

It's 'Hurry Up & Wait' For Joyce Katz

The cardiologist Joyce Katz saw on Thursday (6/2) was happy, but Joyce left the office somewhat disappointed.

The verdict on the angioplasty is entirely positive. The doctor called the surgery a success, changed some of Joyce's medicines and recommended a visit to her regular doctor a little down the road.

More disappointing was his judgment that Joyce should have a lengthy period of recuperation before she proceeds with the ankle fusion surgery. At first, he said "six months," but Joyce's pleas concerning her constant ankle pain encouraged him to say that it might be possible to consider the operation in 60 days.

Bernardi Goes to Baycon 2005!

Woody Bernardi went to Baycon in San Francisco over Memorial Day Weekend. Our own James & Kathryn Daugherty were part of the committee for this hugely successful event and one of VFW's stalwart



letterhacks, Chris Garcia, was Toastmaster.

Woody reports that a good time was had, though he lamented the absence of a Fanzine Lounge, a prominent feature of many cons.

On the other hand, he especially liked a fanzine panel starring Dick Lupoff. He recorded the panel and hopes to produce a transcript for the amusement and edification of Las Vegas fans.

SNAPS Deadline Is June 10!

SNAPS' Official Editor Joyce Katz wants to remind everyone that the deadline for the third distribution of the Southern Nevada Amateur Press Society is June 10 at the Westside SNAFFU meeting. Those who won't be there, but who want to participate can either send a printable file to Joyce (joyceworley1@cox.net) by Wednesday, 6:00 or give 15 copies of their contribution to someone who'll be at the meeting (and then send a digital version to Joyce so she can post electronic SNAPS for the benefit of Teresa Cochran and others who don't get a hard copy of the distribution).

SNAPS is a local monthly amateur press association. It's a time-tested way to reinforce community among fans.

Inside Story

All Quiet on the Fanac Front

For a sorrowful moment, I knew Doubt. As I sat in front of my computer, ready to write this issue of *Vegas Fandom Weekly*, the realization hit with thunderbolt force: Linda Bushyager's prophecy that I would not have anything to write about was in danger of coming true! "Get a grip on yourself," I scolded my dim reflection in the monitor screen. "Linda's prediction may hold for a single week, a solitary issue, but this is Las Vegas Fandom, Where Fanac Never Sleeps."

It made me feel better, but it didn't make me feel *good*. I'd run all the reports and previewed everything on the near-future schedule. Was this the week that *VFW* finally fell off its schedule?

It was tempting. I saw myself luxuriating in a one-week sabbatical, free (temporarily) from 27 weeks of unyielding deadlines. Why, I might write the Great American Novel! Well, maybe I could settle for a new issue of *Flicker*. Then, refreshed and reinvigorated, I could return with reports on the 6/4 Vegrants meeting and the 6/6 VSFA meeting and preview the Sunday Social and perhaps the 6/10 Westside SNAFFU meeting.

"Oh, how they will miss me!" I exulted. "How excited and happy they will be when I return!"

Just as I warmed to all the possibilities for wringing egoboo from missing an issue, the tide began to turn. First, Bob Tucker sent a piece about Al Ashley and then Michael Bernstein filed a report on the Eastside SNAFFU meeting. One slot below his letter was an email from Kent Hastings with his report on the *Westside* meeting. Inspired by this deluge of fine content, I began an article about Gafia. Just as I finished, Rob Hansen's *London Calling* arrived.

Forget the sabbatical — it's time for the fannish saturnalia that is *VFW*.

— Arnie



Each contributor writes one or more pages, turns the content into 15 identical copies and gives

them to Joyce on or before the deadline for the distribution.

Many desktop and word processing software programs work just fine for doing your SNAPSzine. If you don't want to use Kinko's

or the like, contact me and we'll work out something.

One of the most enjoyable facets of an apa is mailing comments. Invented by Dan McPhail and Jack Speer, they are the glue that holds an apa community together.

Contributors in the new

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Vegas Fandom Weekly #29, June 2, 2005, is written and produced by Arnie Katz (PMB 152, 330 S. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107; Email: crossfire4@cox.net; phone: 702-648-5677).

Special Thanks to Alan White (cartoons), David Gordon (photos), Rob Hansen (photo) Joyce Katz (proofreading), Woody Bernardi (Star Reporter), rich brown (columnist), Rob Hansen (columnist), Bob Tucker (Ashley Expert)

Reporters this issue: Michael Bernstein, Kent Hastings, David Gordon and Joyce Katz

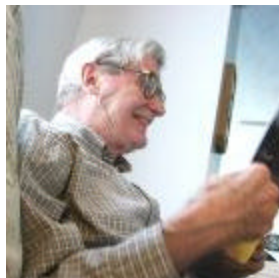
Art/Photo Credits: Alan White (1), David Gordon (4, 8, Steve stiles (12), Bill Rotsler (allother cartoons)

VFW is free by request — and you may get it anyway. It can be downloaded at the SNAFFU and VSFA sites as well as at efanazines.com. No petite fantasy artists were harmed during the production of this fanzine.

Member: fwa. Supporter: AFAL. Shop Steward: Gossip Rag Union.

Remembering Al Ashley!

Bob Tucker



Bob Tucker

Note: Bob Tucker — he's "Wilson Tucker" only when putting his byline on his science fiction and mystery novels and stories — is the fan most responsible for the things most of us enjoy in this hobby. He practically invented humor and fannishness. (See rich brown's column in VFW #28 for an account of one of Tucker's most storied exploits, the Great Staple War.)

When Bob responded to a reference to Al Ashley in VFW #27, my inquiring email brought forth this article.

Al Ashley was a colorful character who, together with his wife Abby Lou and a motley collection of fans, inhabited history's first Slan Shack in Battle Creek, Michigan during the war years 1941-45.

He was a taxi driver who always knew where to find groceries despite the food rationing of those years, and he provided food during those weekend parties at his house -- fans galore, sometimes as many as 20 of them would descend on Slan Shack for a weekend of entertainment. Just like a con suite.

Slan Shack was a large two-storey-plus-huge-attic-house that accomodated 20 fans without crowding if you didn't mind sharing beds or floor space with other fans. Claude Degler was denied entrance. Claude appeared one weekend and wanted to join the gaiety, claiming he had an invitation, but Al Ashley blocked the door and never let him in.

Six fans lived there and shared the rent: Al and Abby Lou, Walt Liebscher, E.E. Evans, Jack Wiedenbeck, and Thelma Morgan. Wiedenbeck got married there and moved his wife in (name not remembered). Evans' daughter (name not remembered) some-

times lived there a few weeks at a time. My date and I spent countless weekends there. Al -- the taxi driver with an inside knowledge of rationed food -- fed us all.

The first Slan Shack broke up in either 1944 or 45 when the troupe moved to Los Angeles and took a large apartment next door to the L.A. clubrooms. And Al Ashley met Francis T. Laney, Elmer Perdue, and Charles Burbee at the club meetings -- to the enrichment of fan history. One of that trio (I suspect Burbee) wrote a piece of fan fiction having this punch-line: "You bastard," said Al Ashley."

Fandom seized upon that line and immortalized it. In later years it was repeated in any number of fan writings and it may now be in the FanEncyclopedia. Ah, fame.

— Bob Tucker



Slanshackers and Friends (left to right): Al Ashley, Mary Beth Wheeler, Bob Tucker, E. Everett Evans (Photo by Bob Madle)



SNAFFU Meets the Singularity

Kent Hastings reports on the 5/13 SNAFFU meeting

The Westside meeting of SNAFFU convened inside Borders Books at Sahara and Decatur with Kathy Daugherty, Rebecca Hardin, Ron Bushyager, Linda Bushyager, Lori Forbes, Shane Roth, JoHn Hardin, Woody Bernardi, Kent Hastings and Michael Bernstein attending. Guests known to me only as "Darrin" and "Treasa" were visiting from an SCA-oid organization called Standoffish, if I heard the name correctly.

I was shocked that techno-optimist Dick Pelletier was not present for the evening's topic, "The Singularity," but later learned he was attending a Futurist meeting with a similar topic. Paraskavedekatriaphobia may account for the absence of the other usual

suspects who normally attend.

SNAFFU President Michael Bernstein called the meeting to order around 8:15 pm and announced the *Hitchhiker's Guide* outing, the *Revenge of the Sith* gathering on the 19th, and the Tap House Sunday Social on the 22nd.

Michael introduced "The Singularity" topic and attributed the origin of the term to an essay by Vernor Vinge, the Hugo winning novelist who also explored the topic in his "bobble" novels *The Peace War* and *Marooned In Realtime*.

Michael gathered a stack of science fiction books related to the topic from the bookstore shelves and passed them around. After

Michael described some current technologies such as artificial intelligence, genetic engineering and nanotechnology, Ron Bushyager quibbled over definitions of "intelligence" and "smart" when it comes to machinery.

I piped up about memory storage and computing cycles, but Linda Bushyager said there were other factors like pattern recognition. Michael outlined other waves of change in human history such as cave paintings, goddess figurines, agriculture, industrialism and the information age. Ron added literati and Gutenberg as an important change.



Kent Hastings (left) and JoHn Hardin played major roles at the meeting.

Michael "singled out" the Singularity by describing the vast increase of pervasive intelligence leading to a future so radically changed that the accuracy of our current projections will be laughable.

With runaway intelligence, there will be concerns other than the physical realm due to virtual reality simulations. The Singularity has been likened to an event horizon that captures light itself, but Ron didn't think black holes were a good analogy.

Shane Roth criticized a science survey show on cable, *What The Bleep Do We Know*. Lori Forbes listed some novels with uploaded personalities or historical/fictional recreations from other books, for example, *Dragons of Pern* recreated by characters in a 2001 sequel.

The Dancers at the End of Time also comes to mind. Kathy Daugherty spoke of Brin's *Crystal Sphere*. Michael described *Singularity Sky*, Donald Kingsbury's *Psychohistorical Crisis* and a post-Singularity nanotech failure "melding plague" in Alastair Reynolds' *Revelation Space*. I described a short story I had published about researchers releasing anti-nanotech nanotech after seeing their medical work misused by a genocidal global Earth Union.

I also mentioned pre-Singularity scenario nanotech novels by Neil Stephenson and Jeffrey Carver.

JoHn Hardin asked the intriguing question: "Which comes first, Peak Oil [collapse of civilization] or The Singularity?"

Linda asked Michael about the time frame for The Singularity. According to Michael, Vernor Vinge gave 2030 as an estimate of its arrival, probably based on Moore's Law (actually an observation of the rate of computer improvement), which has held true for forty years so far.

So will the mass of the universe be converted to "computronium" running simulations that human analogs can reside in? Or will there be one single intelligence? Or will the cats take over as Linda suggested?

Contributors gave their zines for SNAPS Distribution #2 to JoHn Hardin and Kathy Daugherty, who assembled the copies and distributed them at the meeting.

At adjournment, some of us went to a nearby restaurant that isn't in my notes and I can't remember the name. Who's going to continue humanity's tradition of natural stupidity with pervasive artificial intelligence all over the place?

– Kent Hastings

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mailing will often respond to things said in the previous one, This creates wide-ranging, multi-pathed conversations.

SNAPS is a way to try doing a fanzine in a very small way, writing to entertain your friends and swap ideas with them in a way that just isn't possible at a formal club meeting (or amid the chaos of a Vegants meeting).

June Social Strolls Down Memory Lane!

The June Sunday Social hopes to build on the un-

precedented success of the May event with an afternoon of free-flowing conversation, not-very-expensive food and a dash of programming to tie it all together.

The event, scheduled for June 19 at The Tap House at 2:00 PM, will have the Roots of Fandom as its theme. Previous program themes — the salute to Joyce Katz, the Pioneer of Las Vegas Fandom and Fan & Pro Art — have all worked very well and this should be no exception.

Filk Circle Adds Keyboard!

Plans for the Las Vegas Filk



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Gafia: There & Back Again

Arnie Katz analyzes the dreaded phenomenon

In a VFW recent article that deciphered fannish initials, I explained that “Gafia” means “to leave Fandom.” The subject this time is again Gafia, but the focus is not the meaning of the initials, but the impact of the word – and the process it represents.

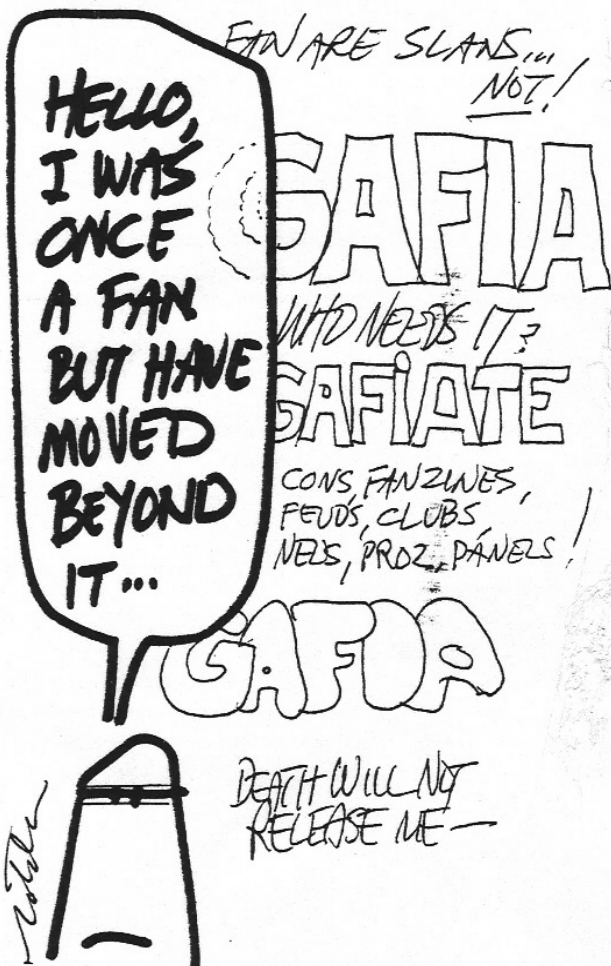
The whole subject of people who sever

their connection with Fandom is very upsetting to some fans. The sorrowful effect of a fan’s gafiation spreads like ripples in a pool. The more famous the gafiate, the wider the splash. When a BNF (Big Name Fan) gafiates, it leaves a void that sometimes triggers secondary gafiations among those closest to the departing BNF.

Fandom has witnessed some fairly spectacular gafiations. Some fans simply can’t pack their things and go in silence. Francis Towner Laney was very vocal about being an ex-fan, though this didn’t seem to stop him from writing and publishing hundreds of pages of fanstuff over the next five or six years after his declaration.

Dick Geis left Fandom in a huff in the mid-1950s. He excoriated fans and Fandom for real and imagined sins in his most extreme Geisian purple prose. Then he turned away from Fandom to concentrate on his true calling as the world’s most successful author of Lesbian porn novels. Yet despite his fiery exit, Geis returned to Fandom in the mid-1960s and produced many issues of *Psychotic*, *Science Fiction Review* and other titles. (He’s still publishing now, as a visit to efanzines.com will confirm.)

Like everything else, there are degrees of Gafia. Some fans call going off for a one-week cruise Gafia, while there are others who appear to be ex-fans to everyone but themselves. It is very common for a once-active fan to recede to the utmost edge of Known Fandom, keeping in touch with no more than a few friends. Technically, they



haven't gafiated, but the fans who don't still hear from them might well place them in that category.

Before discussing the causes of Gafia, I must admit to what could be called "a near-Gafia experience." Around 1977, Joyce and I dropped out of Fandom and we didn't return until early 1990. I've been to the Glades of Gafia and I have returned.

I wouldn't want to generalize my specific experience as typical of all fans, but my gafiation has given me both a strong interest in the topic and some empathy toward those who quit Fandom. Observation, plus conversations with other fannish revenants, has led me to some conclusions about why fans gafiate.

Gafiates are different from people who encounter Fandom and decide that it isn't for them. Only one person in 40 who likes science fiction will, upon exposure to Fandom, find a place for themselves at any level. Many times, these are very nice folks with whom we, as individuals, may have things in common. They simply don't find anything in Fandom that causes it to replace something in their existing schedule and priority pyramid. Empirically, most of the people who contact Fandom disappear within one year.

One thing that can trigger Gafia is a major upheaval in a person's life. When most fans were teenagers, that usually meant going from high school to college. Then as Fandom developed into a more sophisticated hobby that held the interest of older people, the big life crises became marriage, career and children. Now that Fandom has its silver brigade, you can throw in retirement, reduced finances and health issues.

Personal disappointment prompts some gafiations. A well-respected, outstanding fan writer named Creath Thorne quit suddenly after he felt one of his fan friends (Hank Luttrell) ignored him when they met at St. Louiscon in 1969. Undoubtedly, Hank was in the midst of doing con committee work, but it seemed like a snub to Creath and

soured him on Fandom. Taral Wayne McDonald said that the reason he dropped our Fandom for Furry Fandom is that he gets much more egoboo there. Bill Kunkel has said similar things during several periods of Gafia over the last 15 years.

Feuds incite Gafia, too. The combatants may burn out after sustaining an unusually high level of activity to pursue the feud or the experience may dim their enthusiasm for Fandom. The big feuds like the Breen Boondoggle and the Bergeron Wars made quite a few fans decide to spend more time at the gun club or rock club and put some distance between themselves and pervasive unpleasantness.

A lot of fans just seem to drift away, gradually replacing fanac with other activities. Although several of the factors weighed with Joyce and me when we gafiated, it was not really a conscious decision to leave Fandom. Our lives got busier, local New York Fandom declined due to many of our friends moving to other parts of the country and we gradually slipped away.

Fandom, once the province of high school and college students, now appeals to all ages. This has caused a profound change in the nature of Gafia. Fans who gafiated used to *stay* Gafia. Now, in increasingly numbers, they come back to the hobby and friends they once loved. Among returnees, besides Joyce and me, are such Vegas Fandom favorites as Art Widner, Earl Kemp and David Burton

In retrospect, Joyce and I agree that it was a bad move. Dissatisfaction with some aspects of Fandom and the demands of our careers shouldn't have blinded us to the value of all those friendships. Several times I felt a flash of fannishness, but things always intervened and I never translated it into any concrete action.

And yet, in the end, here we are. Joyce and I have been back in Fandom about 15 years and, I would say, have been even more active and involved than even during our first time around. Just call us The Fans Who Cheated Gafia. — Arnie

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Circle, slowed by Joyce Katz's recent surgery and Steve Brust's eye problems, are nonetheless moving toward reality. The first get-together is tentatively planned for the Non-Con II weekend.

Although Joyce's voice is famed for its glass-etching power and she has knocked out the odd dirge on the electronic keyboard, her greatest talent involves another type of keyboard — the one attached to her computer.

Joyce has announced that the newborn group will soon have a fanzine, *Songbirds*. The publication will get news of the Filk Circle to potentially interested fans, print song lyrics and other items likely to help make the new group's sessions more enjoyable.

Heard Around Vegas Fandom...

Ken & Aileen Forman got disappointing news this week. The owners of the place in Mountain View, AR, on which they had made an offer, rejected the couple's final offer. Ken and Aileen are undaunted,

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Red Rock Ramble

Three Vegrants Turn Vagabond

Note: A trio of Las Vegas fans spent part of the Memorial Day weekend on a walking adventure. David Gordon files the report and provides the photographic evidence:

Three Vegrants - Lubov & Merric Anderson, and David Gordon - went hiking in Red Rock Canyon while most residents of Las Vegas remained home. The trekking troika enjoyed their Memorial Day BBQs.

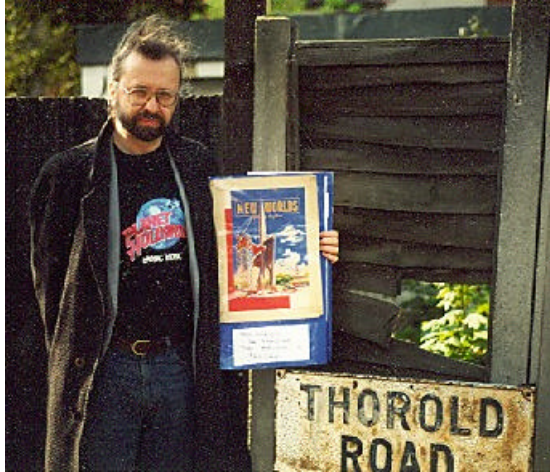
By hike's end, the three were so ravenously hungry, they followed their nose to the nearby *Cheesecake Factory*.

Guess what they had for dessert...?



London Calling

Rob Hansen



Rob Hansen stands at the site of the first con.

This year is UK fandom's 75th birthday. The precise date of this auspicious occasion is 27th October. I hope someone bakes a cake.

"Rob," some of you will protest, "how can you possibly say that?"

Well, a cake **would** be nice.

"No," you'll say, exasperated, "how can you possibly say that a given day is UK fandom's birthday?"

If there's a better date than the first meeting of the country's first ever fan group, I can't imagine what it might be. And as it happens we know the name of that group, where and when they met, and even the names of most of those present. The group called itself the Ilford Science Literary Circle (Ilford being a

small town east of London, one long since absorbed into the huge mega-sprawl that is the modern capital) and met for the very first time at 32 Thorold Road, Ilford on the evening of Monday 27th October 1930. I know this to be the case because I'm the one who discovered it.

In the late 1980s, I started doing research for a history of UK fandom, something no one had ever attempted before. This involved lots of reading through ancient fanzines and the assistance of the late, great Vince Clarke - owner of possibly the best collection of pre-1960 UK fanzines in existence, which passed to me on his death (along with his photos, which I recently issued on a fine CD now available to Vegrants from Arnie). Anyway, delving into those ancient zines it soon became clear that Walter Gillings had been one of our earliest fans and that the ISLC he had organised with Len Kippin had been the earliest fan group. Gillings had written about all this subsequently, but the dates he had given seemed contradictory to me.

In the early 1930s, Gillings had been a cub reporter on *The Ilford Recorder* and had mentioned having written reports on the ISLC's meetings for a section of the paper devoted to the activities of local clubs. Since I only live a few miles from Ilford, I took myself off to the library where its back issues were housed in microfiche form and spent an afternoon poring over them, which is how I came across a report on the inaugural meeting of the ISLC.

Years later, local fans Brian Ameringen and Caroline Mullan moved to a house only a few streets away from Thorold Road. Inevitably, New York fan Moshe Feder and I found ourselves visiting them during one of his visits and, of course, Moshe insisted on seeing this fabled address for himself. The photo accompanying this piece is one of those he took then (it was a very windy day) That's the original artwork for a cover of SF magazine *NEW WORLDS* I'm holding, but that's a whole other story.

I'm sure that you Vegas fans reading this think of your activities mostly in personal terms, as social get togethers that are enjoyable but of no lasting import, but who knows? Three quarters of a century from now someone might be researching and writing about those activities. Timebinding, a sense of shared history and our part in that ongoing story is one of the wonders of fandom.

Seventy-five years? That's not too many. — Rob Hansen

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however, and are looking at a batch of alternatives.

Cathi Wilson and Ken are on a fact-finding mission to Arkansas. They are rumored to be selecting for the Cosmic Free Love Camp. “Finally, Degler’s Dream will come true,” Ken is alleged to have said...

Best wishes go out to Roxanne Gibbs, who had a particularly bad health week. Roxy does so much for Las Vegas Fandom; it would be so nice to see her recover enough to enjoy some of the events to which she had made such outstanding contributions...

Ayesha Ashley has gotten a new gig as the lead singer of a rock band! No word on when and where they will be appearing, but I think we’ve got the makings of a great fan outing here...

Remember Jeff, the young female Vegas fan of the mid-1990s? April Reckling reports that she is now engaged and living in Ohio...

Merric & Lubov Anderson have told *VFW* that they may soon have a big announcement about a future LV fan event. This could come as soon as next week and, if their plans jell, could be a major plus for the local scene.

Chatback: The VFW Letter Column

Now it’s time for one of my favorite VFW features, the letter column. What better way to begin than with one of this fanzine’s most loyal letterhacks...

Lloyd Penney

The weekend is almost upon us, and we are getting ready to spend a good portion of that weekend with none other than Mr. Mike Glicksohn as he and Mike Harper are set to spring Mikecon 26 upon an unsuspecting fandom. As I wait for Yvonne to come home from work for a well-deserved weekend, I thought I’d catch up on *Vegas Fandom Weekly*, so here’s some quick comments on issues 26 and 27.

26...Maybe David Gordon is the missing member of First Fandom I’ve heard about? At least he hasn’t wandered away. Has there

been any contact from the remaining paper apas about SNAPS? In this modern age, it is indeed rare to see a new apa start up, but it is certainly welcome.

If any group were to form and stage a first convention, it would be a minor miracle if the con went off without a hitch. It would be my recommendation to have each of the members of the committee write down what they did to do the job, the mistakes they made, and any recommendations they can make to do the job better. Put it all together, and you have the beginnings of a fannish con bible, for the benefit of those who come after you to do the job.

The phrase I commonly use when discussing how future committees refuse to learn from the acts of the past committee is “re-inventing the square wheel”. Put the next committee to school, and the chances of pulling off that perfect con just went up significantly.

One set of initials I’ve had recent experience with is FIJASOI – Fandom is Just a Source of Income. I know lots of dealers who espouse FIJASOI, and I did at our local convention this past April. We did about \$300 worth of business, which included a few of Yvonne’s patented tacky shirts.

Local fandom here is pretty food-oriented, but food ain’t cheap here, so we indulge ourselves in two local fannish pubnights, in the fine British style. We have First Thursdays at the Duke of York pub, just north of the University of Toronto campus downtown, and Third Mondays at Orwell’s Pub in the west end.

By reading those messages on the VSFA list, I certainly know about Joyce’s medical travails, especially the angiogram and angioplasty. I hope the worst is long done, and Joyce can perk up and resume a hectic fannish life.

27...My latest movie? *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*. I enjoyed it, but... I was 18 when I first saw what later became *Episode IV: A New Hope*. I am far from 18 now.

Some reviews in the paper say that the last movie to have this lack of suspense was



Titanic. I have to admit, Lucas seems to have connected III and IV fairly seamlessly, so as the ads say, in your best James Earl Jones, the saga is complete. And now, with *Star Wars* complete, and *Star Trek* on hiatus for some time, what will media fandom do with their time? Try to take over

your local club/convention?

Rich brown's column reminds me that I should tell you of Yvonne's latest adventures. She has been attending space advocacy conventions, and just came back from the 2005 International Space Development Conference in Washington. She got to meet luminaries like Burt Rutan, Buzz Aldrin, Sir Richard Branson and others well known in the industry. She was unsuccessful in bidding for an ISDC for Toronto, but who know what will happen in the future.

I will wrap with two very important dates for me.

May 28 – Our 22nd wedding anniversary! We will take some time out from carousing at the Glicksohns to have a nice, quiet dinner at a steakhouse we've got in mind.

And...

June 2 – I turn 46 decrepit years old. So, I expect I'll need most of the month of June to recover from all these parties and dinners. Tough job, but...

Arnie: It's good to hear of Mike Glicksohn, who midwived the marriage between Las Vegas and Fandom. I even miss his hat, though Steve Brust helps quell the yearning by wearing his headgear at fan gatherings.

That's no age at all, you know. When I think of all that has happened to me since I turned 57, it's a little mind-boggling. Speaking

purely in fannish terms, the rise of Las Vegas Fandom, Wild Heirs, the Silvercons, Toner and the two Corflus and now the rise of Vegas Fandom's New Generation are only a few of the things that have happened to me past 46.

And now, making his VFW letter column debut is a fan who wrote his first letter of comment to Astounding Science Fiction...

Bob Tucker

I do admire you, you sneaky devil you. I was reading page 7 and riding along with the flowing prose when--suddenly-- I found the name Ayesha Ashley, closely followed by your comment on her vocabulary. I had to stop reading for a long moment.

A long moment later my wife asked what was so darn funny; she seemed to think I was in danger of wetting my bluejeans. Thank you sir for pulling a fast one I failed to see coming.

Arnie: And thank you for the LoC and the article. Now that you've visited, I hope you won't be a stranger.

Next up is the hardly-at-all gaffiated, recently resuscitated, lovable lawyer...

Eric Mayer

Just a note (as they say...for some reason, because, obviously, it is "just a note" so what is the point. Better to say, just a very long missive, pages and pages of fascinating stuff... even though it is only two lines, because, hey, the editor might not notice it is just a note... He might just believe it is a real loc, because you told him so...but then do you suppose any fanzine editors are Bush voters?)

Anyway, I'm amazed you are keeping up this schedule. Man, the last week I've been trying to start a new book and it's knocked me out for even blogging. I don't have very good multi-tasking ability. The slightest thing knocks all my schedules and fine resolutions out of whack.

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SNAFFU Rises in the East

Michael Bernstein reports on the 5/27 SNAFFU meeting

We all gathered that evening at the club's Eastside headquarters, BordersBooks. A familiar place to many, on the corner of Sunset and Stephanie, there was something a bit different this night. Perhaps it was the mix of attendees, newcomers as well as regulars. Maybe it was the musical stylings of the unremarkable crooner who took over the store cafe.

In any case, once eight o'clock rolled around and Merric Anderson asked if all meetings were like this (meaning the collegial but disjointed conversation that tackled random topics), I launched the meeting.

Woody Bernardi gave a brief synopsis of

the recent Sunday Social art show for those who hadn't attended, and Rebecca Hardin recalled some random person who had wandered in and tried to purchase some pieces for ridiculously low prices from her.

Following the science report (robotic airplanes and the looming possibility of a new arms race in space), we got going with the evening's discussion topic: 'Graphic novels: Not just comic books anymore'.

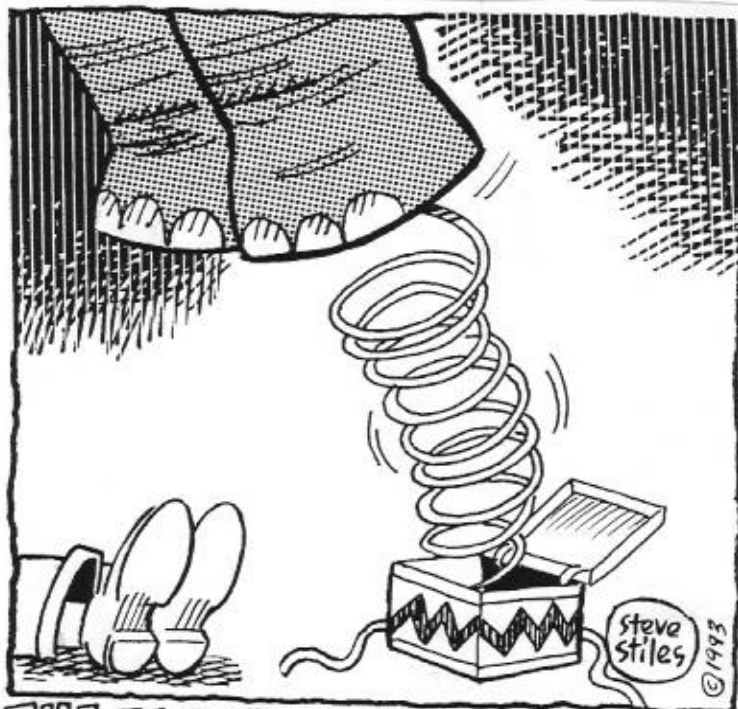
With ten people at the meeting, we had a group just large enough to have an interesting conversation without requiring the president (yrs trly) to brandish his ultimate weapon, the dreaded Speaking Stick.

The Speaking Stick is an ancient and hallowed symbol of the club president's office. Inscribed with mystic runes and well worn from being handled by countless grubby hands, it accords the holder the power to command the true measure of respect they deserve.

In other words, none whatsoever.

But now is not the time to recount the history and provenance of this mighty discursive implement of yore. Perhaps another time.

I launched the meeting topic by describing a few works that had re-mixed the superhero tales I had so enjoyed in my mis-spent youth (also a story for another time). *Watchmen*, *Astro City* and *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, all try to explore and reinterpret the notion of a hero with-



THE ELEPHANT OF SURPRIZE

out falling into the spandex rut that many current works are stuck in. In *Watchmen*, Alan Moore explored the sort of people that would have become (mostly) non-super-powered costumed vigilantes, with all their psychological frailties and complexities, and the sort of effect that having these vigilantes running around would have had on history.



In *Astro City*, Kurt Busiek takes a different approach. If *Watchmen* tries to puncture the superhero balloon, *Astro City* is an homage, showing that even within the superhero stereotype, you can tell stories with humanity, complexity and depth.

One of my favorites in this series is the story of the teen-aged superhero girl who runs away from home.

Alan Moore also experimented by resurrecting Victorian literary figures and bringing them together as a team in 'League of Extraordinary Gentlemen'. He took quite a few liberties in his interpretation of these characters, remaking them with quite a bit more depth than their original authors had managed, by showing each of them quite a few years after the end of their original stories. Alan Quartermain, in particular, is now a broken down old opium addict, long past his days of glory.

After I had soaked up as much time as I felt I could get away with, I yielded to James Taylor, who introduced Japanese Manga to us, discussing the ways in which the market for these works in Japan is different.

Apparently, color printing is much less common than here, and Manga books are much more popular as an element of popular culture as well as less expensive than in the US. James also mentioned that all or most large-scale comics printing in N. America is now being handled by a single printing plant in Canada.

After all that, there wasn't much time left for Kent Hastings (club Vice President) to discuss a few works he had appreciated for their outrageousness, especially *V for Vendetta*, which has the protagonist blowing up

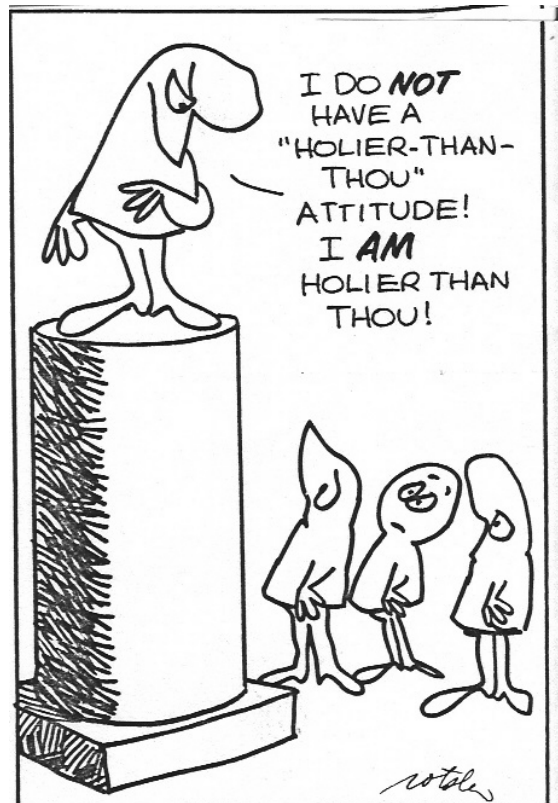
government buildings right off the bat.

More fans contributed to the conversation than can fit here, such as Luov Anderson, Teresa Cochran, Melonie, and Lorie Forbes.

After the meeting was over, the club adjourned as is our usual habit to a nearby restaurant, though I was unable to join the other members that evening as I had to get up early the next morning. I am sure that I would have heard of any treasonous plotting though, as my spies are everywhere.

All in all, a *very* interesting gathering. I hope to see you all at the next meeting!

- Michael Bernstein



Las Vegas Fan Event Calendar.

Las Vegrants Meeting June 4 7:30 PM

The informal club meets on the first and third Saturdays of the month at the Launch Pad, the home of Arnie and Joyce Katz.

VSFA Meeting June 6 7:30 PM

This formal club meets at the Clark County Library on the first Monday of each month.

SNAFFU June 10 8:00 PM

This formal SF club meets the second and fourth Friday's of each month. This time, it will be held at Borders bookstore on Sahara.

Las Vegas Futurists June 18 7:00 PM

This discussion group looks to the world of tomorrow on the second Friday of each month at Borders bookstore (2190 N. Rainbow Blvd.) The featured topic is online education

Sunday Social June 22 2 PM

VSFA is sponsoring this event, open to all Las Vegas fans, at The Tap House. The theme this time is the roots of Fandom.

Science Fiction Research Association June 23-26

Ursula K LeGuin leads a roster of well-known authors at this convention that stresses the academic aspects of science fiction discussion and analysis. It will be held at the Imperial Palace. Admission is \$140 or by the day for \$25. Website: <http://www.sfra.org/>

SNAFFU June 24 8:00 PM

This formal SF club meets the second and fourth Friday's of each month. This time, it will be held at Borders bookstore on the East Side.

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I don't know whether I'll ever travel as far as Vegas but thanks very much. Hey, if I ever do. Maybe for old time's sake, I ought to just call you up unexpectedly from the crummiest dive in the city. Of course as we are all older and slower I'd likely be killed before I escaped this time.

Arnie: We used to have the perfect hotel for you, Vegas World. Not only was it such a hole that some called it "Vagrants World" — note difference in spelling from the invitation fan club — but it even had a science fiction theme.

*Its opening day ceremony pretty much set the tone for the establishment, now sup-
planted by the Stratus Tower. Owner Bob Stu-*

*pek hired a parachutist to drop into the parking lot on the first day. Tragically, the chute didn't open and the diver made a good-sized crater right outside the hotel. For some reason, gamblers decided that Vegas World was *unlucky*.*

We Also Heard From: Michael Bernstein, Dave Locke, Bruce Gillespie, Shelby Vick

Is This the End?

Yes, but only until next week, when VFW will return with reports on some big local events, rich brown's column, a first look at a major development and whatever good things you send my way between now and then.

I'll be standing next to the email queue, waiting and hoping. — Arnie