
THIS HERE...

Draws another breath

EGOTORIAL:

This Here... last appeared in March of 2001 with Issue #8. I'd just been laid off from my computer job and was about to endure six months of unemployment and fruitless job search before embarking on what was to be a new career in construction.

After eight issues of alarming frequency, plus the generally well-received if poorly-distributed *nichevo* #1 and a couple of issues of *SingSing* during a year's membership of FAPA, I found myself skint, depressed and almost completely fasia except that there was *Corflu Valentine* to organize. Ian Sorensen later grumbled mildly that, given my well known teckspertise which had been on display at *Novacons* and *Mexicons passim*, having expected a typically nice sound set up for the world premiere of *The Booze Brothers*, he was rather disappointed to find he had, in fact, got fuck all. I had changed from being fiercely organized (required for work and therefore a life constant) to a condition of amorphous, almost purposeless daze, abetted by the fact that with *Corflu Valentine*, as with other conventions I've chaired, I delegate a lot.

The first con I actually chaired was *Confetti* (August 1988), a Trek Con in the UK which, although one of the "scheduled" fan-run cons (there was a large one in Spring, a smaller one in late summer, both awarded by a bid system devised by Rog Peyton and based on that of the Eastercons) was done at very short notice indeed - the usual bidding interval had been 3 conventions hence (meaning that the August '88 con should have been bid for at the Spring '87 con; this was later changed to a 2 year interval so that attendees at the early-in-the-year con would be voting for an early con) - but the May con of '88 rolled into town to the realization that there was *no* convention in place for later that year. Perhaps someone can remember how that happened? I know I can't. Anyways, I leaped to the stage at the "Business Meeting" with an ad hoc bid, the wry name *Confetti* meaning a lot of little bits thrown together at the last minute. (A conrep, of sorts, is still lurking online in *Conrunner 11*).

I'd had some fairly specific ideas about con organization, both in the planning and execution phases, and after the *Confetti* experience was ready to put these into practice with *Team Holodeck*, which I organized primarily to run

Star Trek conventions under the *Holodeck* name, but we also got involved in minicons and the organizing of the first *Red Dwarf* conventions (called *Dimension Jump*), since I'd also started the Official Red Dwarf Fan Club in 1990. The conrunning system I put together was highly structured, but in theory adaptable to anything from a small relaxacon to potentially a Worldcon, or at least an Eastercon, and conducive to great fluidity of personnel between events, since the various roles were well-defined. An important part of the structure was that the Chair, while responsible for overall policy and predefined specific jobs (in my case usually Guest and Hotel Liaison) essentially relinquished any hands-on decision making or final authority over most if not all other major tasks, such as finance (mostly in the planning phase) and Operations (in the execution phase).

And so it was with *Corflu Valentine*. In the absence of need of Guest Liaison, pretty much all I had to do was deal with the hotel, though I did eventually have to contrive the program, after certain people had a *huge* fucking snit at the attempted inclusion of E.B. Frohvet who I would have liked for this task - the resulting flames prompted him to withdraw from the event.

Anyway, the initial point hundreds of words ago was that I'd gotten into a lazy, purposeless state of mind - not the best of moods to have going on when there's conrunning to be done - and then 9/11 added to the general paranoia of the moment. A newly-discovered reluctance to travel for many meant that attendance at *Valentine* would not be as high as we'd hoped, and it was certain at this point that we were going to lose money on the joint, not a great prospect when our household income had dropped about 50 grand from 2000 to 2001.

9/11 had affected me probably much more than I cared to admit at the time. I was working by then as a carpenter's helper to a guy named John Christiansen, who is in large part responsible for many of the building skills I came to possess. On that day we were working up in DC for a semi-crooked outfit called HomePro, trying to refurbish a half burned-out crackhouse which had been bought by a couple of DC cops. Someone had a radio tuned to a fairly horrible "urban" station (i.e. nasty rap) when the news broke in about the first plane hitting the twin towers. At first we refused to believe that this was anything other

than a horrible accident, but the increasing hysteria and paranoia of the radio news became infectious. We could see smoke rising from what we later realized must have been the direction of the Pentagon, and speculation that the city was about to be sealed off, trapping us within, started to gain currency, so we all decided it might be better to get out of there. Most of us (including me), were unable to work the rest of that day or the next, having seen the full enormity of events on every TV channel running when we got home.

I'd had a long-standing habit of responding to adversity by drinking even more heavily than usual, and this was not to be a habit-breaking kind of time, apparently. By all rights Corflu Valentine should have been a complete fucking disaster.

There are several reasons that it wasn't (at least operationally - financially we ended up about \$1000 out of pocket; and the hotel finally got paid a year later with *that year's* tax refund after some creative delay caused by billing disputes). First, the conrunning system worked again, with the usual caveat of having got in good people: BB of course, Victor Gonzalez handling the auction and FAAN awards, and particularly Tracy Benton in the consuites. Second, Ted as *Eminence Grise* pretty much had my back, ready to both defend if needed, and on occasions where my behavior became problematical (at least twice, and that's only the ones I can remember), to apply the avuncular meaty hand to the metaphorical shoulder. Third, the program was really a bit weak, as Ted himself pointed out in a later review, but was undoubtedly saved by the world premiere of Sorensen's *The Booze Brothers* (lack of sound system notwithstanding). I'd actually had the foresight to ask Ian if he'd be willing to do one of his musical entertainments a year earlier, as soon as we won the bid, in fact. Finally, and by no means leastly, the impressive number of fellow Brits who made their way to Annapolis brought with them a devil-may-care, we're-re-determined-to-have-a-good-time attitude. Eve Harvey has often been there for me, and appropriate to her reputation as a fine cook, knows just how much boo to add, and when to add it, and likewise with vinegar - when she gives you the hairy eyeball you better sit down, shut up and pay attention! Claire and Mark made this their first Corflu, and are now regular attendees, a fact which Mark has told me is "Your fault, actually". And of

course Max, who I've known since our *Red Dwarf* Fan Club days (as I write, now 18 years and counting!).

A little happier, but still drained at this point, fafiation could now occur. I'd written nothing except PRs and the *Valentine* program book since *This Here... #8*, except the one-page *Yield It* the night before Corflu, done about half from a sense of obligation about having *some* product to distribute, and half because Max opined that I couldn't possibly do it. I vaguely recall a deliberately obtuse set of interlins, half of which were lines from Pink Floyd's *Comfortably Numb*, the other half photo captions from a previous week's *Washington Post Book World*. Now I *like* this sort of thing generally - you'll often find obscure references in my writings - but this was probably a bit over the top. I must have been losing it.

Thanks to *Chunga* and *Banana Wings* in particular (whose loyalty in keeping me on their mailing lists is something to admire) I wasn't ever completely out of touch during what we might term Nic Farey: The Wilderness Years. I also tooled around a bit with LiveJournal.

One of the first things I did when I got my bit of inheritance this year was register for Corflu Silver, and having attended that worthy event have gotten somewhat fired up again, so here we are. What will happen next, I wonder with happy expectancy.

While digging around some old files which had miraculously not been consigned to storage when we had to sell the house, I uncovered some locs which pertain to *This Here... #8*, and in part to #7. I'd like to acknowledge those loccers by finally giving their words some air here.

And let's face it - it's all about the boo.

Nic Farey, June 2008

OK, you can call it *This Here... #8½* if you like.

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[[Editorial comment, which I can rarely resist as any fule kno, looks like this.]]

on April 1, 2001, **Paul Di Filippo** wrote:

What a fine ol' time, hangin' out w/you & Bobbie. Thanks for making the detour to rained-out Providence (second-largest city in New England!)

[[BB and I had stopped off to visit with Paul & Deborah on our way to the Boston Corflu, to find him as delightful in person as in many years of correspondence. Also a tremendous pleasure to meet Deborah. Fuckin pissed down while we were there though...]]

This Here #8 continued your unbroken run of fannish excellence! Gossip, wit, insight, yucks and pathos. Long may she run!

[[Er, sorry about that Paul...]]

On April 12 2001, **E B Frohvet** wrote:

Lovely picture of Bobbie on page 13. oops, that's Teri Hatcher, isn't it? I always get those two beautiful ladies confused.

I regret not having locced *nichevo* #1, however, fan politics is a realm I try to avoid. The question of your Nova eligibility came up in either *Quasiquote* or *Bogus*, I forget which, and I expressed the typically American view that if there was no specific rule banning non-resident Brits, then you ought to be permitted.

[[Ah, that old chestnut gets another chew! You're right about the rules Eeb, but despite blandishments from the Irishman For Hire, my aversion to running for TAFF has been and still is largely for ethical and philosophical reasons. I remain, however, a dedicated TAFF supporter...]]

I used to follow motor racing, though NASCAR was never my particular area of interest, but I did watch it from time to time and certainly knew who "The Intimidator" was. I didn't watch the race. When I saw the replay later, I winced, but I've seen race drivers walk away from worse-looking shunts.

My favorite Dolly Parton story is that when she graduated from high school, she told her friends that she was going to Nashville to become a country singer - and everyone laughed at her. The next morning she got on a bus to Nashville. The rest is history. It seems to me I heard Martina McBride in the background of a TV show and made a note to look up her music.

[[We saw Martina live outdoors at Solomons Marine museum a few years back, and in person she's very tiny & a bit of a stick insect, but boy can she sing!]]

Alan Sullivan says he doesn't know who Henry Welch is. Closer attention, Alan: you get my fanzine, and Henry's *The Knarley Knews* is reviewed in almost every ish thereof.

Speaking of fanzines, way too early to be taking notes toward my 2002 nominations for the Fan Hugos, but it occurs to me that *This Here...* deserves some consideration.

[[Now that's boo, that is! Shame I fucked it up...]]

Hoops: In the Iowa/Kentucky tournament game on March 24, there were 60-some fouls and Iowa had six players foul out. If anyone cares, the NCAA rule is that if a team loses so many players they can't put five players on the court, they can continue playing four-against-five if, in the judgement of the officials, the game is not a "travesty". Maybe fandom needs a rule like that...

"Guaranteed to score album": the Righteous Brothers. Didn't always work.

Rodney Leighton says he is "the only *FOSFAX* contributor on your mailing list". Yo, Rodney: over here! Remember me? [...]

Damndest thing happened the other day. Coming out of this store, where there was a large mat suitable for wiping your boots on, tucked neatly under a corner of this doormat was a wad of cash. The top bill was a \$100, couldn't tell about the others. Looked real to me. Did I say "neatly"? Too neatly - I smelled a trap, as in, the sucker grans the cash and someone jumps out yelling "Stop thief!", or videotapes it and blackmails you later, etc. If the money had been loosely scattered I might have believed someone dropped it. I went into the store and asked for the manager. I was gone maybe 45 seconds, possibly as much as a minute. When we came out the money was gone. I assume they recognized that someone wasn't going to fall for their scam, grabbed their bait and left. What I should have done was take the money into the store and have the manager call the police, but didn't think of it.

[[Smile: You're on "America's Most Wanted"...]]

On April 12, 2001, **Alexis A. Gilliland** wrote:

Many thanks for *This Here* #8, which arrived despite being addressed to "4060" instead of 4030. Interesting how your \$7k tax refund got engulfed by your septic tank, especially in light of your current unemployment. The equation of money and shit has rarely been more explicit, although the Bible does note that: "Sooner shall a rope pass through a needle's eye than a rich

man get to Heaven.” That’s the Aramaic version; going from Aramaic to Greek come ancient scholar was divinely inspired to mistranslate rope as camel, whereupon it stayed camel by popular demand - vox populi vox Dei.

[[Either way, bad news for Pete Weston...]]

My own tax refund was a more modest \$1,688, and within a week of receiving it - the money was emailed to my checking account without hard copy notification - a piece of tooth broke off, necessitating a gold and porcelain crown for which the dentist charged \$1195. Sigh. That crown will be ready later this month, and until then I make do with plastic, both for chewing and paying the dentist.

[[The seven grand we got did not end up in the shitpit septic tank after all. I sorted what was to be the first in a series of increasingly desperate temporary repairs, and the windfall money (a sum never to repeated, and one which has alarmingly decreased over time to the point where this year I owed \$3000) ended up as living expenses over those following months...]]

Cars. Last fall I sold the '84 Nissan, leaving us with the '92 Subaru. Why do we need two cars, after all? This made Lee unhappy, because she felt the Nissan was “her” car, so after a trial period with one car, not to mention meditation and prayer, we went out into the cold wet spring and bought a '00 Mazda Protege, somewhat discounted for being on the dealer’ lot well into the new model year. I quite liked the Subaru, and would have bought another one but my old dealer had stopped carrying them, and the nearest dealership was on the far side of Tyson’s corner. Rosenthal Mazda is at least within walking distance. The blue Subaru has now become Lee’s car, filling her atavistic need for wheels, and the gold (well, metallic sand) Mazda is for us and me.

[[Having just one car is a right royal pain down here in the boonies, & Bobbie’s hours make my work week quite variable. I’m not driving at all at the moment, since I know that Psycho Cop would like nothing better than to see me locked up again, and as things stand I have about 4½ years of backup time. Once again I’ve jumped all MVA’s hoops (including yet another six-month bout of drunk school classes, even though I wasn’t in for DWI), and am now just waiting for paperwork from my PO so I can file for reinstatement of my license. If and when that happens I’ll look for a little work van of some kind. Bobbie’s ’98 Saturn finally turned up its toes this year, so she now tools around in a rather spiffy ’07 PT Cruiser...]]

Rodney Leighton says: “Given that I appear to be the only FOSFAX contributor on your mailing list...” Well, no, actually the gentleman is mistaken on a point of fact. In TH#8 we find Sheryl Birkhead, Marty Cantor, Milt Stevens, Joseph T. Major, E.B. Frohvet, and me, not to mention Terry Jeeves and Harry Warner, Jr., all of

whom have contributed to FOSFAX in the past year or so. Leighton goes on to make the point: “It (the cover of FOSFAX #200) was pure Harvia; David Thayer had nothing to do with it.” Again, the gentleman is mistaken. Perhaps he is unaware that Teddy Harvia is a nom de plume, being an anagram of David Thayer. That should do for now.

[[As usual, who knows what Rodney is on about most of the fuckin time anyway...]]

On April 14, 2001, Arthur D. Hlavaty wrote:

This Here 8 much enjoyed. Please consider it a tribute to your writing that I decided to read the zine despite the typeface with which you have unsuccessfully experimented. [...]

You and I may never see eye to eye on wrestling or the **Non-Athletic Sport Centered Around Rednecks**, but we are in complete agreement on Dolly Parton, whom I would love even if I were, God forbid, a leg man. A glorious voice, a remarkable songwriting talent (“Bargain Store”, “Traveling Man”), and a delightful sense of humor about herself. (“If I hadn’t had them, I would have had some made.”) Maybe I’ll actually buy *Little Sparrow*. A while back (when they were still putting music on records instead of computer disks) I bought an album of hers with all sorts of totally inappropriate songs (“The Great Pretender”, “Turn Turn Turn”) and enjoyed it. (The only song on it that didn’t work, surprisingly enough, was “I Walk the Line”).

[[Dolly’s humor is, of course, legendary, including such quips as: “When feminism started I was one of the first to burn my bra. It took three days to put out the fire...”]]

Alexis A Gilliland: Back in the eighties the minimum number of nominations for the Fan Writer spot on the Hugo ballot was about two dozen. I used to joke that mine were the same two dozen every year. Alas, they have disbanded.

Like Marty Cantor, I noticed your apparent failure to discern who “Leah” was in a discussion of *Stet*, and failed to appreciate the deliberateness thereof.

Lloyd Penney is too kind in his description of the Xcremental Football League as “relatively good football”. It stank. But who knows? Maybe Tommy Maddox or Jim Druckenmiller has actually turned into a real quarterback by now.

[[Er, no. And was that a sneaky shit joke?]]

A definitely agree that Paul Di Filippo’s *Lost Pages* is a delight.

On April 16, 2001, **Joseph T Major** wrote:

What employers want is someone who can do some hot Java coding. In two years there will be unemployed hit Java coders on street corners begging for a quarter so they can get a real cup of coffee, but for now it's JAVA JAVA JAVA.

The last time I was looking for work the big thing was CICS. This was not taught in college; the only way you could learn it was on the job. SO there was no way to get a job.

I had signed up with an unemployment service and got a most annoying runaround. One of their interviewers set up an initial appointment, then backed out at the last minute because the company had suddenly received a big request and had to send down resumes and so on and everyone had to pitch in. Couldn't reschedule for the next day, because that was when her vacation started. And I couldn't see anyone else, since she really really wanted to handle my file.

[["Handle my file"... fnar fnar snuk snuk ooo missus etc...]]

Two weeks later I came down for the new appointment. Which is very short because I tell her right off that I have discerned that they are only interested in shuffling the same few CICS people from company to company, taking a cut off the top along the way, and have nothing for anyone else.

Fifteen years later there are next to no CICS-running systems here in Louisville and you know what... the placement service is also out of business. Dou you think there could be a connection?

[...]

One can't be sure that the new ownership of the WCW will "take the smart business decision". The notorious case of the American News Service comes to mind. This was the biggest magazine distributor in the country back in the fifties. It had a lot of warehouses on prime property - carried on the books at their original acquisition price. Someone noticed this, bought up all the stock, liquidated the company and sold the land for its assessed value, making a substantial profit. Of course, this meant that a lot of marginal magazines could no longer afford to get distributed, and so died off - for this and other causes, admittedly. Nevertheless the new owners killed a profitable company to get the land.

[[Not sure I see the parallel. WWE was almost certainly correct in junking some of the real big contracts that WCW was carrying, in many cases to a lot of stiffs, but

it seemed to me there were a lot of problems in assimilating the talent rosters. Then, as now, WWE likes to concentrate on a few very recognizable characters (eg Triple H, who is also one of the bookers) and run fairly long programs with the result that you tend to see a lot of the same matches over and over. I'm looking for wrestlers like Mr. Kennedy and John Morrison to get good pushes in the WWE "draft" later this month, as I write, but I fear it'll end up being more of the same old. WWE ratings are down generally, but of course Vince McMahon is still a multimillionaire, so his answer is pretty much yar boo sucks to us all. And jeez, don't even get me (or Arnie Katz) started on how excruciatingly bad their womens' division is...]]

"[The] favored method would be to bash their heads in with a brick," you say.

[[What th' hell was I writing about...?]]

So medical supply houses would be selling special high-endurance bricks to use for contrecoup therapy. You can get away with anything, it seems, if you call it therapy. A hospital here started having the patients form gangs and beat up one of their number. Since they called it "Milling Therapy", it was all right, you see.

The poor performance of the XFL is a sign of hope that Norman Spinrad's "Combat Football" will remain only a story. You will recall that one of the distinguishing signs of this competition was the listing of the number of spectators killed or injured.

Maybe the Oscar for Best Supporting Actress should have gone to Julia Roberts' Wonderbra. Then the Best Supporting Actor could have been Wilson the Soccer Ball.

Wasn't copacetic" more a forties term?

[[Uniquely, it seems, in the 40s and 50s the word was used in youth slang to mean "confidential, just between ourselves", rather than the more usual definition of "fine and dandy"...]]

On April 16, 2001, **Steve Stiles** wrote:

Yeah, I've found that that there are aspects of life in 2001 that definitely slip the meat to my delicate personality. Unemployment is one of them, as I seem to have a talent for mastering professions - dot.com writer, comic book illustrator, paste-up and mechanicals man - that are slated for extinction. So, while trying to figure out what to do next (computer graphics? porno comix? beatnik?) in this job market oh so white-hot for unskilled guys in their fifties, I've been temping these last few weeks at the

Random House warehouse in Westminster, Md. My boring job is to open returns from the stores, sort the books according to “shelve” or “destroy”, category into two large boxes for soft & hard cover. This can be fun when destroying Ronald Reagan biographies or Danielle Steel crap, but there’s been a lot of stuff that gets tossed that I’d love to add to our bookshelves; it’s very tantalizing. Fortunately, even temps are allowed to score ten free books a month so I’m hoping to hand around there for just another few months to fatten up the collection (currently have my eye on “The Secret Art of Dr. Seuss”, a history of jazz, and an Onion collection).

In the broader area of sucking dead bear ass, there’s the fact that yet again there’s another conservative in the White House, along with a Republican controlled Congress, so that we can expect another four years of the environment, the workers, the minorities getting screwed as the government slithers further to the right (as usual). It is just so fucking delightful to contemplate the fact that the US is the most conservative nation of the western democracies, with more people working longer hours for less real pay, security, and vacation time than their European counterparts, more prisons, more death row inmates, more guns, all while listening to the continuous lying grousing about all-powerful liberal influence that’s holding us back from whatever fascism will be called 25 years from now.

[[And seven years on, we know how it turned out. I don’t have a great deal of faith in the Democrats ability to turn it around too much, since they’ll almost certainly overcompensate, so as usual I’ll sit here and watch the pendulum swing past me again. Them in the middle never get the gravy. For some reason I’m reminded of an old joke about how various media outlets might report the end of the world: The Wall Street Journal (“WORLD ENDS: Stock Markets face serious downturn”); Fox News (“WORLD ENDS: Clintons implicated”); New York Post (“WORLD ENDS: Superbowl cancelled”); The Washington Post (“WORLD ENDS: Women and minorities worst affected”).

On the personal horror show front, our waterbed recently sprung a fatal leak, and I found myself having to empty and remove it. Since the recommended method of draining the thing didn’t work, an unfortunate friend and I spent the hardest nine hours of our lives siphoning it off into buckets and heaving the thing upwards to aid the drainage while kneading and treading on it with our knees and feet, a sweaty muscle-abusing process I continued with for four more hours the following day before I could manage to drag it out into the back yard and slice it up in many pieces for the

trash bags. I never want to go through that again so we spent a major wad of cash on a new mattress (astounded at how much mattresses cost these days). I’m now sleeping better than I have in years.

[[I’m not a fan of waterbeds. 500 years ago, Dee Ann and I were staying over at her sister’s for some reason (no-one else was there), and slept on her waterbed. Or in my case, did not sleep. I ended up kipping on the floor. Mattresses, by the way, are one of the most highly marked-up retail items you will buy...]]

I had hoped for a longer letter but I suddenly realize that I have just two weeks to both finish a six-page comic book story (done in my “apre time” after hours from both the temp job and a part-time gig) and prepare materials for a talk I’m giving (for cash, of course) at a Connecticut high school on how to create comic books. I’m hoping to be upbeat about this latter obligation although presently the comic book field is pretty anemic, if not headed for oblivion.

On April 22, 2001, **Amanda Baker** wrote:

Many thanks for *This Here* #8 (via the heroic Martin, of course). I’m very grateful to everyone who has kept me on their mailing lists despite my almost complete lack of response for far too long. I’ve had a crummy couple of months, with grumbling flu exacerbated by no-one to cover my teaching duties at work, but that comes on the back of many more months of disorganization after being diagnosed with a nice little autoimmune disease (Hashimoto’s hypothyroid). No excuses, here I m trying to get back onto the path of righteousness.

The new format is nice enough, I’m pretty blind to such things unless they actively intrude in my reading pleasure - I like the three columns, anyhow. I take it that PrintMaster isn’t like e.g. StarOffice Write, and can’t export to e.g. M*cr*sn*t Word document format?

[[How things have changed in seven years! Of course I’m now on the brutally fuckin brilliant iMac, which happily accepts almost every common text file format I’ve thrown at it so far, including Windows, though of course the reverse is not true as Arnie Katz & I discovered when I sent him the file of my piece for Vegas Fandom Weekly. Simple enough to change that to .rtf file from this end though. When I finished compiling “Tits, Sausages and Ballet Shoes” (originally punted in installments on LiveJournal) into a continuous narrative, it was readily saved as a PDF so the grate Burns could do his efanzine thing with it...]]

I'm currently contemplating redundancy at the end of the calendar year, which would equate to leaving the field of astronomy research, and quite possibly seeking gainful employ in the Real World, presumably in some area which involves the use of computers. Not really analogous to your situation, in fact it might be a good thing for me in the long run, but the prospect is making me rather depressed at the moment, not least because I've been training to be an astrophysicist (or, as I was heard to utter late on the Saturday of the Eastercon, an astrofizzypissed...) for between 11 and 31 years, depending on how you want to count. BTW, terminology questions, does "discharged" imply that your contract was terminated due to fault on your side, as opposed to "let go" implying that there was no longer any work for someone with your job description to perform (redundancy)? I'm pretty innocent of all these employment terms, having been treated like a glorified student for all my years of working in academic and research astronomy...

[[I'm not too sure how they defined terms either, but it was basically a redundancy situation. When I joined CAS there were around twelve of us in the RPG/400 section, plus the boss. When I visited back there a little over three years ago to see how my old work buddy Craig was doing, there were two people (including him) and no boss, and he expected to be out within a year or so, as there was barely enough work to keep the two of em going at that time...]]

I reckon that all holidays should be at weekends, for the very reason you cite. Actually I reckon there should be 3 days every weekend, an extra one inserted between Saturday (which often devolves into "Shopping, housework, and other chores" day) and Sunday (which usually ends up as "getting some rest so you can drag your bones back to work tomorrow" day). I suggest we call it Funday, and everyone could have a real blast on Saturday night too, and still use lazy old Sunday for recovery time.

[[Our weekend schedules are depressingly similar in terms of chores etc. Quite often on Sunday I'm also cooking so I don't always get to do the lazy. Sundays in jail were the worst day, since about all you're doing is looking forward to getting back out to work on Monday so you can have a smoke. Holidays there, especially long weekend ones, are thus worse! I like the Funday idea, but think of the grief it would cause all those poor convention prorammmers...]]

I'm looking forward to seeing *nichevo* #2 on your website, by the way. We now have a cable modem, so I could move over to an electronic

subscription to *This Here...* (on balance, probably a good idea, even though I do enjoy the tangible paper version, as I'm rapidly running out of filing space in my room!).

[[But it hav all come to o...]]

(Don't quite know what to say about the family squabbles, and the death of Dale Earnhardt, so I'll just express my sympathies and move on.)

I'm disappointed to hear that the Barenaked Ladies are getting "more serious", like we need any more CDs by people taking themselves very seriously. We'll just have to stick to the more light-hearted Canadians, like Captain Tractor and the Splendour Bog.

[[Um, if I remember right I think I wrote that rumors that the Barenaked Ladies were starting to take themselves seriously were unfounded...]]

I admit, I'm another person who doesn't "get" rasslin'. I get the feeling it is something like a cross between extremely vigorous dancing and a very showy martial art. (Dave and I have recently taken up aikido, but we lean towards the low-impact, low-spirituality end - I just want to be able to avoid breaking people accidentally; oh, and finally learn to breathe and think at the same time.) Add in all the b*llsh*t politics, and I think I'll just limit myself to reading about the whole subject as seen from your perspective.

I'd only just met Kench, at Novacon, when the sad news of his passing came to my ears. Time goes by too quick. I met James White at the Wrap Party, and the same is true of many of the late, great recently departed: I first met them, or even saw them knowingly, mere months before their passing. Seems like I'm doing something very wrong, spending too much time at conventions with people I already know, nadgered by my physiology which demands at least 7 hours sleep before dawn to function, wasting my life by working long hours. Shit. [...]

[[“The Wrap Party” strikes me as a fine name for the section of Heaven reserved for fen, if you believe in such metaphysicality. Also, of course, a great name for a rock band...]]

On April 25, 2001, Dale Speirs wrote:

I've never owned a television set since I left home and went off to university. I don't miss it either, and especially when reading about wrestling shows. However, I am not opposed to television for the lumpenproletariat since it keeps them pacified instead of doing something

dangerous like voting or attending council meetings.

[[We actually have nice TVs (2) in the apartment now, but BB is really the watcher. My pacification pretty much consists of "Family Guy" reruns, rasslin' and (real) sports...]]

On April 26, 2001, Lisa Major wrote:

Maybe you could get a part-time job at a copy center and get employee discounts on printing?

I'm 38 and I still think it's pretty cool when the ball drops in Times Square. I suppose that says something about how far I have to go before I become truly mature.

Looking at Sheryl Birkhead's letter, I realized that we had been spared one pet ailment. We have had ear mites, various and sundry infections, and scratched ears. Oh well, that is one experience I don't mind missing. Ear mites are bad enough. Could be worse. One of my friends just had to put her old dog down. I've never forgotten what it was like when the dog I grew up with died. When I got my first cat, I lived in fear that I would do something fatally wrong with him. Now that we have five cats, I've gotten a bit casual with them and have learned to tell what is serious. I'm glad to hear you think FOSFAX is worth getting, although I have a feeling that the other stuff you have in mind doesn't include writing about horses.

[[Knock on wood, my ole mutt Bosstone is still going strong at 10 years old...]]

Ah. a discussion on music. I enjoy folk music of all kinds, oldies and movie music.

Rodney Leighton has brought up the subject of imaginary turtles. Never had one of those. I did, when I was little, have six imaginary tigers.

On April 28, 2001, Robert Lichtman wrote:

Time for another two-issue loc, but this round I'm going to give shorter shrift to *This Here...* #7. First off, in your comments to Rodney Leighton about "rasslin'" being written of in fanzines, it's clear that he doesn't see Arnie Katz's electronic *Jackpot!*, since Arnie has been writing about it in there (and I guess you must've forgotten it, or else he hadn't yet done so by the time you put together this issue). Arnie's also been doing quite a lot of writing for a wrestling website, name unremembered, and is hoping it will turn into something that pays money.

[[I suspect I hadn't seen the relevant issue(s) of "Jackpot!" at the time. Arnie currently writes a regular column for Pro Wrestling Daily online...]]

Ardis' son Christopher certainly grew up around fans, but I don't recall if he ever became involved in fandom. However, Ardis was involved in the Society for Creative Anachronism, and perhaps Chris was also. [...]

[[Robert cited a memorial article online written by one of Ardis' sisters which is no longer present...]]

Don Fitch writes that "most car-makers (including Toyota *sigh*) seem to be concentrating on off-road gas guzzlers." Not quite true. While Toyota certainly isn't oblivious to that part of the market, on the other end of it they've put out a couple of *very* high fuel economy vehicles. One is the Echo, a standard internal combustion engine vehicle that's roomy inside and small outside, and reasonably priced. For city dwellers needing to squeeze into small parking spaces, it's only around fourteen feet long. The other is the gas/electric hybrid Prius. It sells for about \$5000 more than the Echo and is comparable in dimensions to the Corolla. It has a small internal combustion engine and a large battery, the latter located in the vicinity of the trunk. A computer switches the means of propulsion from one to the other based on conditions, and it gets marginally better gas mileage than the Echo but is, of course, more environmentally friendly. It's disadvantage is that the large battery is only good for 7-8 years or 100,000 miles, whichever comes first, and costs a whopping \$7000 to replace.

[[I get a huge larf out of the fact that in the US, a 30mpg car is described as "fuel-efficient". Back in the UK, it would be damn near impossible to sell a car to the masses that didn't do at least 35 to the gallon. One thing that surprises me about BB's PT Cruiser is that, while I consider it a "small car", it only gets about 24mpg. Latest on the Prius is that Toyota expects to bring out a 100mpg version in 2009!...]]

Moving on to #8, sorry to read that you're still unemployed and about your various problems automotive, house and so forth. Your new typeface for *This Here...* certainly allows you to cram in about as much in each issue as you'd done in much larger previous ones and with the airy leading is quite readable.

[[Supergee, you were outvoted...]]

I sympathize with your problems about "long distance". Where I live is much the same; the local calling area is a circle about a dozen miles in circumference. However, our phone company

offers a variety of in-state long-distance area plans that are so much per month for so many minutes. I use one that's \$24.95 for 1000 minutes, and it covers everything outside my local calling area all the way down to my son in Santa Cruz at the extreme. Since Carol and I don't live together despite being married (not counting the weeks I've been spending with her while recovering from my broken ankle), this allows us to talk to each other all we want. We have never used up our respective 1000 minutes (she has the same plan) but once we get beyond 500 minutes a month (which we always do) it's cheaper than our previous in-state long-distance arrangement of a nickel a minute *and* we can make calls at any time (that nickel rate was for evenings only; it was fifteen cents during the day). You might want to see if something like that is available to you.

[[Once again, things have moved on considerably. We currently have an "all-in" plan, unlimited calls on the land line to anywhere in the contiguous 48 and Canada for, I think, about 60 bucks a month...]]

Rodney Leighton probably snorted when he read E.B. Frohvet's assessment of me as "a voice of uncommon sense and reason within fandom" and a "mentor" since he's finally blown his fuse over my commenting in various fanzines about his attitude towards "the Usual". He doesn't mention it, but in either that initial letter he refers to or one of the follow-ups he was under the impression that it was somehow incumbent on fanzine editors to maintain a ready supply of their publication so that if he or anyone else chose to write out of the blue requesting a copy we would have one and be required to send it. Last I heard, fanzine publishing wasn't a money-making proposition, and I'll readily admit that I've run out of many of the back issues of *Trap Door*. I know what I'm about to say here is not going to endear me to Rodney, but the reason I didn't send him *Trap Door* is because of some of his attitudes as expressed in his locs to you and others (the teasing of women, for instance, and clod-like references to their body parts). As with the late Joy Hibbert back in the '80s, I didn't care for what I read of his locs in other fanzines and had no burning desire to get my own personal supply. (Joy once found a copy of *Trap Door* somewhere, wrote me a perfunctory loc and crowed about how I'd *have* to add her to my mailing list. She didn't even make the WAHF, as it happens.) Rodney writes, regarding my request that he pay for a sample copy, "since I had recently seen 4 or 5, I forget which, negative reviews" of *Trap Door*, he chose not to pay to check it out. I wonder where he saw them? Has someone been talking behind my back? (I either

hadn't seen any or I've blocked them from my mind.)

[[*"The Usual" is something of a two-way street in my view - I would think any faned sends out their carefully chosen words to those whom they feel will reciprocate in either tangible or intangible ways, whether the more obvious loc or trade, the pat on the back or the drink at the convention, or merely the knowledge that what you're putting out there is going to be appreciated and enjoyed by the recipient. I don't think it's elitist or even remotely bloody-minded to assert that, as faned, one has the right to basically tell people to fuck off if you don't want to send them a fanzine. Sue Jones, of course, takes the much nicer approach with "Tortoise", gently pointing out that she can only afford to produce a limited number of copies and therefore would like them to go where they are going to be appreciated, if not always responded to. I've resolved to try to respond positively to requests for older stuff (for example, John Neilsen Hall wanted copies of the "Arrows of Desire" run), and as soon as I get my files in order (hem-hem). Since so many people now have reliable internet access, though, making zines available on efanzines should make that a first port of call for anyone who wants a taster, don't you think?]]*

I entirely agree with you about Sue Jones' *Tortoise*, which is one of my favorites coming out of the UK. As you point out, despite its small circulation it came in second in the Nova voting last year. That certainly is indicative to me of its high quality.

[...]

On May 1, 2001, **Sheryl Birkhead** wrote:

Like the format but I'd suggest one or two things to open space - either increase the font size (and see what happens) or decrease the baseline shift - a small change may make a big visual difference.

[...]

Yeah - I found out about the several types of long distance calls when I changed "carriers" - but "some" calls were pure gold through AT&T. Not all long distance converted, so I took care of that.

No comment from you in response to mine - about your needing art - so I'll stick to pocs.

[[Ah well, I may be in the market for some art Sheryl, if you think BEAM needs it (heh) - or even if "This Here..." has a revival, who knows...]]

Any fan is eligible for TAFF (etc.) but I still tend to think of it as a fanzine fan thing - BUT, I know that's incorrect. [...]

PS What IS the history of candy bars in general?

[[An article waiting to happen, is what it is...]]

On May 2, 2001, **Henry L. Welch** wrote:

Thanks for the latest *This Here...* #8. Sorry to hear about your unemployment, but we have been actively phasing out the AS400 we use for administrative computing. The quaint 70s front end and the reliance on EBCDIC characters required rather specialized clients just to be able to talk to the thing. One of the AS400 people left and another got retraining. Either way we found it necessary to phase out due to the maintenance nightmare in terms of both hardware and software.

The phone company billing practices rival that of the airlines. I can call the south side of Milwaukee (at least 35 miles) as a local call, but calls to the villages west, north, and northeast at about 10 miles are long distance calls which are more expensive than calling say Florida or California.

I haven't watched any wrestling since WCW tanked. The WWF had become so patently ridiculous with the chairs, ladders and what not as to go beyond suspension of disbelief. I had also feared that WCW was heading in that direction and I guess we'll never know.

[[“Gimmick” matches are still a big part of WWE, and indeed TNA, which does put a rather different spin on a lot of them. WWE’s efforts to trick up some of the same old piss in a different bottle is becoming sadly obvious. For example, what used to be the fairly straightforward “No Disqualification” match, allowing foreign objects and so forth, can now be either “Extreme Rules”, “Street fight”, or, if Dave Finlay is in it , a “Belfast Brawl”...]]

I don't see what the problem is. I receive *Vanamonde* and I read everything but the APA-L MCs. It is largely the same for the MCs in Teri Weiskopf's *Yngvi is a Louse*. There may be a gem or two in there, but without the actual APA most of it is lost in the translation. I don't see this as a knock on each of these two fanzines and if someone cannot see through that then too bad. [...]

On May 4, 2001, **Milt Stevens** wrote:

The cartoon on page 1 of *This Here...* #8 raises an interesting point. I wonder how many guys are trying to get over being men of the nineties. It seemed that the men of the nineties must have been produced by a demented but politically correct government program which

was designed to create creatures that didn't have enough vices to sustain life. I felt like telling some of these unfortunate wretches that God didn't really forbid the consumption of pizza in the ten commandments. I became quite tired of being told that I either had to do something or refrain from doing something because it was the nineties. I would concede that it was the nineties, but I didn't feel the slightest compulsion to do things any differently than I ever had done them because of that fact.

Maybe it is fortunate that nobody has figured out what to call the current decade as yet. If we don't know what decade we are in, we don't have to do anything in particular because of it. Within a few years, the people who assign such things will assign a name to the up-and-coming generation and begin lamenting the qualities they notice in this newly identified group.

[[Well Milt, we've had the Baby Boomers, Gen-Xers and Generation Y. It occurs to me to vaguely wonder whether we'll get to Hebrew letters at some point (rather like the naming of portals in “The Forever War” so perhaps we'll end up with a “Generation Yod-54”, though presumably in neither of our lifetimes...]]

They will undoubtedly find that the new generation is just as imperfect as the previous generation and the one before that. Oh Woe! Some academics have already decided that we are living in the era of Post-Modernism. I go into hysterics every time I hear an explanation of Post-Modernism. I think they invented the term to avoid admitting that we are really living in the era of Nothing in Particular But We're Bound To Think Of Something In A Few Years.

Congratulations on getting back \$7000 from the Feds. Marrying a woman with two children was a drastic method of getting a tax rebate, but it appears to have worked. Personally, I felt rather fortunate that I only had to ante up an additional \$1000 to the Feds and State this year. Last year was far worse. I still haven't got the hang of calculating my taxes when I have several different sources of income. I have set all my deductions to zero, but it never quite seems to cover it.

[[As I mentioned earlier, this year I got hit for \$3000, although that was more or less what I expected. I file as self-employed, and have done for the past three years, and use TurboTax online, which I find to be pretty easy to use and thorough. Year before last when I managed to perpetrate some horrendous fuckup in my filing, their help desk person, showing great knowledge and patience, got me all straightened out, so I have high praise for them...]]

A couple of weeks after writing my last loc, I realized I had made a mistake. The wrestler who was known as the Swedish Angel was Tor Johnson. Iv Tors was someone else who had a connection with horror movies, but I forget exactly what it was.

On May 7, 2001, **Chris Murphy** wrote:

Sorry to learn of your new trouble. The IT job market in the UK has been hit by a post-Y2K downturn too. Doing the roving computer advisor thing is probably a good idea, as many people who own PCs don't really know how to get the best from them. All the technical jargon that gets thrown around doesn't help, and neither (in most software) does Help itself.

At least you got a tax refund. I'm currently in the process of filling in my tax return, having just completed the British 2001 national census form. This includes a question (optional) about religion. Apparently if at least 10,000 people write in the name of a faith then it has to be officially recognized by the government here. There's been a campaign for Star Wars fans to answer "Jedi". I resisted the temptation to do that, as well as the urge to write "Cult of the Mighty Thor" or something similar, and just ticked "None". Perhaps I should have put "Doorknob"...

I'm not familiar with American auto racing, but I know a few people who are into European-based Formula 1. These fans are very loyal, getting up in the early hours of the morning to watch live television coverage of races in other time zones. They are also, as you say, partisan. What they all share is a loathing for German driver Michael Schumacher, aka "The Cheating Kraut", because he sometimes uses intimidator-style tactics.

[[It's difficult to recognize extreme partisanship in sports one doesn't follow, of course. NASCAR fans are noted for their rabid devotion to particular drivers, teams, manufacturers and by inference their sponsors. Since the great Dale Earnhardt died, one of his sons (many seem to think he's the only one), Dale Jr., moved up to the major NASCAR series (then Winston Cup, now Nextel Sprint Cup), and instantly became the most popular driver on the circuit, a fact I chafe at considerably since as a driver my opinion is that he's not even half the man his father was, and at times is so fucking clueless he's actually dangerous. He raced for DEI (Dale Earnhardt Incorporated), the team now owned by Dale Sr's widow (and Dale Jr's stepmother) Theresa Earnhardt, but they came to an inevitable parting of the ways at the end of last season, and Junior (or "Little E" as we detractors tend to dub

him) now races for Hendrick motorsports alongside champion racers Jeff Gordon and Jimmie Johnson (the latter being last year's champion). Despite a series of fuckups, Little E is currently well set in the top 5 in points, but in a storyline worthy of the great days of rasslin' the current Driver The Fans Love To Hate, Kyle Busch, who presently sits atop the standings, has had some on-track run-ins with Li'l E where Busch has consistently got the better of him, has been winning races, and is therefore consistently booed by the morons who cannot seem to realize that they are disrespecting the Earnhardt name by cheering on this callow fool of a son. Busch himself changed teams during the offseason, having gotten something of a reputation (although his elder brother Kurt, also a top-flight racer, is much surlier), and now rides for Joe Gibbs Racing (JGR), alongside former champion Tony Stewart (my favorite driver, and the one who most resembles old #3 in my opinion), and Denny Hamlin, also decent. but occasionally a bit of a whiner...]]

Thank you for describing me as "one of the finest of men" in reply to Rodney Leighton's speculation that I might be female.

[[Nothin' but the truth Murf...]]

I think he may be artificial intelligence. Surely no human being could write two such mammoth locs in response to just one issue of a zine. As for falling down, I may just do some of that at this year's Novacon as I'm not on the committee and can therefore drink as much as I like throughout. Incidentally the new vebue in Walsall looks good, with the function rooms on the ground floor (NO MORE UNRELIABLE BLOODY LIFTS) and management who actually seem glad to be hosting the convention. [...]

On May 9, 2001, **Lisa Major** wrote again:

How is the job search going? I hope 2001 is going better for you now.

Too bad about Dale Earnhardt. I remember well the way I felt when the magnificent filly Go For Wand died in a big race. I lost interest in horse racing for some time. Of course, watching a human get killed would be much more depressing.

[[Dale's demise was certainly depressing for me, close to, but not quite as much as the emotion I felt when I learned Joe Strummer had died. I can understand your empathy over Go For Wand. As far as horse racing goes, I consider the horse to be an athlete as much as any other participant in any sport.

I'm missing a lot of heroes, as it happens. Losing Strummer so early was a huge blow. The Clash,

to me, are the second greatest rock band the world has ever seen, second only to the Who, so you can imagine how I felt about Keith all those years ago, and latterly John. I honestly don't know how I'll deal with Pete dropping off the twig, God forbid. I almost hope he outlives me so I don't have to deal with it...]]

Your wedding seems to have gone much better than mine. But then, these things happen when a temporary pastor performs the ceremony. I wanted the pastor at the Messianic Jewish Synagogue I was attending to perform the ceremony but he wasn't licensed to do weddings.

Running off with Geena Davis and Nicolas Cage. Hmn, there's an idea. Maybe Joe would let me go with David James Elliott of JAG, whom Joe refers to as my Navy lover, when his favorite female star shows up to claim him. My luck, though, I'd open the door and find Ted Raimi, who plays the likable goof Joxer on *Xena, Warrior Princess*.

Female writers in U.S. fandom:

1. Elizabeth Garrott
2. Sheryl Birkhead
3. Evelyn Leeper
4. Karen Johnson
5. Trinlay Khadro
6. Nicki Lynch
7. Leah Smith
8. Esther Cole
9. Leigh Kimmel
10. Catherine Mintz
11. Deborah Tabor

I probably could have come up with more names if I had looked longer, certainly there would be more female names if I counted artists. I don't know much about Canadian fandom but surely there is at least one female loccer or zined in that big country.

I don't remember ever seeing a copy of *Tortoise* but then I don't rank among high-level fanzine fans. [...]

I don't know much about Siberia except that I have co-religionists there and that both Czarist and Soviet governments used it as a convenient place to dump inconvenient people.

WAHF: Rodney Leighton

THIS HERE...
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