for *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals make all kinds of sense. But, of course, the lighter-skinned folk wrote most of the books on human species, so it's not such a surprise they chose to depict *H. sapiens* looking like themselves. How very... white...of them. <grin> Makes me wonder if any professional archaeologists or anthropologists ever put forth a similar viewpoint in print.

"The Wisdom of the Jewish-Zen Buddhist Monk" had me laughing, so thanks for including it. A day that goes by where I don't laugh is a day closer to the sloughs of despond, and I don't wanna go back there, no-sir.

While reading Ted White's clever slice-of faanfic in thish, I realized that the current discussions about what fanwriting is were very familiar: they are very like the discussions fandom has had several times over the definition of science fiction. This is something that more learned pundits than me have likely already noted, but there you are.

#15: Lee Lavell's concerns about police procedures and investigatory policies piqued my interest. In homicides, looking for suspects who are close to the victim(s) is, as far as I know, taught in criminology classes which police officers are required to attend as part of their training. Statistics can and do reinforce investigatory techniques, sometimes to the detriment of catching the actual culprit, but it's wise to remember that the stories ones hears about via the news media are but a drop in the bucket compared to the overall number of homicides. Though I'm not a regular watcher of the "Law and Order" TV shows (the original and the spinoffs), I've seen several episodes where the original focus was on someone close to the victim, and the investigation later led to someone unknown

to the victim as the actual perpetrator. Bureaucracies move ponderously, but perhaps in the coming years police academies will begin training officers to rely less heavily on statistics and follow the trail that the evidence leaves.

Peter Sullivan took on a Herculean task by reviewing a month's worth of *The Drink Tank*; the column could have been longer if Chris had had more time to knock out a few more issues. I confess I can't keep up with the Garcia energy plant, and so sample its offerings from time to time, as my reading schedule allows. If Hugos were awarded on energy expended, Chris would have landslide victories.

Robert Lichtman <[robertlichtman at yahoo dot com](mailto:robertlichtman@yahoo.com)>

Hope you're having a good time *not* keeping up with a monthly publishing schedule. What are you doing with yourself to fill those empty hours? Are you still in eAPA?

For a value of "your" which equals "him", the other Dave guy. I can answer part of the question, that Dave and Eric and myself all left eApa about two years ago. Me, I left *all* three of my apas at that time, but rejoined Flap when Gary Grady and Jodie Offutt and Carolyn Doyle started beating up on me, telling me I couldn't.

The "Martian bluff" photo from NASA on the front cover of *Pixel* No. 16 looks for all the world like it could have been taken in the American southwest. It's a lovely shot, well-reproduced, no matter what the planet of origin.

In his column Eric Mayer writes, "Mary has the distinction of being the last person on earth to be using Windows 3.11," and goes on to describe the various problems atten-

dant with such a dubious distinction. He doesn't say how old her computer is, but given the dramatic decrease in the cost of new computers in recent years it seems to me that it might be time to give up on hers and bite the bullet for a replacement—which might best be a second-hand (but much newer) computer running Windows XP since one hears various horror stories about Vista.

Beyond that, though, I could relate personally to Mary's "distinction," because before I got my current computer in the waning days of 2000 I was perhaps the last person on the planet running DOS 2.1. Given the 640K of RAM and giant 20MB hard disk on that computer, it was never very likely that I'd use it to go on-line—and indeed back in the years running up to replacing it I lamented how so many of my former paper correspondents had abandoned their printers and allowed their envelope-addressing and stamp-licking skills to atrophy. But once I got on-line myself at work and the world of e-mail, the Web and the earliest of the current crop of "lists" was opened up to me, I could see *why* and it was only a matter of time before I took the giant step of bringing the internet home.

My current line in the sand is over paper fanzines and my intention to continue doing them until something completely prices me out of the system—either sudden personal poverty or postal rate increases too draconian to stomach. So far I've been supporting *Trap Door* by selling off old fanzines and am able to afford the cost of my various apas. Given the slow decline of those apas as long-time members pass away and few step forward to replace them, it's possible that they may pass into history before my need to economize causes me to drop them. An alternative that's occasionally discussed is taking them to electronic form, but so far there's no consensus on doing so.

The increase in costs, and the ever-present labor intensiveness of it all, put me out of deadtree publishing many years ago. The last issue of *Time and Again*, #2, was done in September of 1986 via midnight requisition on the xerox at work. And mailing costs alone still made it too expensive.

Like Lee Lavell, I'm very fond of Fredric Brown's *What Mad Universe*—it's without a doubt the single SF book I've reread the most—and would love to see a movie made from it. But rather than “update” its context I believe it could be filmed as a period noir piece, perhaps even in black and white, something which has worked successfully for movies of many genres. That might limit its potential “blockbuster” appeal but it would be more satisfying to those who romanticize various aspects of the past. I don't think the universe of pulp magazines is entirely forgotten.

I'm a Big Time Fred Brown fan in much the same way that you are. Although I liked *What Mad Universe*, I do consider it the least of his SF novels. I think his best-written SF was *The Mind Thing*, although personally the one I found most enchanting was *Martians, Go Home*.

In his letter John Purcell takes the romantic view: “I honestly don't think we'll ever see another Willis or Tucker, Burbee, Laney, Shaw, Carr, etc. They were all wonderful individuals who added their distinctive voices to the fannish mix through the printed medium of their times.” On the contrary, we may not see those specific voices but we'll have others come down the pike who will be just as good and just as individual as those John lists.

In fact, in my view we already do and have—fan writers such as Dave Langford, Graham Charnock and Greg Pickersgill, to name just the first few that come to mind. To close off recognition and appreciation of them is to devalue their potential contributions.

I like, or liked, many of the names listed, and agree with you that others of equal value will tumble down the chute. For that matter, I think there are a lot more names from the past that could go up on the list.

John Purcell <j_purcell54 at yahoo dot com>

Well, David, I can certainly understand how you feel about being burned out by producing a monthly zine. After a while it does start taking on the characteristics of work or requiring more effort than usual as self-imposed deadlines loom. This is how I started to feel with *In a Prior Lifetime* and ...and furthermore, but I also had my doctoral work slapping me on the back of the head, reminding me that there were other more pressing needs that required my attention. By all means, take a break. We shall still be here.

He likes the break so much, he's still on it.

So onward I go into a few comments on the sixteenth *Pixel*. For instance, I had no idea that Claude Monet had cataracts. My wife, being an artist who took some courses in this subject years ago, probably knew this, but I never did. It is an interesting theory that his failing eyesight contributed to the vivid colors and imagery of his later works,

and it makes perfect sense to me. Monet is one of my favorite impressionist painters, and when I think about this, I can see - sorry for the pun (oh, no, I'm not!) - what Michael Marmor is getting at. The paintings of Degas are likewise explained by his deteriorating vision, and knowing this information gives me more appreciation of these artists and what they were trying to do given the limitations of their physical sense of sight, thus using their artistic vision for expression.

When Eric explains how the writer's vision colors the way the writer's story is told, that likewise makes sense. A writer will usually work with what he or she knows best, and if that happens to be their personal perceptions of reality, then so be it. The end result may be story endings that are familiar and predictable, but still they may not adversely affect the enjoyment of the stories. When a writer - like a painter, composer, or performer - attempts to reach beyond what they are familiar with, seeking new expression or deeper meanings, that is when a work becomes, I guess, truly "new." I have always liked it when a favorite writer or performer of mine moves onward, rejecting formulaic structure, trying new means of expression. This is probably what I loved the most about the Beatles, for example, back in the mid and late 60s; they were constantly breaking new ground. The Rolling Stones, in contrast, while still good and a lot of fun to listen to, kind of were stuck in an r&b rut; I liked it, but not as much as the music the Beatles produced. Along these lines, maybe what Eric and Mary need to do with their stories is try to "break the mold" they created with Brother John, and have him do something a bit different, but still solidly in character.

Geez, look at what I'm doing here: making writing sug-

gestions to a published author when I haven't even read any of his books yet! Only in fanzines... But it is still an interesting discussion topic.

Speaking of writers, I like Fredric Brown's stories; Ghu only knows how many versions of "Arena" have been adapted and produced over the last few decades. It has been a long time since I read *What Mad Universe*, and I believe I shall take Lee Anne Lavelle's advice and re-read it. So add another book to the "to be read" shelf. Just last night I started in on *Heavy Planet*, that Tor collection of Mesklin stories by Hal Clement. The first one is, naturally, *Mission of Gravity*, and I'm enjoying it. Fun stuff. Reading the classic works in SF is always a good thing to do, I doth believe.

In his loc, Eric Mayer says that he values "spontaneity in fanzines," and I agree. I also don't expect perfection in fanzines, although the technology available right now can make a zine look pretty damned close to it! Writing is so subjective anyway, and that's the way it should be. What one person likes, another will hate or even be ambivalent about what has been read. So be it. Fanzines are kind of like planned spontaneity, in a sense, but sometimes really nutty stuff develops on its own therein, and that is what makes being a fanzine fan fun. Cons are quite enjoyable that way, too. The unexpected moment makes the convention memorable and makes attending so worth the effort.

Lloyd Penney says that he wants us to be like the picked heads on *Futurama*. Well, I don't know about that... Can you just imagine a convention panel with a bunch of jars lined up on a table, filled with talking heads? Yeesh! A bit spooky, if you ask me.

By the way, I love the Talking Heads. Great music.