

Time and Again



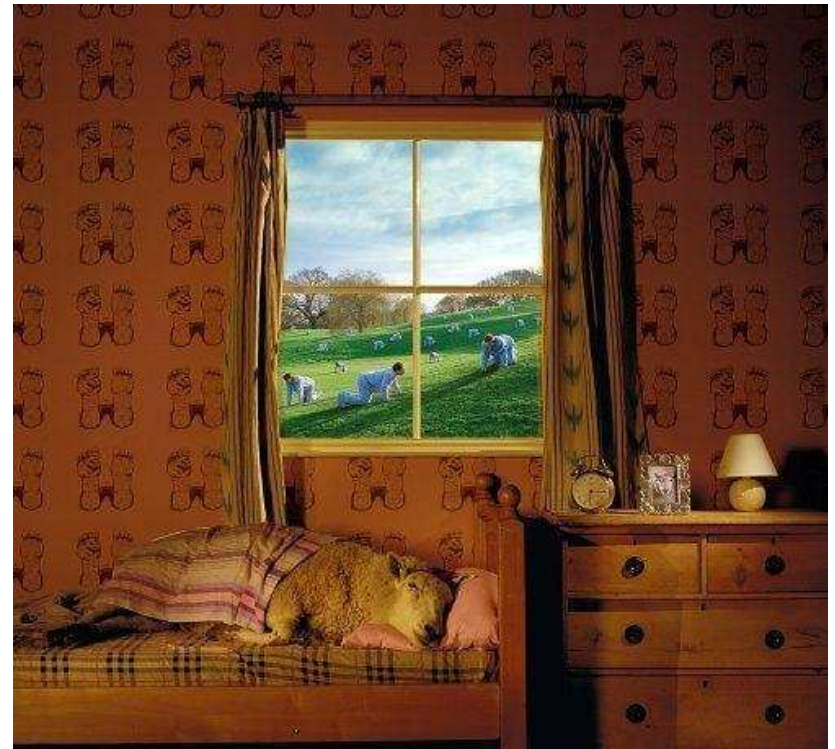
Time & Again #10

October 2009

This genzine comes right at you from **Dave Locke**, who lives in Pownal, Vermont but can be reached by electrons at [time3again at gmail dot com](mailto:time3again@gmail.com).

Eric Mayer provides advice and kicks the editor in the ass when needed. **Bill Burns** provides a place to announce and store *Time & Again* <<http://efanzines.com/TAA/index.htm>> and regularly dusts all back issues.

The old joke here is that the title is also the schedule, but just for fun we'll say that the deadline on incoming material for issue #11 is the end of November.



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- 5/7/11 - photos by **Curt Phillips**
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DIABOLOGIC

editorial by **Dave Locke**

Fandom has been around since the 1930s. It's a social group which swings from a love, or former love, of science fiction. The playing ground is largely the written word. Since the Internet we've shifted away from the dead-tree product use of paper for correspondence, we let mailing lists and/or Usenet into our hearts and let the paper Apa recede into the background, and we grimly hang onto paper fanzines or we abandon them gleefully for digital fanzines which free us from the drudge and expense of printing and assembling and mailing, just as email frees us from the same. But it's still the fields of words that we're so often playing on. There's now just less between our applying the words and reading them. We've the capacity to instantly exchange the written word. Just hit the Send button, and forget all that other stuff like stamps and paper and delivery time.

I think we have to be careful here to avoid circling the argument of the excluded middle in what we read -- considering only the two extremes in a range of possibilities.

On the one extreme you've got the insularity of many local fan clubs. The clubs develop their own syntality, as does any group, and how you feel about one is strictly an interaction of style.

On the other extreme you've got the fan historians, the fan history buffs, and also many who define fandom narrowly so that they have the appearance of being a fan history buff, though really what they have is a specialized expertise.

In the vast excluded middle you've got those who have specialized expertise but don't pretend to be fan history buffs. Like me, and most fans of my acquaintance. They follow their interests,

and they pick up on a lot of things outside their specific interests, but those interests don't include picking up on everything about fan history simply for its own sake. Not that there's anything wrong with being a fan history buff, despite that some would think so.

For example, I could tell you a fair amount about the history of the Petard Society for the two years before I joined it in '68 and the few years it existed after I moved away from the LArea in '80, because I was interested in knowing that. On the other hand, what I've picked up about the Cincinnati Fantasy Group's history has been in passing; I haven't sought it out because I don't care



all that much about it. A nice group of folks, but the meetings didn't do much for me.

I can tell you a lot about fan history as seen through the writings of such as Charles Burbee, Bob Tucker, and Robert Bloch, because I found their writings very interesting and memorable.

Of course, they weren't writing history. Not at the time.

It's the same with mundane history. A good writer can make history come alive and be compelling. A James Loewen or a Will Durant can do that. Most cannot.

I think with most people, including fans, they'll learn more about what interests them in particular even if the process of doing so is a dead bore, and otherwise they'll encounter interesting first-hand accounts of other venues and other times because of their specific interest in the wordwhipping talents of the authors involved. It seems to be the way things work for the vast excluded middle and, alas, it makes me feel almost mundane to be numbered among them...

I've always felt that fanzines were a product best served warm



and enjoyed at the moment. Sometimes the mere character and quality of zines would appeal to me, and other times what was most appealing was that they were done by friends and good acquaintances. The value of occasionally Looking Back, for me, lay entirely wrapped in the warm cloak of nostalgia. Good things once read, good people either once known or known in their younger incarnations.

Again, just as one fan continuing with my own take on it, the big appeal of fanhistory was where it intersected with the activities I was part of at the time and the people I knew Back Then. While I couldn't help soaking up more fanhistory in almost five decades, some of it interesting for its own sake, per se there is little appeal in it. I gave Harry Warner's ALL OUR YESTERDAYS a bad published review when it came out; it told me far more than I wanted to know about the minutia of something which, once cold, had no appealing taste in gourmand proportions. I was unable to get into any other book of fan history that's been written for the same reason: a failure to make history interesting, to make it come alive. A lack of interest in it for its own sake.

Yet in the mailing lists and in other places online I've been happy enough to write up my remembrances of the Petard Society, of Dean Grennell and Charles Burbee and Lon Atkins and other fans I've known quite well. I've tried to make it interesting, other than strictly on the level of being fanhistory, for the fans this kind of thing doesn't resonate with.

I probably represent the average fan's interest in the topic. Not no interest, not a great deal of interest, but I can get interested enough to participate on a personal experience level. And others can write well enough to make their personal anecdotes and remembrances appealing.

Fan history, as with fanwriting of most any kind, can be interesting but not simply because of the subject matter. It has to be interesting writing, about interesting things.

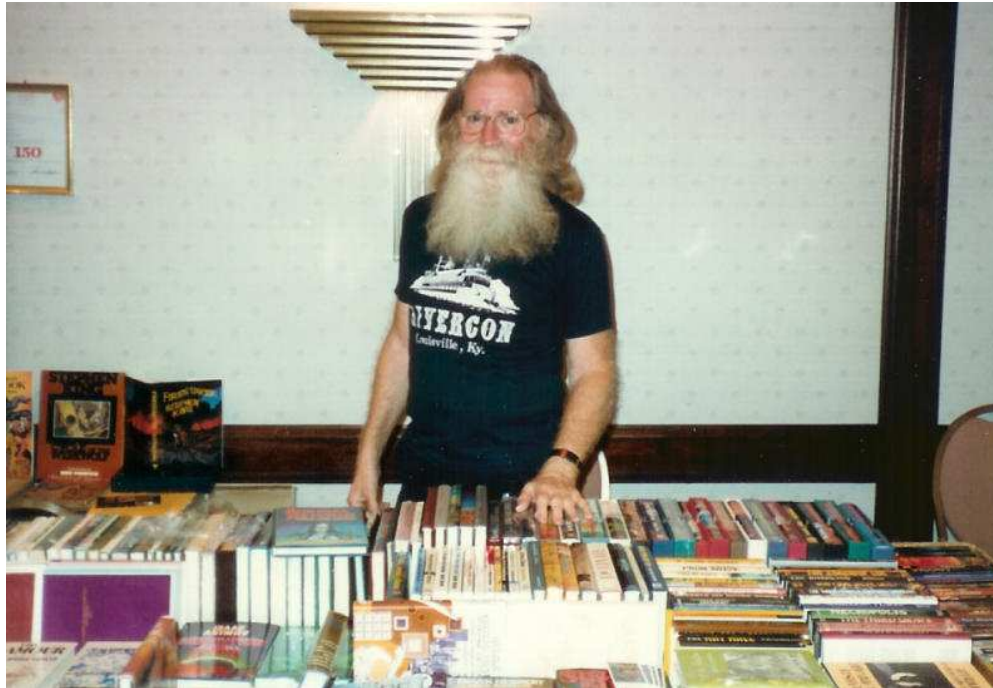


paying it forward

One of the many flaws of human beings is that we tend not to tell the people we care about that they're important to us until they're gone from this world and beyond the point where our thoughts can make any difference in their lives. We're really just sharing our grief when we write that kind of tribute, but that's something that only really helps those of us who are left behind. There's nothing wrong with that, and I'll confess that I do have the hope that after I'm gone, somebody somewhere will be willing to speak up and say about me, "yeah, I guess he wasn't all *that* bad..." But I digress.

I have a friend and he's important to me and I'd like to tell you something about him. His name is James Hevelin, but you know him as "Rusty".

Rivercon 1980, Louisville, Kentucky. My second SF convention and first big road trip, and I was slowly making my way around what would turn out to be one of the best dealer's rooms I'd ever see at any SF convention. At this far remove I only vaguely recall the details; lots of stuff, lots of books. Probably a lot of



books I'd have bought then if I'd known how good they were, but I was still pretty green as far as being a science fiction collector goes. I think I spent most of the convention in that dealer's room, exploring, examining various volumes, and trying to learn whatever I could. The most important thing I'd learned at that point was that there was an awful lot I needed to learn. "Here I am wanting to collect science fiction magazines and I don't even know how to find out all of the titles!" I said aloud to myself in frustration.

"I bet I can help you with that," came a voice from across the dealer's table I happened to be standing at. I looked up in surprise at an older fellow with graying hair, a large white beard, and deep eyes. "Do you know something about old pulp magazines?" I asked. The fellow shrugged. "A little, I guess. I've read and collected them for a while. What are some of your favorite writers and stories so far, and we can start from there." And with that, Rusty Hevelin took me under his wing a little and started teaching me a little bit about how to explore the world of pulp magazine collecting.

I wouldn't say that Rusty and I bonded instantly on that first meeting. He was friendly but very laid back and a little reserved, but it was instantly clear that he perfectly understood my passion for collecting science fiction. He was a little older than my parent's generation but unlike my parents, he understood why those books and magazines were important to me without my having to say a word about it – and I knew this after talking with him only a short time. I think Rusty may have been the first person I'd ever met – inside fandom or out – of whom that was true. There'd be others later, but Rusty was the first. I bought a few books and magazines from him and asked how he determined the prices on older pulp magazines. He gave me an old Bob Madle catalog that listed many other magazines I'd never heard of before and explained that while he didn't necessarily price his stock exactly the same way that Bob did, he was able to use it as a general guideline. Doing that myself over the next few years proved helpful to me and also taught me quite a lot about the magazines themselves. I'd look for Rusty in the dealer's room at conventions from then on and he always had some interesting books to show me and sell me, but I think I looked forward more to the continuity of seeing him at the conventions for our conversations about books and old SF. It was obvious that other book collectors valued Rusty's advice too and I met several other great collectors by hanging around at Rusty's dealer's table. He's set up as a dealer at a great many conventions over the years but I suspect that Rusty views bookselling at cons much as I do; it's the best possible way to meet all of the people at any given convention who like books. I'm sure that Rusty enjoys being able to pay his convention expenses with book sales as much as I do, but I've

seen him give away books for free to kids who seemed bright enough to appreciate finding just the right book at just the right time in their lives. I've seen him do that more than once too. For a while there in the 80's and 90's it seemed as if Rusty attended every convention, and in fact he once told me that he'd attended 30 conventions in whatever year it was at that time. I remember thinking that it would be a great way to spend your life to travel around to SF conventions selling books and doing pretty much exactly what you wanted to. I don't know if Rusty thought of it in quite those terms, but it was clear that he enjoyed the travel and the conventions greatly, and he impressed me as a man who had figured out a great way to live his life.

Rusty was also a familiar convention panelist in those years too. He did a lot of "*History of Science Fiction*" panels and "*History of Fandom*" panels – these last often with his "*grandson*" sidekick Bob Tucker. Whenever I'd see that Rusty and Bob were both going to be at a particular convention I'd always make an extra effort to attend. No convention with those two fellows in attendance was ever a dull convention. Rusty doesn't care for making formal speeches but I've often seen him pressed into service as a banquet toastmaster or to introduce some other speaker and have never seen him stumped for some joke or quip or funny story to warm up the room for the speaker. And he actually does do a pretty good speech when he can't get out of it as I found when I saw his DUFF Report – which was a live narrated slide show that he performed at several conventions in the years following his DUFF trip to Australia. I believe that Rusty made that trip in 1975; the year that Tucker invented "Smoothing" on the long plane ride over the Pacific. I have no doubt that Rusty was

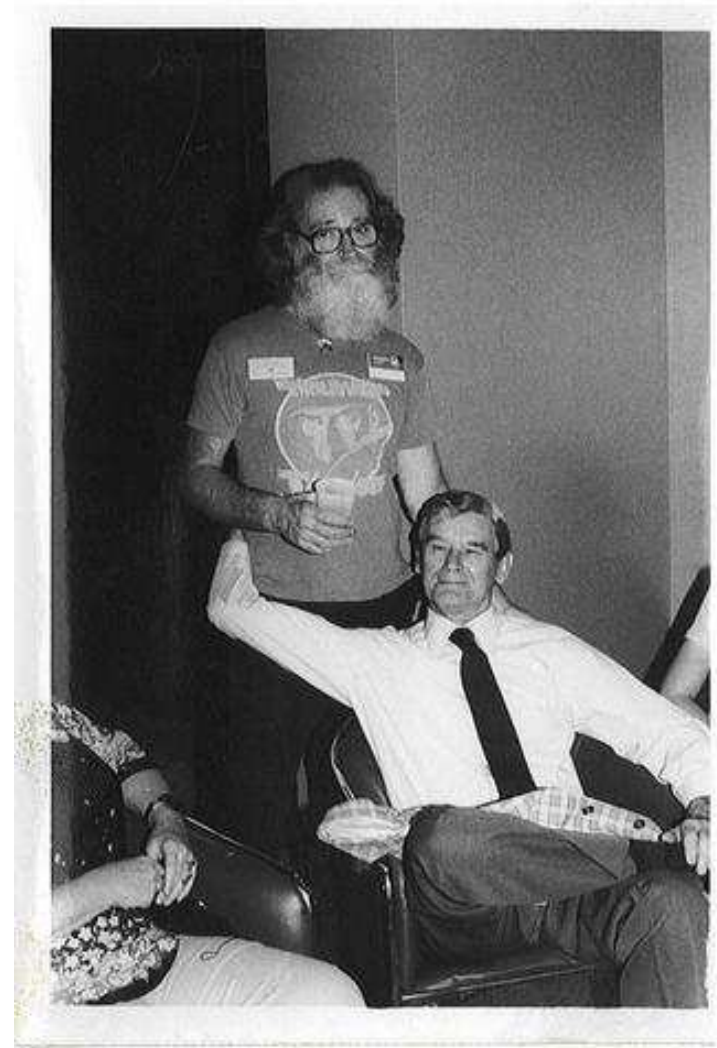
right there at Tucker's elbow making sure that Bob didn't spill any drinks as the air miles rolled away.

One day at some convention somewhere – I can't recall where – while we were talking about pulps and where to find them Rusty stopped mid-sentence and said to me, *"you know, Curt; you really ought to go to Pulpcon."* *"Pulpcon?"* I replied. *"What's that?"*

"Well", he said slowly. "Imagine a convention dealer's room with 100 or so tables, with every single table piled high with pulp magazines and nothing but pulp magazines. Maybe 100,000 or more pulps all together in one room." Yeah, I thought to myself. Do I look that gullible? There can't be that many pulp magazines left in the whole world... But still, maybe I should go and have a look at this *"Pulpcon"*...

Rusty Hevelin didn't invent pulp fandom but he was the one who seems to have first recognized that the earliest pulp convention (Pulpcon 1; St. Louis, 1972) was headed towards complete assimilation with the then exploding comics fandom. Rusty was - as I've mentioned - a very active SF convention Fan at the time and recognized that the infant pulp fandom could really use a guiding hand to keep it focused on pulps and not just to allow it to become submerged in the general nostalgia fad that was sweeping America in the early 70's. And so he became involved in helping with the early Pulpcons and took the convention over completely within a few years as the original people realized that running a convention was Hard Work when all they really wanted to do was collect pulps. Right from the start there were constant pressures from a few attendees – dealers for the most part - to add comics, trading cards, movies memorabilia, western

collectables, porn magazines, and other collectables to the Pulpcon dealer's room. Rusty took the position that it would be best for the pulp magazine hobby to *"keep Pulpcon all*



about the pulps” and banned all those other items from Pulpcon dealer tables. There were already many other conventions or shows for comics, movie memorabilia and all those other things, and Rusty – as he explained to me and to anyone else who asked him – felt that if he allowed the dealers to bring in those other items to Pulpcon it would a) decrease the room available to display pulps on the tables, and b) dilute the focus and impact of what Pulpcon was organized to do. I thought then and I think now that he was exactly right about that. Most of the dealers and attendees approved of Rusty’s policy. We know this because at every Pulpcon that Rusty ran there was an open business meeting where the topic of opening Pulpcon up to all that other stuff was raised - usually by the exact same people year after year. Rusty would hear them out and then call for a vote from that year’s membership. Every such vote that I ever witnessed or heard about later overwhelmingly supported Rusty’s policy. But the big-money boys - the dealers and speculators who tortured themselves with the idea that they could all be making a lot more money if they could have their way with Pulpcon - were persistent and kept raising the issue year after year.

Pulpcon 1991, Dayton Ohio. So there I was in a walnut paneled meeting room at the University of Dayton in Ohio attending Pulpcon 1991, and found myself standing in a room with the heavenly smell of slowly decaying sulfite pulp paper wafting from well over 100,000 pulp magazines and I was ready to crown Rusty as the King of Fandom for talking me into attending. Rusty was almost a one-man convention committee and was in constant motion supervising every as-

pect of that very nearly perfect convention. Pulpcon was very much Rusty’s convention and was run the way he thought a convention should be run. I loved it, because that turned out to be very much the way I thought a convention should be run. That 1991 Pulpcon was my first and I can testify that the impact of entering that dealer’s room with table after table of nothing but pulp was magnificent. It ranks as one of my favorite single moments at any convention ever, and Rusty Hevelin made it possible for me. I hope you can imagine how I felt from my description because unless you attended one of the old Pulpcons you’ll probably never have that experience for yourself. I’ll get back to this point a bit later.

As I said, there were those who felt that they could be making more money at Pulpcon if they were allowed to sell whatever they wanted to at the convention. They had “an audience” with cash in hand, and these guys wanted to move product. That was about the limit of their motivation. There were also a few pulp fans – mostly the younger ones of roughly my age – who felt that pulp fandom was doomed to die out unless we “*did something*” to broaden the appeal of Pulpcon. Much of that something seemed to involve opening up the dealer’s room to some of the forbidden areas of collectibles, and in finding other new ways of bringing in larger crowds. I was part of that wave having joined PEAPS (The Pulp Era Amateur Press Society founded by long-time SF Fan Lynn Hickman) with its first mailing. Within a year I became the OE of PEAPS and I suppose for that reason I was invited to a closed room meeting at that Pulpcon. At that meeting were several younger pulpfans and professional dealers, some of them among the most active pulpfans of today.

None were from SF fandom except me. *"Here's the thing,"* the organizer said. *"Rusty's policies are killing Pulpcon. He's stifling us, not letting us grow. We could easily double or triple the size of the next Pulpcon if we were only allowed to change Rusty's policies but he's determined to stop us. If we in this room unite and start organizing an opposition we can..."*

"Stop right there," I said. *"You've made your first big mistake by inviting me to this meeting. I've known Rusty for years from SF fandom and I can see - even if you guys can't - that none of us would even be here today at this Pulpcon if it hadn't been for Rusty and his policy of keeping the convention focused on its topic. He is one of the most experienced people in the world with SF conventions and fandom, and it seems to me that he's done exactly the right thing all these years. Rusty is also my friend and I support him completely and I don't want to be part of any of this Rusty-bashing you're doing."* And I walked out. None of those fellows have ever spoken to me about the matter since that day.

It was three years later before I mentioned any of this to Rusty early one morning at a convention when he and I were having a private talk while opening up the dealer's room. He just smiled and said, *"I knew all about it"*, and then he named every other person at that meeting. *"Are you worried about that group, Rusty?"* I asked. *"No"*, he replied. *"It's always the same people every year agitating for change. I keep calling for a vote each year and they keep getting voted down, so I'll just keep on as I've been doing. Eventually Pulpcon will have to change as us old guys die off, but till then I guess we'll keep going on in the way that the majority of the Pulpcon audience tells me they want it to continue; at least until they tell me differently or I get too old to run the convention myself."*

And that's how it stood for the rest of the 90's and into the new century. But as he predicted, Rusty's age and health began to fail him and so he took in some helpers to run Pulpcon. Dayton had and has no fannish community. If it had then things might have been different because Rusty would have had others to call upon to become involved with running Pulpcon. I once toyed with the idea of moving there myself and getting involved; Pulpcon in its glory years was that good. I could have played a role in preventing what happened next. But it would have meant so many changes for my family... Well, I let the thought drift away as impractical. I sometimes wonder what might have happened if it had been possible. Anyway, the obvious people for Rusty to call on were those close to Ohio who'd been helping with various aspects of the convention already. I won't name their names here. Those folks aren't and weren't part of any Fandom that the readers of *TIME & AGAIN* would know, though they seemed like good people, mostly. The trouble was that they weren't really pulp fans either. They were a combination of well-intentioned friends and neighbors and people who had their own interests to pursue. They were probably the best people that Rusty had available to turn Pulpcon over to, but within just a few years it became obvious that they weren't nearly good enough, and so Pulpcon began having troubles and eventually fell apart. Three of the Committee members broke away just before the end and founded a new pulp convention this past year called Pulpfest. It wasn't a Pulpcon, but from what I've been told the last few Pulpcons weren't really Pulpcons either. I attended and had a great time, but the convention was marred – for me at least – by the absence of the one person who should have been there as a

Guest of Honor, Rusty. From talking with the Pulpfest Committee I knew that Rusty would have been welcomed with open arms from them and from being among the audience I knew that many of them felt as I did; that there was a Rusty Hevelin sized hole in the soul of our convention. I called Rusty several times that Saturday night hoping that I might talk him into agreeing to allow me to drive from Columbus to Dayton to pick him up and bring him to the convention the next day for our Sunday morning banquet, but I never got an answer. I wish he'd answered that phone. We needed him at that convention to remind us of some important things about our pulp magazine hobby and about ourselves.

It bothers me considerably to think that Rusty Hevelin might not get his due recognition for all that he's done for many decades for fandom – particularly pulp magazine fandom. I'm convinced that his basic Pulpcon policy was a sound one and that it largely established modern pulp fandom all by itself simply by providing a focal point for pulp fandom. Without Pulpcon there would have been no PEAPS, no Windy City con in Chicago, no PulpAdventurecon in New Jersey; old time pulp professionals like Nelson Bond, Hugh B. Cave, Talmadge Powell, Nelson Nye, Dwight V, Swain, Harry Steeger, Walter Baumhoffer and dozens of others would have probably gone to their graves thinking that their work had been entirely forgotten; and a lot of "new pulp" desk-top publishers happily cranking out product today would have never known that there was a market for their efforts. Instead, Rusty did the largely thankless work of keeping pulp fandom focused and helping to teach them that the real point of pulp fandom or of any fandom isn't found in moldering stacks of old magazines but is instead found within the

other people who recognize and share the interest and passion for the hobby that brought us to the convention in the first place. Most of the guys laughing and sharing a beer in the Pulpfest convention suite last July might not have understood that point that weekend. I hope they come to understand it someday, and to recognize just how much we all owe to Rusty Hevelin.

October 1996, Asheville, NC. A special off-season Pulpcon held in the South to allow veteran pulp writers Nelson Bond and Talmadge Powell to meet pulp fandom and receive their due recognition, just as Rusty had arranged for other pulpsters at other times and places. I was the dealer's room guard at that convention and woke up early on Sunday morning to go to breakfast, but Rusty stopped by just about then to check on things and we fell into conversation. I never did get my breakfast that day, but I got something much better in return; a great conversation with a very good friend. We talked about several small things and a few big things; about Pulpcon and what it had meant to me, and about what it had meant to Rusty. About the people we'd known and about the nature of pulp fandom. About what it all might be like 10, 20, 50 years from that Sunday morning, and about what it was like right then. Rusty told me – when I asked - about his years as a young man during WWII, and though he didn't ask me to keep it confidential it seems appropriate to me to make it so now (suffice it to say that young James Hevelin did his duty in those years well and honorably) because the Rusty Hevelin I know is so far removed from such things that it simply doesn't seem right to think of him that way. Sitting in that large pulproom early on that Sunday morning, talking with my friend as the sun slowly came up over the moun-

tains, it seemed to me that Rusty was the most perfectly “at peace” man I’ve ever met. He has been a part of my life in the world of science fiction and pulp fandom for over three decades now, and I can’t imagine anyone who could have taken his place had he not been there all along. He is a quiet man, but his presence in our lives speaks out loud and clear. He walks through the fannish world with a friendly and gentle smile, taking joy from his friends and returning the same many times over, and always makes sure to let the newest neofan know that he’s welcome in the family of Fandom.

And so I give you my friend and yours, Rusty Hevelin. We could use a lot more like him, but I fear he’s an absolute original. I’m glad that my time in Fandom has coincided with his.



THE POST-CONVENTION BLUES

Len Moffatt

**I walk across the hotel lobby
At the end of another con.
The pros are adding their expenses,
And most of the trufans are gone.
I've signed autographs for the neos,
And I've paid my Worldcon dues.
So now I must roam
Right back to my home...
I've got those post-convention blues!**

**I've been to all the dead dog parties,
And I have raised my share of hell;
Sung bawdy songs with Poul Anderson,
Neville, Garrett, and Pournelle.
I've been seduced by the hucksters;
No more money to spend or lose.
So now I must roam
Right back to my home...
I've got those post-convention blues!**

More Panel Discussions



much nothings about ado

column, by lee lavell

Dramatics Scholastic Act II

I also helped to create the Spring Program for the last year at School 73. Again I was asked to write the “framework” around which the program would be presented. This time all the grades that had not been represented in the Christmas Program were to participate. The Fourth and Fifth Grades would be represented by the choir, the “actors” and the “stagehands” (whom I promised would get full credit for their work). The Primary Grades not in the Christmas Program would be on stage. This time my framework centered around a pair of (non-identical) twins who had had their birthday presents stolen by the Birthday Thief and their attempts to retrieve them with the help of the Wish Detective who had been conjured up when they had accidentally said some magic words. The Birthday Thief had taken the presents into various months of the year so the



twins followed him there with the aid of the Wish Detective’s time machine. Thus as the Twins visited each month a group of children from the various grades, etc. performed something appropriate for that month.

Mostly things went fairly well for this program with two exceptions. The Wish Detective was played by Anthony, now in Fourth Grade, but whom I had taught when he was in First Grade. At that time Anthony had a very specific cry when he was upset for some reason. It sounded much like siren: “oooOOOOooooooooOOOOOOoooo.” A few days before the performance Anthony fell down a flight of stairs at school, shortly before we were going to rehearse. (I was directing the speaking parts.) He was checked out at the office and then came down to rehearsal saying he was alright. Nothing hurt. I told him to be sure to tell me if that changed. Not terribly long afterward he said “My arm is hurting now.” So I rushed him back to the office. As we were on the way I heard him moaning very very quietly “oooOOOOooooooooOOOOOOooo...” It seems he had broken his arm. I figured I had lost one of my “actors” but he was back to school the next day determined not to give up his plum starring role. He did just fine despite having a rather cumbersome cast on one arm.

The other problem came with a first grade room. They were doing November and their presentation was the recitation of a Thanksgiving poem. The poem had several verses and they were doing just fine until they apparently unanimously noticed all

those people out there in the audience. They froze. They had come to the final line of the poem and they just plain stopped, staring with big eyes at the audience. Nothing could get them to utter another word. Dead silence. Their teacher ran out in front of the stage and tried to get them restarted. Nothing. All of us in the wings were hissing the line at them. They were deaf to it. They stood there silent, unmoving, little clockwork figures that had run down. The audience never heard the final line of the poem but they applauded politely anyway. Their teacher was mortified.

How to Be an Expert Without Really Trying

A teacher at one of the schools where I taught once said, “If Lee doesn’t know the answer to something, she has a book that does.” That was essentially true. I do have a LOT of books and I read a lot. Thus my general ignorance is concealed by lots of reference books, this before computers made things so easy to check. I very accidentally became an expert on wine once. I had just finished reading a book on the history, horticulture, varieties and uses of wine, so when a teacher was complaining that she just didn’t understand why the rule for white wine and meat, and red wine and meat and that it seemed arbitrary to her, I explained that one has to think of a wine like a sauce. One uses a delicate tasting white wine with a mild tasting white meat, while reds are the opposite. After that, if a question about wine came up, it was go to Lee and ask.

I have often stated that generally I am a mathematical idiot. However, at one school I was referred to as a mathematical genius. This occurred *because* I am a mathematical idiot. Back in the days before all stats went to computers, every teacher had to turn in a monthly report concerning attendance. This report had to account for every student in the room, whether they were

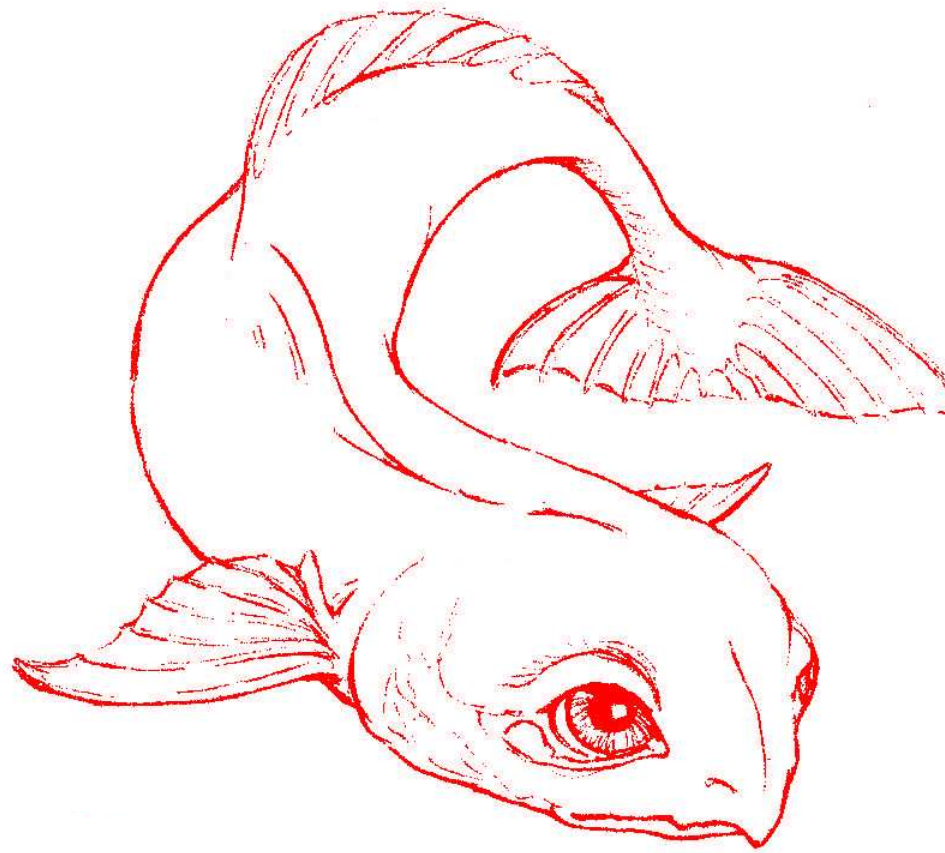
late transfers in or had already transferred out. Then at the end of the school year we had to do the same for the full year. It had to balance and if it didn’t you stayed there until it did. Teachers went crazy during the end of year report. All these lines had to be consolidated so that everything balanced. It was very easy to go off by one absence or presence. And finding the error was a true bitch. I finally devised a checking system that would let me know where my error lay. It really helped me a lot. Then other teachers found out about it and started to come to me for help. I tried to show them my system, but apparently their minds didn’t work the way mine does and they just didn’t get it. So I often spent a great deal of time fixing other teachers reports and consequently barely getting mine finished in time.

This was not the only time I did something just for myself at school and found myself doing it for others as well. At one school we had a lunchtime rotational system, One hour for lunch. Grades 1 to 3 for a half hour lunch and a half hour recess, the grades 4 to 6 had recess first and ate second. The Recess part was where the problem ensued. We had three places to go during Recess: the playground equipment, the blacktop and the gym. This was when the weather was good. When it was bad the outside groups had to stay in their home rooms. The rooms rotated day by day into the various areas. However, one winter we had a lot, and I mean a *lot* of snow days and when we would come back no one could remember where they were supposed to go for recess. So I made myself this little chart that had the days of the week and the areas to go on it. Just a bunch of boxes with Mon. thru Fri and B. E. and G on it, but it worked for me,. Of course, another first grade teacher noticed it and asked for a copy so I duplicated it for her and for the rest of the first grade. Well, the second and thirds grades found out about it so I had to adapt it for those grades, and naturally the Intermediate teachers wanted something for them, too, so I tweaked it some more. The next year I voluntarily made copies for all the teachers. Not

long after that the Principal found out about it and asked for a copy for the Office. I did this voluntarily for several years, when suddenly, it became my particular duty assigned by the office to make it out. On it went. We got a new principal, but all stayed the same until I retired. My principal retired at the same time. I don't know whether someone took over the chart or even if the whole rotational system continued with the new Principal. I never asked.

I have often said I am a computer idiot...very true. However at one time I was considered an "expert." It all came about accidentally. This was back in the days when computers were just coming into the schools so, essentially, all the teachers were computer idiots and had to be given training. After that was over with we were allowed to take our class up to the "Computer Room" for sessions. The children were provided with different discs with educational games: reading, phonics, addition, subtraction, etc. (I was teaching first grade at the time.) I soon found that some of the programs were running too fast for struggling students and too slow for lots of others. The discs offered additional directions so I checked them out and found that there was a way to slow down or speed up the programs, which I did for those who needed it, mumbling to myself that I wished

that they had told us in the training that there were variabilities. I casually griped about this to some of the teachers during a lunch hour and they went into a case of shock. No one else knew this. They were so happy and I became the "computer expert" even though I kept telling them that all I did was read the directions.





PAIN AND BACK AGAIN

DAVE LOCKE

Originally appeared in my perszine *The Works* #1, April 1978. These illos by Jackie Causgrove accompanied the original article.

Tendencies. I have several.

I tend to write more than frequently about my greatest weakness: pain. This might lead one to presume that I have a low tolerance for pain, but you would be led in the wrong direction if you chose to think along those lines. I actually have a very high tolerance, though I do not run around trying to exercise it. Pain just happens sometimes. One can not always avoid it. When encountered, however, there is also a brilliant realization which accompanies it.

Pain hurts.

This is a deep thought which cannot be truly appreciated if you are not firmly trapped within a painful situation; in fact, the encounter with pain must make this thought leap at you as though you had just created it out of whole cloth.

Pain can be considered a weakness in that it has the great capacity to bring you "down" sometimes. One's ultimate defenses are against pain, as its invasion can cause you to lose all control

over the mental processes which make you what you are. If you have a fiery personality, pain can be like a bucket of cold water. If you're "cool", you might suddenly find yourself on fire. No matter what you are, pain can strip you of the ability to be yourself. Sometimes it only chews away at that ability, but sometimes it annihilates it.

As the result of spending a night on the Grennells' daybed, I have learned that pain can be carried to new heights. It occurs to me that I should consider myself extremely fortunate to have had this devastating encounter with their daybed, based on the fact that it has provided me with new fuel to write yet another pain story. How can I be so lucky?

Just lucky, I guess.

As it happened, neither Dean nor I would have to awaken on Friday, November 11th and grundle in to our respective offices; a thought which was pleasingly uppermost in our frontal lobes the day that Dean called here inquiring about the possibility of Jackie

and I and Jean and himself getting together sometime so that we might drink ourselves into oblivion while discussing the general nature of the universe. Everyone apparently thought that possibility to be a jolly good one, and a Thursday night get-together was suitably penned-in on our social calendars. And, due to the holiday which was being thrust upon us, we could even make a night of it. No need to round ourselves up and go many long miles home prior to having a good night's sleep.

Aha, but there was the catch.

We presumed that we would all get a good night's sleep.

Even the best laid plans of nice fens can go awry.

Following a pleasant evening (except for the three-minute period when Dean got carried away and dropped forty-seven puns in unmerciful succession ((which is another pain story all in itself))), the daybed was opened up. We all sleepily watched Jean place a sheet upon it, followed by two small pillows and a blanket. The Grennells then trotted off to their bedroom, and Jackie and I collapsed on the daybed.

It is a most unusual sensation to be rudely jerked into a state of full wakefulness as the result of lying down in bed.

We laid there and stared at each other.

One of us said: "I can feel every single spring in this mattress, and each one is applying a different degree of pressure."

The other said: "I can't live like this."

"I can't sleep like this."

"I can't live like this, let alone sleep."

"I wonder what the Grennells will think when they get up in the morning and find that we're not here?"

In an effort to at all costs avoid offending the hospitality of the Grennells (after all, they are fine people who never beat their children or stock Coors in their refrigerator), we manfully and womanfully tried to adjust to the situation."

"Let's try putting the pillows at the other end of the bed. Maybe it's more comfortable that way." It wasn't.

"Is there anything between us and these springs except this one fitted sheet?" We tried lying on top of the blanket, to see if that was significantly more comfortable. It wasn't.

In hopes of taking our minds off the problem we even considered sex, but couldn't come to an agreement as to which of us would get the desired position of being on top.

Finally, through some fluke of luck, I found myself lying on my stomach with one hand underneath the mattress. This was lucky, you see, because suddenly I realized that it seemed to feel better on the other side of the mattress than it did on the side that we were fighting.

"Stop the presses," I announced (in subdued excitement, to avoid startling the Grennells).

"What?"

I leapt off the bed. "I found it, I found it!"

"Throw it back."

"Quick, get up!"

"We're sleeping on the floor?"

"No. I think the mattress is softer on the other side."

In two seconds we field-stripped the bed and flipped the mattress. It was just a nanosecond to reinstall the sheet and hop back in.

"Wow!" Jackie whispered, loudly.

"What a difference!" I exclaimed.

"Sure is," Jackie said. "It's the difference between pain and discomfort."

We were happy.

The next morning, however, I had to crawl out of bed. Usually I crawl out of bed anyway, because I'm not a morning person and that is my preference, but this time I actually had no choice in the matter. The only way I could get out of bed was to crawl out.

It seems that I had this immense pain under my left shoulder blade.

A small spot of exercise (two pushups, a trot to the bathroom

at three miles per hour, and half of a deep knee-bend) was sufficient to whip the pain into submission. A dull ache replaced it. And took up housekeeping all day Friday.

On Saturday the dull ache decided to move around and see how it liked other parts of my body. It kept moving around from my shoulder blade to my armpit to just above my left breast. Sometimes it was just above my left breast and under my left shoulder blade, as though I had an arrow in me. Or a bedspring.

Sunday was more of the same. A traveling pain. At times I had the suspicion that it was working its way inside my shoulder, perhaps on a scholarship. A day of discomfort. But no big deal. Just an irritation.

Monday was another story. The same plot, but the action got a little heavier as soon as I got into the office, and by noontime I wasn't feeling worth a shit. From there it went downhill.

By 4:30 I could no longer concentrate on my work. Not that I really wanted to anyway, but I was getting paid for it and people expected it of me. However, I chucked the whole thing and went home, but not before making an appointment to see the doctor the next afternoon.

Tuesday wasn't too bad. It was more like Saturday, and I idly wondered if I weren't past the crisis point and mending nicely all by myself, thank you. Well, maybe not, so I went to the doctor anyway.

It was a two-hour appointment. Suddenly I found myself under a diathermy machine, and I was flat on my stomach on one of those terrific vinyl couches (the ones that try to form a blue-bond with your skin). I spent fifteen minutes under that damned thing, with nothing better to do than

just lie there and listen to my bones melt.

Naturally, when the machine shut off no one came in. I pushed it away and got up, put on my shirt, and stood in the hallway waiting to trip up the doctor as soon as he showed up. However, when he showed (in an amount of time sufficient to prove that he was just slightly faster than the Second Coming of Christ), he promptly ushered me into a different examination room and had me lie on my back. On another vinyl table.

"What's my problem?" I asked, as he had me place my left hand on my right shoulder.

"Mmmmmmm," he responded.

"Any idea at all what's wrong?" I inquired, as he had me put my right hand on my left shoulder.

"Well....."

"Yes?" He pulled me slightly forward and to the right.

"I think...."

"Yes?" He had me push my left elbow into his armpit, then stood over me with his hands on my hands. My hands were on my shoulders.

"I think...."

"What?"

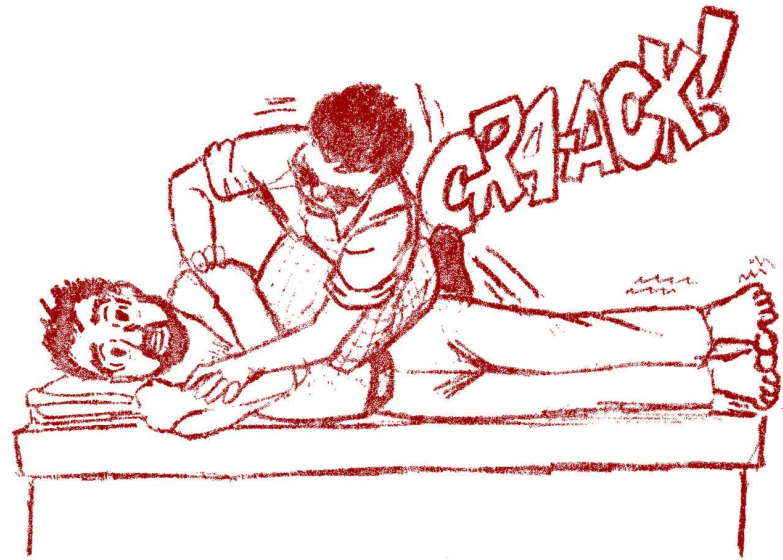
Then the sucker jumped me. He leapt on me while I was lying there on the table. Startled the shit out of me.

And there was this noise. CRACK! I thought it was an earthquake, and the building had split in two.

I laid there while he crawled off my body.

"Aha, we've solved your problem," he told me, smugly.

"You bastard," I said, "you ever



jump me again and I'll solve your problem."

"Nonsense, you had a twisted rib is all. It was canted at a slight angle, and that's what caused the pain to travel around the side of your body. It's back in the right position now, and shouldn't cause you any more discomfort after a day or two."

"You bastard," I said.

"Well, look at it this way," he suggested. "If I told you I were going to put you on that table, pin your hands to your shoulders, and then jump your bones, how cooperative would you have been?"

"Never thought of it like that," I acknowledged.

"Of course not."

"But you're still a bastard."

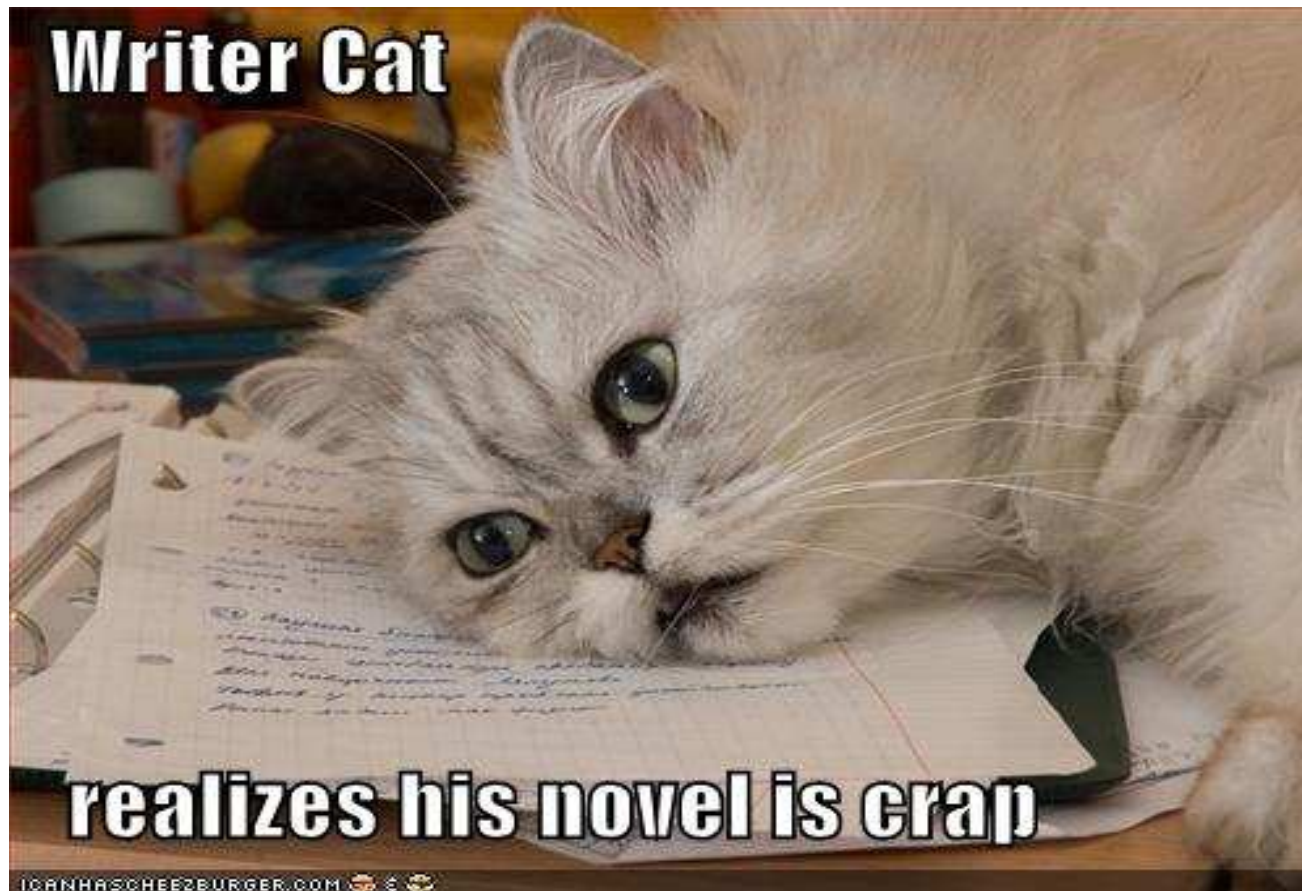
"That's nothing. Wait until you see my bill."

I haven't gotten his bill yet. It won't particularly bother me to receive it, actually, because I do have insurance and the deductible was met a long time ago.

Writing about pain is just one of my tendencies. Like I said: I have several. Writing embarrassing mate-

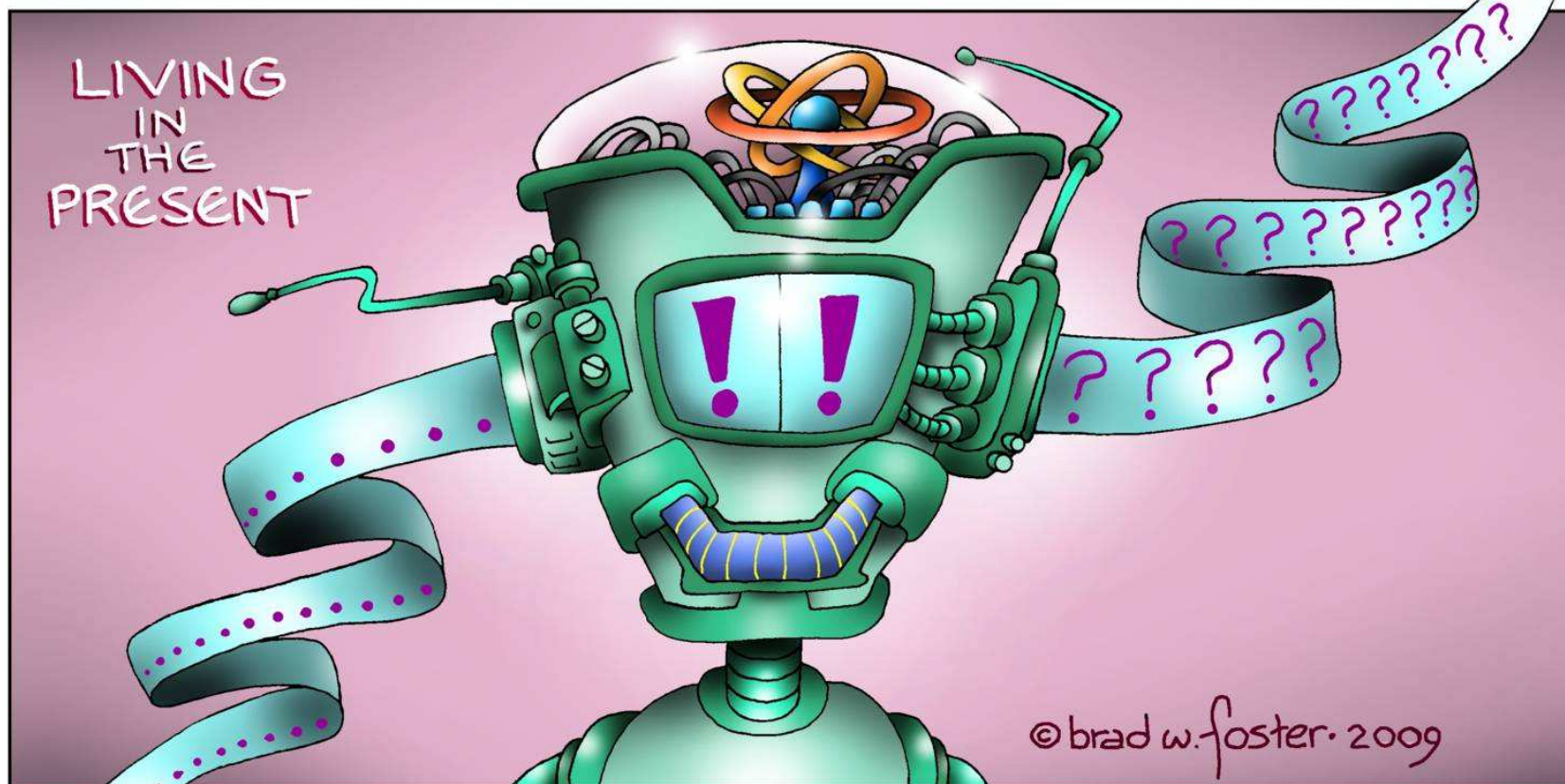
rial about my friends is another one.

Also, I believe that it won't bother me too much if my insurance doesn't cover altercations with a daybed. If that turns out to be the case, you see, I tend to think that I could always send the bill to the Grennells. I'd feel bad about doing it, though, because they really need to save their money for a new daybed.



Notes From Byzantium: Past

Column, by Eric Mayer



The past isn't what it used to be. Not my past. Not for me.

And that makes it hard to come up with topics for fanzine essays. Back in the seventies and early eighties I often wrote about childhood, although not so often as people seem to recall. I thought it made sense. I was only involved in fandom from a dis-

tance, publishing, writing and drawing. I hadn't been to the Worldcon for instance, like other fans, and couldn't write about our shared experience, but we've all been to childhood.

Back then I wasn't uncomfortable searching the years gone by for essay material. But I was in my twenties and thirties. Now

that I'm pushing sixty, writing about my childhood feels too much like the sentimental maundering of the aged.

Not that I don't break down and maunder from time to time. I've always been fascinated by the past. While growing up I read incessantly about the future worlds imagined by science fiction but I was also intrigued by the equally exotic worlds of previous eras. Babylon was no less alien than Barsoom. Roman Siege engines and Tom Swift Jr's Atomic earth blaster were both wonders of technology. And history possessed a quality science fiction lacked -- it actually happened.

I was interested in my own past too, almost before I had one. There's no history closer to hand than our own.

One of my first experiences of personal history involved the child-sized roll-top desk I used to draw at long before I went to school. The top became stuck. I used a bent clothes hanger to fish down the back, into the space where the top should have rolled, and was surprised to pull out ancient artifacts. A plastic soldier whose companions had long since been lost. A stick of Black Jack gum so ancient it was petrified. A badly crumpled and torn sheet of paper bearing a crude drawing of my friendly chipmunk character.

Had I really lived long enough to acquire such a rich history? I thought the whole bag of soldiers had perished in the garden trenches an entire summer before. The drugstore didn't even sell Black Jack gum any more. As for that chipmunk drawing, it was embarrassing juvenilia now that I had moved on to machine-gun wielding squirrels. I could hardly imagine I had once been so unskilled and immature.

How these treasures had fallen into the back of the desk I had no idea. They should have been gone forever, along with the very memory of them. Howard Carter couldn't have been more amazed when he first peered into King Tut's tomb.

What is so compelling about history? Perhaps it gives us meaning that time would otherwise sweep away.

What we think of as the "present" is merely a recognition of what has already happened. We are separated from the world by electrochemical processes, by the time it takes for neural impulses to form and travel and make whatever connections lead to awareness in our brains. The present may be out there somewhere but we are always an instant behind, experiencing the past. Were I to be suddenly obliterated by a meteorite I never heard coming, I'd never know it. My neurons would never have time to get the news to me. A shame, really, since that's the sort of very interesting end from which one could derive some bleak enjoyment.

The past is gone, the future is yet to arrive. We imagine the future and reflect on the past, however recent. Where does that leave us? Forever locked in a moment that means nothing except in the context of moments which are gone and moments which have yet to arrive. We take our meaning from that which does not exist.

Most of us, in one way or another, are our own historians. We keep diaries, for instance, or family photo albums. We are not just preserving the past. By what we write in the diary, which snapshots we preserve, we are, like historians, interpreting our histories. How many snapshots do we have of people crying?

Remembering is as much an act of creation as recordation. We don't simply remember who we are but who we want to be. I am suspicious of my own recollections. Do I truly recall the time my grandfather pulled the giant rutabaga out of the garden with a lawn tractor or, by now, do I remember nothing but the essay I wrote for my fanzine, and how reliable was that?

When I look at the family photo album. does the snapshot of me and my dad at the lake bring back the memory of that distant summer day or only the memory of having looked at that same photo last year or the year before, or my mother's explanation of the photo, long after the event which I had totally forgotten? And did she remember it all correctly?

I've always played at making history. As a child I loved reading the Alley Oop comic strip in the newspaper. Why wouldn't I? Alley was a caveman who rode dinosaurs and time traveled. I started clipping out each strip out and pasted it into a scrapbook. After a year, when I looked at the beginning of the scrapbook, saw vaguely remembered scenes and read story lines which seemed to have occurred an epoch ago, I felt like I had jumped into a time machine and traveled in time. I guess I had created a historical record for my own enjoyment.

My friends and I created a history for the Horseshoe Club which met in our basements every couple of weeks. The club's activities consisted of consuming chips and soda, electing new officers at every meeting, and keeping an official record of the elections. Before long we had a history. At the end of the summer we put the official club record in a plastic bag and hiked up the railroad tracks to the edge of a swamp where we buried it.

We drew a map, naturally, on which X marked the spot. After eons had passed, after the ice sheets had advanced and receded -- the next spring -- we trekked up the railroad tracks into the wilds and started digging.

What a discovery we made! The bag had split and the precious paper inside was wet, stuck together and partly rotted. But working carefully, we managed to dry, reassemble and tape enough together to decipher the strangely childish handwriting. We were astounded. The ancient document revealed that had once been a secret organization called the Horseshoe Club and we'd all been members! Look, I was the 2nd, 4th, 6th and 9th president!

The older we get the more dangerous it is to write about the past. We think that with age we have come to understand life much better, we have reflected and put things into perspective, but maybe in reality we have simply had more time to get our story straight and polish up our illusions. We have developed a theory of our history which colors what we write.

My stories about my childhood never fit very well into fanzines anyway. Fan history is what is wanted, not personal history. I am sure you would rather hear about the Worldcon than the Horseshoe Club. And why not? You were at the Worldcon. You weren't drinking Royal Crown Cola in my parent's basement. Not according to the club membership rolls.

Perhaps it is just as well that I have no faanish past to draw upon. No doubt from the height of my current age I would look down on a vast panorama with myself at the center. And I would be able to see and write about the shortcomings of others with the absolute clarity that only comes as a person ages and gains wisdom and those people he dislikes have died.

I don't know if I can avoid becoming a cranky old man but I can refuse to make a public spectacle of myself. I can be wary about making my past into dubious history. I can ask myself twice whether anyone will actually be interested in how Sally Oliver chipped my front tooth on the playground during recess in the third grade.

Still, in moments of weakness, I find myself writing about my past. Sometimes, doing so, I try to place the taste of Black Jack gum and fail.



PURE QUILL

Alex looks back at issue #8, then forward to #9.

Alex Yudenitsch 13th August 2009

But, even in retrospect, I like #9 more: Everything is subtly more interesting and agreeable, showing -- dare I say it? -- a clearer vision on The Editor's part.

That's one way of putting it...

Lee Anne Lavell 5th August 2009

I loved the cover. It sort of reminds me of my house. People have asked me why, as a single person living alone, I need such a large house. The answer, of course, is to have the wall space for bookcases.

Diabologic: I can sympathize with your eye problems, thanks to my "macular hole" plus cataract surgery. I had to wait with uneven eyes for six months between the surgeries. Even now I have some problems with reading, especially the smaller print, because the scar tissue across the macula causes the letters to have slight wobble. The result is that if I read for long periods I have a tendency to get eye strain. However it's better than having the letters really warp as they did before the surgery.

I disagree with your assessment of Koontz's *Life Expectancy*, Dave. I found the book quite funny, something I had not expected. I especially loved the fact that our narrator-hero, being a chef (with emphasis on pastry) uses food and cooking similes, etc., throughout.

There are certainly a lot of his books that I liked far better. And not all that many I thought worse. I guess we can be thankful that there are so many different books.

Len's Adventures in Cardioland (June Moffatt): I have had, personally, little experience as an in-patient at a hospital. (Knock wood!) As a child I had a tonsillectomy and an appendectomy. In my thirties I spent a night in a hospital in the Florida Keys. Found out that I was very allergic to the molds in that vicinity. (Asthma, help, just let me out of here!) I've had a few out patient procedures, the most recent being a CT scan and an MRA after I had my TIA. My greater experience is with being a visitor in one form or another, while my father was dying of cancer and when my mother and my husband (at different times) had their ultimately fatal heart attacks, and while my last living close relative, my 92 year old aunt, was recovering from a perforated ulcer. I do not have pleasant memories of these times, mostly just panic, shock

and grief.

You Are Here: Excellent short little piece, well worth reprinting. Really put us in our place, didn't you!

Notes from Byzantium (Eric Mayer): As always, Eric Mayer's contribution is a highlight of the issue. Reading has been very dear to me since childhood when I became enamored of the Oz books. I devoured the "Lad, a Dog" Terhune tales and Nancy Drew among others. Then I discovered s-f magazines. Since this was just toward the end of WWII, there was a paper shortage going on and most of the mags were only quarterly so I saved each issue so I could re-read them. I also bought the few s-f hardbounds available, completing the Burroughs and Venus novels. The habit pattern was established and I hung on to them, too. And so it went. The collection expanded to books on history, various and sundry sciences and so forth. Recently it has been mystery and horror. I am currently on a Dean Koontz kick. My reading has slowed down because of my eye problems, but then, I have more time to read now that I am retired.



Pure Quill:

John Purcell: Having no debts means that one probably has a lousy credit rating. On the other hand, if you have lots of debts but are at least keeping up with your payments, your credit rating is probably very good.

June Moffatt: My cat, Gummitch, was named after Leiber's Gummitch. Jim and I often took him to conventions with us where he gave room parties. (Somehow Jim and I never got the credit for the parties.) At one Midwestcon he and Fritz Leiber actually met.

Mike Deckinger: Yes, I know what you mean by stray cats just turning up in the backyard. There was a time when I thought I must have a sign, invisible to all but cats, which said "Sucker lives here!"

Lloyd Penney 25th August 2009

Worldcon has come and gone, and it was just the best time. A fanzine lounge that worked very well, and a couple of award ceremonies, plus lots of friends, lots of hugs and chats... a great time was certainly had by me. Back to the LoC mines, with some comments on *Time And Again* 9.

The cover looks great, let's all go and explore. I have a wall in our living room that looks much like that. I've been just ploughing through stacks of books recently, so the wall needs some serious tidying. Whoops, somebody shook that book a little too much...the previous sentence sure applies, I do gallop. Because I do read a lot, and I assist local conventions in flyer distribution, I know where all the local used book shops are, or at least where they used to be. Literacy levels are down, books are an unpopular choice for all ages, and used book store owners are running them for a hobby, for they certainly won't make any money from them. The used book store I do go to has moved to a larger store, and they are bucking the trend. I know of at least two used book stores that are shutting down right now, with huge closing

sales, and it looks like there's still no one going. I've heard of pallets of used books being shipped here and there, and new stuff arrives at the local thrift stores. Are used books good for nothing more than pulping?

I have lots of books and ebooks on my PDA...yes, I still have a PDA...my cataract hasn't stopped me from reading, and I don't mind the small type. But then, I am getting older, and that statement may yet change.

I like reading cat stories a lot, and a visit to I Can Has Cheezburger usually puts a smile on my face. Guilty pleasures, and all that...

There's the usual You Are Here t-shirts I see at cons everywhere ... You Are Here, the Rest of Us are Over Here, or You Are Here, Your Luggage is Over There. Fun to see, but perhaps not fun enough to buy. Too many t-shirts, and not enough time.

Brad, you are a sick, sick man. Cathulhu would go so well on one of the aforementioned t-shirts. If the Lovecraft estate doesn't get you, the Geisel estate might...

My LoC ... the interview with the office cat? No, she didn't get the job. Then again, earlier this year, I had an interview where the president's Rottweiler cuddled up with me, and I didn't get that job, either. The job I refer to at the end of my LoC ... I was laid off at the end of February, and as always these days, the job-hunt continues apace. Hi, June! If you ever figure out how getting young and strong works, put it in a bottle.

The idea of not being responsible ... so prevalent these days. No one wants to take responsibility, everyone wants to pass the buck. I never did buy a house, I never had enough money to buy one. Never thought any bank would offer me one, and sure enough... There is some responsibility on the part of the banks there, for there are plenty of people who they never should have given mortgages to, but they did, and that's part of the financial meltdown. I never did get a credit card until I was 40, and now that I'm 50, my credit rating is fairly good, and the card is paid

off.

I will happily buck the trend and say that I just couldn't get into the more modern *Battlestar Galactica*, and remember with a smile the cheesy original. For me, *Battlestar* also has Boxey, and Muffit the Daggit. I know I'm in the vast minority there.

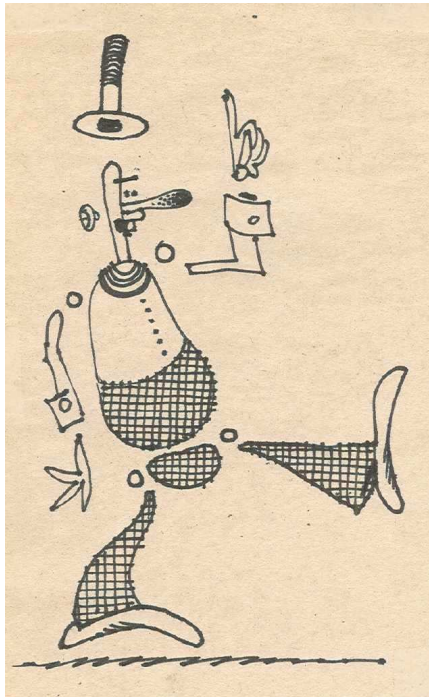


John Purcell 15th August 2009

I really loved that cover picture. That is simply incredible, and makes me wonder how many books it took to create that castle. Pretty unbelievable. Of course, all a marauding horde would have to do is fling some burning arrows into the fortress and down it comes in a literal blaze of glory.

Like you wrote in your *Diabologic* editorial - and Eric Mayer picked up on in his column later in the ish - I have been trying to

do more reading as well. Of course, I didn't have to undergo laser surgery on my eyes, but it certainly sounds like you came through with flying colors. Very glad to hear that, too. But my reading has picked up again. At the present time I am working on three books simultaneously: *Battlefield: decisive conflicts in history* by Richard Holmes, *The Sky People* by S.M. Stirling, and *Our Endangered Values* by Jimmy Carter. All are interesting, and the



Stirling novel is fun. The Holmes book is really good to simply pop it open on any page and read about one of 300 major battles fought over the course of the last 3000 years or so anywhere on the globe. Very interesting material. President Carter's book is a real wake-up call (which he wrote in 2005) about the polarization occurring in America between radical conservatism and the far-left in terms of how religion has done more harm to the fabric of American society than anything else in recent years. It is very much a warning about what so-called Christians have

done to assume control of the Republican party and how they are dangerously misleading people. And this is coming from a very religious person, too. Granted, Carter is a life-long democrat, but this book is written from a moderate standpoint, and I am likewise enjoying it.

In my zine and other zines - notably *Challenger* #28 - I have written about the Purcell Petting Zoo and our cats. Lee Anne Lav-

ell's article makes me remember all of the unique cat personalities we have had rambling through our household in the past 20 years. When I met my wife in early 1989, she had had Raven for 17 years, and he died about two years later. It really is amazing how much about life, love and death our pets can teach us. Overall, it has been a real joy having all of these crazy animals in my life, even though I have had to say goodbye to many of them over the years. Still, great memories and lots of photos. Thanks for the trip down that memory lane, Lee.

June Moffat's article was extremely well-written and made me very glad that Len is doing well. This is one medical malady that I hope won't happen to me, but there's not much I can do about it now. A very enjoyable though harrowing tale. Thank you, June, and pass along my well-wishes to Len. It would be great to get an update about him in a later issue. Make a note of that, Dave.

[Yessir. They are both welcome in this fanzine.](#)

I really adored that Cathulhu illo Brad Foster did for Eric's column. Very nicely done, capturing the essence of Dr. Seuss and H. P. Lovecraft. This is a wonderful illo, one of Brad's best. A big plus is that it accompanied another fine Eric Mayer column, one which I have basically commented on already, so I don't have much else to add here. Except for maybe admitting I need to read some classic literature myself. I have read a lot, but reading Steinbeck's King Arthur book would be a nice touch, I think, maybe *The Turn of the Screw* again. It has been thirty years since I've read that one.

My loc: Gee, it seems like I was the only one who didn't care that much for Cy Condra's article in the 8th issue. I still stand by my initial reaction, though; it kind of bored me. Yes, it was well-written, but I just couldn't get into it. Oh, well. Everyone has their tastes, and that's fine.

Finally, that picture of the polar bears grilling a penguin just

got me laughing again. It is so wrong on many levels, but I love it! That's good stuff.

So thank you for a fine issue, welcome back, and if I get an idea of something to write for you, I shall. Just don't hold your breath. With fall semester about to start up, I should be busy for a bit. So, hang in there, and enjoy the LoCs and brickbats coming your way.

[Brickbats? We got brickbats comin'? Are they printable?](#)

Eric Mayer **5th August 2009**

This is my first loc since June 12. When do I know I'm gafiated?

Interesting cover. Oh what a mighty fortress is our library. The best image in the issue though is Brad Foster's effort for that tedious old gafiater's column. Brilliant. Would work for a book cover let alone a fanzine illustration.

I'm glad you're back to reading again. However, my comments on that are already in the aforementioned column. Like you, I don't twitter or grasp the attraction. I always thought it was a good thing to communicate clearly. That's one of the advantages of writing. You can take some care to say exactly what you mean. Just



spewing out incoherent rubbish as fast as possible doesn't interest me. (Heck, back in the seventies I wrote hundreds of four page locs so I've already done that!) Well, to be fair, twitter is more for socializing than writing and being anti-social I'm naturally prejudiced against it.

Written communication is being pushed aside. We've got television, movies, video games. Even when we write we just tweet. (What's next grunting?) But, hey, change happens. Just because it isn't to my taste doesn't mean it's not the future. I'm from an earlier era and well on the way to the recycling bin. (See, I didn't say trash bin, I'm in an optimistic mood today.)

[In the 80s I began to notice that anyone who could write had a skill for the job market. Because the newer the market, the fewer who could write.](#)

Lee Anne's cat stories were terrific, and that incident with the sponge was eerie. A mind reading cat? She ought to sell that story somewhere. *Psychic Cats Magazine*? (It's got to exist...) Our cat Sabrina's main claim to fame is having lived thus far to almost the age of twenty-one. Don't know exactly when her birthday is but I recall she was part of a feral litter a Rochester neighbor found in her ga-

rage in the late autumn of the year I moved into my house which was 1989. She's been through a lot with me since then (the cat, not the neighbor) including two marriages, job changes, five moves. Sometimes it seems like she's a cat who stepped out of another world that I long since left behind. She's always been a rather timid cat and not very rambunctious, but now I understand, she was taking it easy for her big longevity trick.

"Sometimes it seems like she's a cat who stepped out of another world that I long since left behind." That's nice imagery. Makes it sound like what Billy Pilgrim would have had to deal with if he'd owned a cat.

I also enjoyed her school performance tales but I think I've already told my own grade school stage production stories too many times already. I doubt that today they'd allow sixth graders to put on a play called "The Mad Bomber." And I'll bet they wouldn't allow a student to be "abused" by being forced to crawl across the stage in a snake costume either.

June Moffatt's account of Len's hospitalization was harrowing. My health has generally been good. I loathe hospitals and all medical procedures. Hope Len's doing OK now and can avoid docs etc as much as possible.

Your *You Are Here* essay was a terrific little piece. Wringing some meaning out of some common, everyday experience makes for fun reading. I immediately thought of a wonderful record album by D.L.Menard, the so-called cajun Hank Williams titled with the old saw, "Wherever you go there you be." But I also thought of orienteering. At the start you are handed a map and the start is marked on the map. Which is to say, "You are here." But once you step into the woods, you can't be sure where you are until you make it to the first control marker, at which point, once again, the mark on the map tells you that "you are here." So this goes on until "you are here" at the finish, hopefully.

Probably something very philosophical could be made of this. But not tonight.

[My head hurts just thinking about it.](#)

I should second your comment in the loccol that lack of debt doesn't amount to good credit. Having bad credit for 25 years helps lead to lack of debt. Sad to say, though, wages in this country have fallen so much during the past thirty years that it isn't always possible for people to even live while staying out of debt, however good their intentions. However, I firmly believe a lot of people would be much happier if they realized early on, what I only realized after many unpleasant misadventures, that it is easier to want less than it is to earn more.

A bit of a brief loc, I know but I already commented on your editorial and my own column and letter take up valuable space, besides which I think I'm gafiated.

[Maybe we've all changed into a fandom of gafiates. While we weren't looking.](#)

