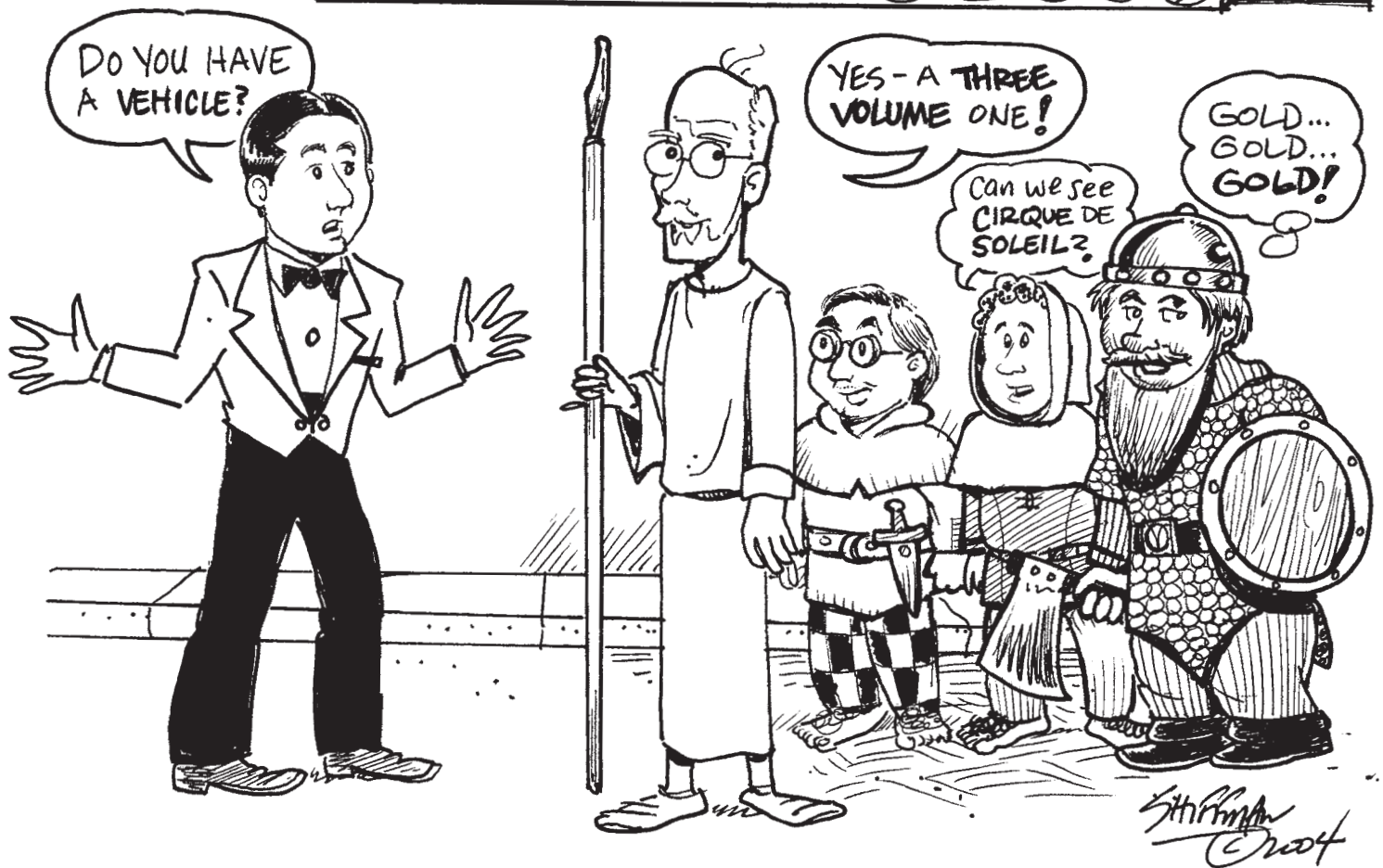


How Green Was My Vagrant



Some of the Best of *Wild Heirs*

How Green Was My Vagrant

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How Green Was My Vagrant: Some of the Best of Wild Heirs is a gift to Las Vegas Fandom from their friends in mossy Seattle, on the occasion of Corflu Blackjack, March 19th to 21st, 2004. This Fanthology was instigated and the articles selected by Andy Hooper, in honest admiration of the Vagrants and their lore. It could not have been completed without hours of re-typing by volunteers including Jerry Kaufman, Ulrika O'Brien, Carrie Root and Craig Steed. The design and composition of the fanzine is by Carl Juarez. Thanks also to Randy Byers for proofreading and support, and to Stu Shiffman for his cover illustration, also completed for a very short deadline. All other art is derived from the pages of *Wild Heirs* #1 to #20 and includes work by Alexis Gilliland, Bill "Potshot" Kunkel, Ray Nelson, and of course, the late Bill Rotsler. All rights reside with the original creators. Distributed Free of Charge to the attending members of Corflu Blackjack. Pending approval by the living contributors, additional copies may be available for a \$10.00 donation to the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund; consult the North American Administrator for details. This is a Drag Bunt Press Production, completed March 15th, 2004.

Chronic Vegrancy: An Introduction

by Andy Hooper

W*ild Heirs* was a fanzine produced in Las Vegas, Nevada between 1993 and 1998. It had 23 editors.

They are an epic unto themselves.

It is an American Frontier saga, something James Michener or Larry McMurtry would be proud of. Science fiction fans living in the neon glare of the last true boom town struggle for years to find their center, unable to connect their local activities to the larger world of Fandom. At a pivotal moment in the evolution of the local fan environment, two exiled SMOFs — publishing jiants, convention mechanics, self-hucksters par extraordinaire — begin to emerge from extended fapiation. They and one of their closest friends left fandom behind in New York on their way to a new start in the Golden West. And it was golden — they achieved undeniable fame as journalists in the electronic gaming community, which, if it isn't quite mundane success, certainly provided a decent living. And it was no small thing that Arnie and Joyce Katz were financially successful, because in addition to every other important thing they did for Las Vegas Fandom, their wonderful home on Bridgeglen became the physical focus for the glorious, productive, important years of Las Vegas fandom in the 1990s.

For science fiction fans, having a place to meet where the management will not expel you in favor of a Dutch language club or simply grow tired of you is an incredibly valuable resource. Las Vegas fandom also had meetings at restaurants and taverns, and several very memorable conventions in hotels and casinos, but it was the Katz house that saw the events that resulted in the most printed output — including *Wild Heirs*.

Originally intended as a one-shot to celebrate Silvercon 2, held April 2nd to 4th, 1993, *Wild Heirs* #1 was about 75% composed of a braided editorial titled “Splitting Heirs,” with contributions from the Katzes, Peggy Burke, Bill Kunkel, John Hardin, Ross Chamberlain, Laurie Yates, Aileen & Ken Forman, Karl Kreder, and Woody Bernardi. The zine was lavishly illustrated with convention badges decorated by Bill Rotsler. But at the bottom of the final page of “Splitting Heirs,” a small box warned “Watch for *Wild Heirs* — It WILL Return!” And then the zine went on with post-convention articles by Joyce, Bill and Arnie, all concerning various people in Las Vegas fandom, whom Arnie had provisionally dubbed “The Vegas All-Stars.”

By the time *Wild Heirs* #2 appeared, Las Vegas fandom had embraced the sobriquet “The Fandom of Good Cheer,” and Arnie formally agreed to call the publishing group “The Vegrants” in his kick-off to the editorial. A lousy movie also used the title “Splitting Heirs” in 1993, so the editorial, composed at the July 15th, 1993 social, was re-titled “Vague Rants,” but it continued to be composed in ribbon-fashion, with each writer able to react to what had been written before. The fanzine was also stocked with articles from legendary fans

who quickly became favorites of all the Vegrants, including Charles Burbee, Bill Rotsler and Chuch Harris, the fanzine’s “European Director.”

Two issues in five months would pass for an almost frequent fanzine by the standards of the 1990s, but *Wild Heirs* then fell silent until February of 1995. The list of editors grew to 18 for issue #3, adding Belle Churchill, Joy-Lind Chamberlain, Marcy Waldie, Ben Wilson, Cora Burbee, and perhaps most importantly, Tom Springer. Tom was a trufannish convert of startling zeal in print, and I think he did more than anyone to follow the larger-than-life, fan-mythical plans that Arnie loved to document.

The Vegrants published dozens of fanzines in the intervening two years, and contributed to numerous others, but it took the approach of Corflu Vegas to inspire them to another group genzine. Corflu 11 was held in Las Vegas, April 7th to 9th, 1995, and *Wild Heirs* #3 was just one of a drawer-full of fanzines published by Las Vegas fans at or just before the convention. In fact, they enjoyed doing #3 so much, the Vegrants put together issue #4 at the March 5th, 1995 Social. Ray Waldie, Tammy Funk (later Springer) and Cathi Copeland (later Wilson) pushed the editorial staff to 21. And then they did it again the following month, less than a full week before they hosted one of the best Corflus ever. And AGAIN in May, less than a month later, adding Karla Hardin and Eric Davis for WH #5, to bring the editorial staff to its maximum size at 23. (That’s not too many . . .)

At this point, I must abandon any pretense that I am or was in any way a dispassionate observer of these events. At the same time Las Vegas was producing an average of four fanzines a month, I briefly did my best to match their output all on my own, with the fanzine *Apparatchik*, which actually kept up a weekly schedule for its first ten issues. As the *Wild Heirs* editorial staff grew, *Apparatchik* added editors Victor Gonzalez and Carl Juarez, and staff members Greg Benford, Randy Byers, Steve Green, Irwin Hirsh, Christina Lake, Lesley Reece and Martin Tudor, which enabled us to keep up a bi-weekly, then tri-weekly schedule through May of 1997. The parallels between *Apparatchik* and *Wild Heirs* were obvious to the creators of both fanzines at the time, and there is definitely a dialogue that can be discerned by comparing the contents of the two. Throughout this collection, I have tried to choose articles and stories that feature relatively little mention of my own name, but that was close to impossible. I am the villain — or at least the antagonist — of one major piece of fan fiction here by Tom Springer, “The IBSG,” but I hasten to assure the reader that Tom and the other Vegrants received similar treatment at our hands.

It’s also ironic that *Wild Heirs* proved so resilient and ran for 20 issues, since Arnie Katz is notorious for creating new fanzine titles with great enthusiasm, then abandoning them after two or three issues for a new name and

a slightly different editorial focus. *Wild Heirs* would almost certainly have been one of these had it not become a ritual observation for a true fannish gestalt. The Vegrants carried varying degrees of commitment to science fiction, as is simply a fact of life in fandom today, but they very rapidly came to have a passionate affection for one another. Their most creative and exciting writing all features the Vegrants themselves as characters, whether in factual or fictional adventures. And the growth of the editorial staff was really a celebration of the personal and romantic relationships in the group, which all sensibly embraced fanac as an element of their courtship rites. The majority of the group produced at least one fanzine on their own as well, but *Wild Heirs* was the title that belonged to all of them equally.

Not everyone fit into the Vegrant village. Arnie, Bill and Joyce all retained the Insurgent tendencies that had made them such exciting members of Brooklyn fandom, and the Formans, Hardins, Springers, Waldies and Wilsons quickly learned to apply Sturgeon's law to fanac as they would to any other field of creative endeavor. Arnie composed huge pieces of good-spirited fan fiction, such as "Willis Plays Vegas," but also took chunks out of the deserving, as in "The Las Vegas Garden of Fugheads." Las Vegas fandom was always much larger than the relatively restricted circle of The Vegrants, and blessed with its fair share of humorless or conniving characters, and large events like Silvercon tended to bring them into conflict with the Vegrants. But despite the hard work that some Vegrants like Ken and Aileen Forman put into SNAFFU, the group came to value paper fanac most highly, and Silvercon did not become a major regional convention after all.

At the time they were published, I commented that these Vegas fanzines tended to be very self-referential, by which I meant that the Vegrants tended to write about themselves or one another in preference to any other topic. At *Apparatchik*, we were anal enough to build in extra time for fact-checking our various topical articles and scandalous revelations of fannish malfeasance. An issue of *Wild Heirs*, on the other hand, was always the by-product of a major fan party. I have little doubt which group ended up having more fun. And as new as the Vegrants were to all of us, most of them were pretty new to one another as well, so all that material which I characterized as navel-gazing was simply part of their fandom becoming acquainted with itself. Some pieces, like Ross Chamberlain's "Dramatis Personal," and the "Auto Memories" installment of Ben Wilson's column "Zonked," are the most involved personal writing that I am aware of from their authors during this period.

But the Vegrants seemed dedicated to reversing my observations anyway, and beginning with issue #7 in July of 1995, included an extra section with most issues of *Wild Heirs*, most frequently titled Heirlooms. These were composed of extremely well chosen reprints of classic fan articles, and pieces of fan fiction that were frequently too long to include in the "main" fanzine. The Vegrants' devotion to fan fiction, which is to say fiction about fans, has little parallel in North American fandom. The younger Vegrants also had a bottomless interest in fan history, and showed an attitude of open worship toward survivors of previous fan generations, most notably Charles Burbee and Bill Rotsler, but also Jack Speer, Chuch Harris, Art Widner and Bob Tucker. And as we also found with *Apparatchik*, a monthly publishing schedule attracts many potential contributors, and out-of-towners like rich brown and Rob Hansen contributed memorable material too. In its later issues, WH published as much material by out-of-towners as by the Vegrants themselves, including chapters of Martin Tudor's TAFF report.

The monthly pace continued through the end of 1995. There was a slip of a few months, some of it caused by the hard work that went into Silvercon 3, but they were back on schedule by June of 1996 with #14. Issue #18 came out before the end of 1996, but there was another delay before #19 was issued, and then Bill Rotsler died in October of 1997. *Wild Heirs* #20

was therefore retooled into a memorial for Bill, and there was reference to another issue to come that would publish the more whimsical material that had been postponed, but if it was ever completed, it is not in my collection. Taken together, the deaths of Burbee, Rotsler and Chuch Harris seemed to signal the close of the most active era of the Vegrants, although there have been numerous fanzines to come from them since, and some fun conventions in Vegas, including presumably this year's Corflu Blackjack. But the Formans, Hardins, Springers and Wilsons have all since moved out of Las Vegas, making this year's event as much a reunion for them as for the rest of us.

Given that general diaspora, the former core members of the Vegrants are not currently in the best position to anthologize themselves or anyone else, and therefore this collection has been undertaken as something of a gift to them by their old correspondents and others in Seattle fandom. I'm sure that the group of articles, stories and memoirs that follows is very different from what they might have chosen. Some of the most memorable pieces of fan fiction are just too long to include, and we could easily have filled these pages with nothing but convention and trip reports. Having 23 editors was a bit like having no editor at all, although I know Tom Springer did his best to kill as many typos as possible, and worked hard to edit the zine's robust letter column. As space permits, I'll fill some of the gaps between the articles with excerpts from "Vague Rants" editorials, so you can get a taste of that chaotic conversation as well.

Not everyone who contributed to *Wild Heirs* is represented here, not even all the editors. But I've tried to present a representative sample of the fanzine's remarkable range of material, largely in chronological order to preserve some of the context in which it was originally published. If it proves irritatingly incomplete, or lacks your favorite piece of Vegrant lore, I hope it will drive you to re-examine the original fanzine from which all this is derived. It was an immense pleasure re-reading them all in the preparation of this Fanthology, one which I encourage you to enjoy for yourself.

Seattle, Washington
March 10th, 2004



I Slapped a 10-Year-Old Boy at a Fan Social

by Bill Kunkel

He had been sitting in that chair in front of the video game station for the entirety of every social I'd ever been to. A 10-year-old among nominal adults, holding sway over the video games, insulting and abusing everyone who tried to play against him.

"I'm an expert at this game," he'd crow, "and you're not very good."

If the adult player makes a mistake, the kid gloats like a . . . like a kid!

"Boy, you really STINK! Don't you know how to do ANYTHING?"

Before long, he is back to playing solitaire.

I had watched all this for over a year, the pressure growing in my brain like a tumor. I had to slap him down — metaphorically, of course. And when I saw him slip in a copy of the Genesis version of NHLPA Hockey, I knew I had a pigeon in the coop.

"Wanna play?" I asked casually, feigning indifference. I'd cast the hook, but would he bite?

"Okay," he responded, and we started playing. It was a slaughter. I was magnanimous in my total domination, scoring only two goals out of a dozen opportunities. But what really freaked this kid out was going offsidés. He didn't know enough about hockey to understand the rule.

"The puck's gotta cross the blue line before your player's in the attacking zone," I explained several times.

He turned to glare at me. "I want to FIGHT you!" he said through gritted teeth. I wasn't sure if we were speaking in simulation terms or not, but I explained that fighting had very little impact on the actual game results.

"I-WANT-TO-FIGHT-YOU," he repeated, blood in his tiny eye.

Two seconds later he rushed over the blue line for the twelve skillionth time, and he was fuming. I, meanwhile, was having trouble with my joystick, so I paused the game.

And the cat actually reached over to my controller and turned the game back on.

"Look, dude, I'm checking something on my stick, so keep your hands off it!" that's when thing started to lose the center. "Do you get hit much?" I demanded. "Do you?"

"No."

"Well you should be. You should be hit hard and often."

And then he said the magic word: "Faggot!"

I reached over, shoved his shoulder and stuck my finger in his face.

"Watch your language with me, you little jerk!"

And then he did the most improbably thing of all: He swung on me, full force, across the side of my face. The next thing I remember was the sweet sound of my hand meeting the side of his face. I was simultaneously infuriated and ashamed and I left.

On the ride home, I thought about my own youth. By the age of 10, I had developed a repertoire of facial expressions guaranteed to drive any adult to tenth level black belt rage. I recalled one occasion when some of the younger kids had crawled into the back of a pickup. I got up on the running board and ordered them out — just as the owner, a stiff-assed kraut, came around the corner. He didn't see the kids but he sure saw me. I tried to explain, but armed with the knowledge in the right, I also let him have one of my most irritating grins.

Wham! He caught me right in the chops. Enraged, I stormed around the block toward home, encountering my assailant's wife along the way.

"What's wrong, Billy?" she asked.

"There's gonna be trouble," I assured her. "LAW trouble!"

There wasn't any law trouble, of course, but my mother scared the hell out of the guy who hit me. And suddenly I felt a kinship with the 10-year-old I had previously regarded only from a negative viewpoint.

But if he calls me a faggot again, I'll put his head through the monitor. 🍄

Wild Heirs #1

Bearing the mantle of modern insurgentism — a position I feel was unfairly placed upon me just so my friends could attribute all their nasty thoughts to "something Bill said," or "something Bill drew" — I didn't know quite what to do when I got out of the car today. Having slapped around a 10-year-old child at the previous social, I figured my only chance at topping myself was to go on a spree of unrestrained insurgence. I'd insurgé at everything. I kicked over Ken's bike (don't worry, Ken, only part of the gas tank emptied onto the hot tar and the broken mirror shards probably won't cause too many sparks) just to get in the mood. I bullied my way over to the one-shot and tossed Peggy — who was finishing her entry — across the room, taking out part of Arnie and Joyce's bookcases in the process. "Out of the way, woman, and let an INSURGENT man take over!"

Then I saw Burbee sitting there in his wheelchair and the most demonic thought of all possessed me. I crept slowly toward him, my eyes gleaming as if I were wearing Linda Blair's contact lenses in *The Exorcist*. I reached out for the chair, caught Cora's attention momentarily diverted in the other direction and I . . . and I . . .

I called him "sir."

Ah, well, there's only so much surge in any one person.

Bill Kunkel, Wild Heirs #1

The Slan Slammers

by Arnie Katz

Bill Kunkel loves professional wrestling. His interest is currently low, but the spectacle of the pseudo-sport still fascinates him. When he came over after the July 4th weekend, he was breathless with excitement about a stunt the World Wrestling Federation had presented to celebrate the holiday.

He told me that they WWF had presented a Yoka Zuna Slam Challenge on board the aircraft carrier Intrepid moored in New York Harbor. All the promotion's top names, plus strongmen from other sports, competed to see who could body slam the 500-lb Oriental matman. A few came close, including Bill Fralic of the National Football League, but no one could hoist Yoka Zuna into the air and put his back to the mighty ship's deck.

It looked like the WWF's top villain would triumph.

A helicopter swooped down and landed. Out bounded Lex Lugar, in red, white and blue trunks. Yesterday, he had been a vain heel called The Narcissist, but the promotion's needs had instantly transformed the muscular blonde ex-football player into the embodiment of the spirit of America.

Lugar slammed Yoka Zuna to the deck. This not only proved that Good is stronger than Evil, but also set up a lucrative pay-per-view title match between the two for the end of summer.

As Bill told me about this event, an unearthly light grew ever brighter in his eyes. The conclusion of his tale was only the prelude to a revelation. The proceeding had fired his imagination.

"The Vegrants should do something like that, something grand and fannish!" The Vegrants is what we call the informal association of about 20 local fans that has sprung up in the wake of our spring 1994 special projects and *Wild Heirs*.

"Put us on the local map," I seconded.

"We've got to have a slam contest!" he announced. "Who gets slammed?"

"Betty Huggins!" we chorused in unison. Betty is a diminutive Vietnamese woman whose physical stature is more suited to a career as a jockey. Bodyslamming her would be easy—and fun. We could save our energy for publishing a fanzine account of our victory.

"No," Bill said coolly. Our frivolity had outraged the desert Barnum. "It must be someone who radiates power. Someone who seems . . . invincible!"

Names were thrown on the table and as quickly tossed away. Bill was getting frustrated, as he watched his glittering concept evaporate under the weight of our mental indolence.

The flood of candidates became a trickle. Then it ceased. The Vegrants looked at each other, hopeless and uncertain.

"Su Williams," I said softly.

"That's it! That's it!" Bill shouted. Everyone nodded. The amazonian for-

mer Michigan fan would be our champion. At 6' 1", the Junoesque divorcee has become one of the most popular Vegas fans over the last year, a mainstay of the Socials, a member of the Vegrants, and secretary of the city's formal club, SNAFFU.

The usually languid Potshot bounced on the sofa as he outlined the flourishes. Her 10-year-old son Johnny, Bill's partner-in-pugilism would wave an American flag while hurling insults at the defeated wimps as his mother resisted their attempts to body slam her in our swimming pool.

"The Su Williams Slam challenge would be a fannish event to remember," Bill vowed.

I forgot about it until the July 10th Social at our place. Something extraordinary happened. Su shocked me, and displayed her abundant good humor, by actually agreeing to let Bill promote his bizarre rite!

What else could I do? I volunteered to be lead announcer.

Under a cloudless summer sky, Las Vegas Fandom assembles around the swimming pool. Rebecca Hardin distributes the four-page program book with Su Williams' picture on the front. It was a typical Social, so the crowd numbered over 50.

I step forward, portable microphone in hand. Among the Vegrants, we have a lot of audio equipment. We were using all of it to make this our new group's Finest Hour.

"Ladies and Gentlemen! Big Name Fans and Neos!" I roar into the black plastic mike. Bill's guitar amp insures that everyone at poolside, or anywhere in metropolitan Las Vegas, could hear. "Insurgent Ring Sports Inc., in association with Las Vegrants Unlimited Limited, William Potshot Kunkel, head promoter, present the Greatest Sporting Event in Fanhistory! Welcome to . . ." I paused for dramatic effect.

" . . . the Su Williams Challenge: Slan Slam Sunsplash!" I was proud. Try saying "Slan Slam Sunsplash" three times, and you'll know why. They greet this with applause. It is still tentative, more polite than enthusiastic.

"Su 'Wonderwoman' Williams, the sultana of Slam, challenges Las Vegas Fandom!"

"She says a woman can be as mighty as a man."

"She claims she is the one irresistible force in science fiction fandom!"

"She dares any brave fan to come forward and body slam her inside the wet and deadly Slan Slam Sunsplash Super Pool."

It's the pool we'd found in the backyard when we bought the place in 1989. I may have also exaggerated the pool's deadliness, though it does *not* have a child-proof fence.

"And now . . ." I throw my arms wide, like a preacher welcoming the

healing spirit into the revival tent. "... Let's... start... slammin'!"

The onlookers begin clapping, steadily but not very loud. The outdoor speakers boom into sudden life. "I am woman, hear me roar, in numbers too big to ignore," sang Helen Reddy as only she can. Fortunately.

Su Williams, in her multi-colored swim garb walks slowly from the house to the pool. She is accompanied by her manager Bill Potshot Kunkel and 10-year-old Johnny Williams. He waves an American flag bigger than he is. As though they had been watching wrestling all their lives, the fans break out into the chant "USA! USA!"

"From the Motor City of Detroit, Michigan, the Woman No Man Can Slam, Su Wonderwoman Williams!" I shout. She waves to the crowd, flips her hair back with a toss of her head. They love it! They begin whistling and stomping their feet. Of course, that could be because they are all barefoot and the Nevada sun has heated the concrete decking to 120 degrees.

Kunkel grabs the microphone. He glares at everyone. "Be quiet, you fake-fans!" he snarls. "This is Su Wonderwoman Williams, you fat-assed faneds! You stand when a lady walks in! Stand up you porcine pencil-pushing pukes!" Everyone is already standing, because we have removed all chairs from the pool area. Bill turns a blind eye to this, and his surliness produces a few cat-calls.

"That's right you grungy game nuts," he screams into the microphone. "You are in the presence of a real woman! Su Wonderwoman Williams! She's six-foot-one of twisted steel and sex appeal!"

"She's the fan with the plan! The fan with the power! Too sweet...." Is that an imitation of Dusty Rhodes' Southern Lisp?

"To be a man, you've got to slam this fan!" he announced. He raises his left hand. One finger points skyward. "Remember this! When you are stylin' and profilin', it all comes down to this..."

"Whether you like it..."

"... or you don't like it..."

"... you'd better learn to love it..."

"... because it's the best thing goin'! Woouoooo!" he howled.

The crowd yells their defiance.

I step forward and recapture the microphone. "Let the challenge begin!"

Su Williams climbs into the pool and stands in water up to her waist. Don Miller, official poolside photographer, moves into position to capture the entire event on video tape.

At first, no one moves to join her. There's a rustle from the from the back, and the cry, "Woody! Woody! Woody!" spreads through the throng. Their hero approaches!

"The first challenger of the afternoon," I say, "Is the living Jophan... Woody Bernardi!" As fans reach out and touch his arm and shoulder, almost reverently. "Ghu be with you," says Marci McDowell, as Woody strides past her to his rendezvous with destiny in the watery arena.

Woody slips into the pool and shambles through the sparkling blue water toward Su. She smiles and crooks a beckoning finger toward him. "Come

here, sweet thing," she purrs with deceptive solicitude.

Woody blushes as referee Ron Pehr explains the mechanics of the contest and the grip he must use in his attempt to hoist the titanic trufanne off her feet and onto her back.

He gingerly grips Su as instructed.

He strains.

He grunts.

He tugs and heaves.

Su Williams, with no apparent effort, frustrates every maneuver.

A dejected, defeated Woody climbs from the pool!

"Go make a telephone call, ya loser!" Johnny shrieks as Woody heads back to the house, hunched over in defeat. "Pay yer parking tickets, Richard Petty!"

"One up, one down!" Bill trumpets. "You silly boy fans will have to do better than that! Su Williams, champion supreme!"

One by one they enter the pool.

Ken Forman,

Karl Kreder.

David Alred.

They try.

They fail.

With Johnny's jeers ringing in their ears they slink off to find Ben-Gay to soothe aching muscles. And a can or a bowl to salve dented egos.

"Well?" Potshot crows. "Well?" Can't we get no competition in this lousy fandom?" He sounded offended at the puny attempts made to bodyslam Su, whom he repeatedly refers to as "The Herculean Honey" and "Superstrong Siren".

The crowd is in an ugly mood. After hours of goading from Bill and Johnny, they are more than ready to see Su Williams slap the water back first.

But no one comes forward.

No one.

I wade to the center of the pool. I start to raise Su's hand in total victory.

I am just about to end the exhibition when the speakers crackle.

Da, Da, da-dun-da. Da-duh-da-duh-da-duh-da-dun-da!" The opening strains of the heavy metal anthem "Iron Man" shake the entire yard!

The earth shakes as Frank Harwood and JoHn Hardin trot from separate entrances to opposite ends of the pool. They pause at the edge. The sun gleams off their multi-colored face paint.

They leap into the air and cannonball into the pool at the same instant!

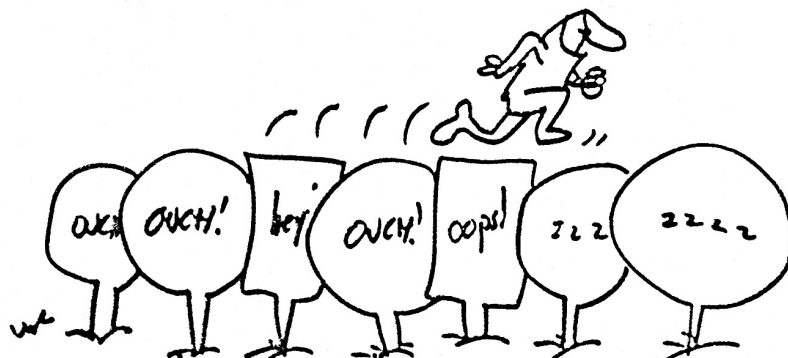
The crowd goes wild!

The competition is not over, after all.

JoHn moves toward Su. "Are you ready to be slammed?" he taunts her. The crowd cheers. He cups his hand behind the ear and bends forward to listen to his public bellow their approval.

"He's a friend to the poor, you know," Joyce says to Raven.

Under my direction, JoHn assumes the stance, seizes Su, and starts to



muscle her up out of the water.

One foot free of the bottom.

Now she stands on tiptoe. The strain is written on her normally serenely pleasant face. JoHn is a serious threat and she knows it.

The crowd urges him to complete what he has begun.

One Williams leg clears the water. The other is rising.

No!

JoHn falls backward, exhausted.

Ray Waldie and Ross Chamberlain rush forward with a stretcher. JoHn drags himself onto the pool deck. They drag him the rest of the way onto the stretcher and begin to haul the defeated fan humorist away.

I lean down, extending the mike to the vanquished trufan.

"I just want to thank all my fans, the little Hardins, for sticking up for me," he whispers, "I will return!"

Ross and Ray haul him away to appreciative applause.

"Iron Man" plays again, even louder than before.

The crowd knows what is coming.

"Here comes Happy Harwood!" I declare to the audience.

In an instant he stands beside the undefeated adversary.

"I will do this," he says, "for the greater glory of science fiction and Las Vegas Fandom!" In the background, Aileen Forman breaks into an a

capella rendition of "The Insurgent Anthem." In this, the climactic moment of the greatest sports entertainment exhibition in fan history, she has at last achieved Fluffiness.

The crowd goes wild.

Frank assumes the position.

Bill nods to Su.

Frank's Valet, Joyce Katz steps forward and says . . .

"Are you asleep?" Joyce's accusing voice lashed me to alertness. "You were asleep!"

"No, no, no" I replied. "I was concentrating on the show."

"With your eyes closed," she said.

"Well, I'm awake now," I said with the smugness of someone with logic on his side. I turned my attention back to the television and tried to pick up the strands of the plot.

During the commercial break, I thought about the Su Williams Challenge. "Maybe some day," I told myself, "maybe some day." But I knew this performance would never play anywhere but in the ramshackle theater of my mind. ♣

Wild Heirs #4

Corflu Report

Las Vegas fans are a bunch of dull, mean-spirited louts and airheads and Corflu sucked. There, that should keep away the riff raff and those who only read headlines and leave a most Excellent con to those of us who can appreciate cons. We don't need a con bulging and bursting with unneeded fen.

I'm not sure what the difference is between a Corflu and a Silvercon, except they select a GoH by lot or some other mysterious process at a Corflu. The Las Vegrants did well. They are lively, exceptionally nice and cooperative, fun and friendly, every one. They really are. They are like fans of the Golden Age we never had but think we might have.

JoHn Hardin and his wife Karla are about to Be With Child. Raven was As Usual (that's a compliment). Arnie Katz—who I dubbed the Moses of fandom for leading fen into the desert—was omnipresent, as was Joyce.

Moshe Feder, Jerry Kaufman, Stu Shiffman, Ron and Linda Bushyager, fellow porn reviewer Mark Kernes, Belle Churchill (better known as Belle Augusta), Frank Lunney, John D. Berry and of course, the lovely and vivacious Ted White were all there, along with many others whose names I don't know or don't remember.

Don Fitch, the Pelzii, the Greys and the Moffatts were there from L.A. (My policy is to pretty much ignore L.A. fans at out-of-town cons on the basis I can see them "anytime.") Jean Weber and Eric Lindsay from Down Under,

At the Con with Bill Rotsler

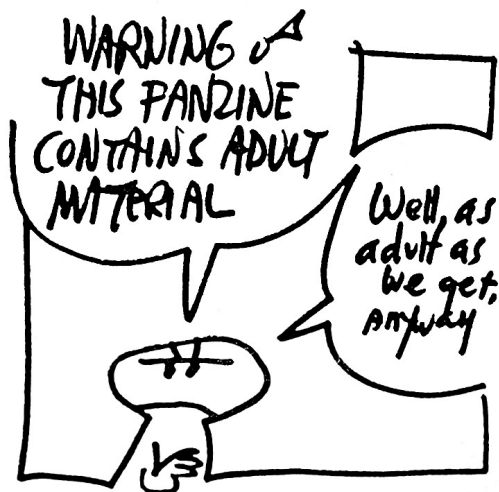
Boyd Raeburn was there from Canada and at one point revealed to me his Secret—what he does for a living. But I can't tell. (See me privately and have small, unmarked bills.)

I know you are just scanning, looking for your name. Too bad fanzines aren't on chips so you could FIND the important part.

Ken Forman led a caravan of cars to the nearby Red Rocks—a large interesting formation—one morning, and was informative and charming. (I picked up some rocks, drew on them, handing them off to whoever was close. I kind of wandered off looking for more rocks and soon had so many—since I was not unloading them on others—that I couldn't draw. Returning to the van, I gave the drawn-on ones to Ken for auction and drew on the rest. I heard they went for \$1,300 but I can't believe that. I know two rocks went for \$100, and another one for \$50 or \$80 or something. (They were [are] stolen, you know.) Also, about sixty 9 x 12 envelopes I had drawn on were sold in the auction.

At various times, people kept asking me with great trepidation if they could use an envelope drawing or a plate or something in their fanzine. So let me say this:

If you have a drawing by me you can use it in any way you see fit, unless you use it commercially, then we talk first. You can—and are encouraged to—reduce them in size, but not to add, change captions,



etc. (Exception: If I have left an obvious blank space, such as a character holding up a blank card.) Don't send me back the original unless I specifically ask.

Aileen Forman labored in the consuite and made a collection of very exotic foods, some of which looked alien. She also filled in a lot of the "forms" I brought, such as:

By Aileen Forman

- The difference between sex and no sex is howling with ecstasy and howling at the moon.
- The difference between Cowboys and Indians is chapped thighs and war cries.
- The difference between living well and living good is velvet drapes on the wall and velvet paintings of Elvis on the wall.
- The difference between fame and notoriety is a quote out of context.
- The difference between and amateur and a professional is a bouquet of flowers and fifty bucks.

Boyd, Bill Donaho, Bob "Robert" Lichtman, F.M. and Elinor Busby, Greg Benford and the elusive and distinguished Gordon Eklund were there—and we're all part of a small incredibly elitist apa that costs \$1,000 to join.

We started with a big party at the Katz's on Thursday night. Someone dubbed it the best consuite ever. Now the most basic reason that I came was that Burbee was there, plus Soccora (Cora) Burbee and her sister.

Burb was weak and hurting because he had fallen that morning and hurt his ribs. They ended up going home early and that evening, and a bit the next day, when he gave the bride away at a wedding, was all I saw of him.

The other reasons I came were Dan Steffan (and wife Lynn, She of the Hair on Fire), Jay Kinney (and Dixie), Alexis Gilliland (and wife Lee), plus the elusive and lovely Grant Canfield. (Who?) Not too many artists, but the *right* ones. I tell you a story about Dan and Grant later on, in case I need a kicker at the end.

I did the worst badge drawing of my life for a nice man named Heneghan. It was incomprehensible because I was interrupted in the middle, lost my place in thought and tried to salvage it. Sorry, sir.

Mostly it was wander around and talk. There was virtually no programming, which was just fine. One night I went with Stu Shiffman and the Gillilands to the huge pyramidal Luxor, supposedly as big or bigger than Cheops beach house.

All the outside is about one room deep, which leaves enough room inside

for an amazing lot of Stuff. There is a Doug Trumbull ride that is supposedly what they found under the hotel when they built it, a VAST pre-Egyptian complex. The ride is in three or four parts, but we only took one leg. Incredible effects, lots of good stagecraft. *Do it* if you go.

They sold "Howard Carter Expedition Wear." It was very interesting to see the kind of people and the kind of fake magazine cover they had their picture put on. The faces were black but the male bodies were the muscle builder type and the female bodies were incredible. Lee Gilliland picked *Flirt*.

We walked over to the MGM Grand (world's largest hotel in a town were the world's largest/biggest/what-ever" is all over) but is VERY dull, just one VAST sea of gambling. We actually had a hard time finding our way out to a taxi.

We had something to eat and I did a critique on Shiffman's work that he didn't ask for. Oh, I suppose you can say it was *implied* when he showed me some work. But he'll be better for it.

By Alexis Gilliland

- The difference between fame and notoriety is whether you wish to praise or blame.
- The difference between an amateur and a professional is rehearsal, practice, and agents.
- The difference between Cowboys and Indians is that the sons of cowboys write the TV scripts.

They are covering over, but not enclosing Fremont Street, which is the street you see in a lot of movies, ending at the con hotel, the Union Plaza. If you saw the TV version of *The Stand* they have a big "rally" there.

The Plaza ain't elegant: gimme caps and beer shirts, middle-aged women in short hair and men with pots. And this was the Vegas I sold the Roman Games—Live! to in the very early Sixties and for about eight hours was a latent multimillionaire... until that night, when they adopted the "Fun in the Sun" approach.

Art Widner was there, happy with a new lover, who wasn't present. There were smoke-filled rooms and one night/day there was such a powerful wind it was coming through the closed windows. But I'd love to have the lightbulb monopoly in Las Vegas.

Lots of small, medium and large conversations, both in quality and quantity. There were big visual surprises for me: *Vous*, a most charming fanzine about how the two people who got married first met, and, ahem, it was gorgeously illustrated. Then there was a collection of our work together done by Alexis. But the biggest surprise was something Ken Forman did, Rotsler's Bits, printing out my first computer graphics work work from two years ago! I thought it was long lost! There was a nice banquet. Much by accident Alexis and I took seats far away from the podium as possible, which turned out fine.

Earlier Las Vegrants had very cautiously approached me, thinking I might be offended, to tell me that the hotel had requested that I—by name!—not draw on any butter plates. The previous year the Con paid the hotel for all the plates which were stolen, but that didn't matter this year, they didn't say "someone" or "some artist," but "*Rotsler*."

Of course I wasn't offended and in fact it turned out even better. They brought me a stack of paper plates and pasteboard chili bowls, which were wonderful, because I could tear the plates! Alexis and I were really smoking, drawing in 3-D on the chili bowls and stuff. We did some *good work* that night (definition mine, and the only one that counts in this) and in fact we were doing some things I would like to have saved (for our collection) but they got away.

My food got cold, it didn't matter. Poor Alexis. I kind of push him into doing these things, and probably he'd like fewer pushes. But he'd try to eat and I'd lay a set-up for him and doggedly eat until the urge got too much (Heh heh heh).

Okay, now I'll talk about Grant and Dan. One mid-afternoon, Dan said, "Let's go for a walk." I thought he meant "Let's go for a walk down Fremont Street," and we did—for about fifty yards, where they turned into Glitter Gulch, a strip bar.

Now—for those of you who do not know my history—I was a naked lady photographer for a long time. (They were naked, not me.) I have seen, in person, over 8,000 naked women. In addition, I have photographed hundreds in all sorts of situations, from one to fifteen. Factor in that this li'l club did not have Stunners, and you see how little I was interested.

But Dan and Grant were. They were stuffing \$1 bills in g-strings, getting nipple marks on their glasses, etc. I am uninvolved, but of course, not only do they come on to me automatically, as part of the job, they seem to take it as a challenge.

One of them did something and I drew a cartoon, and gave it to her as soon as Grant extracted his face from her bosom. Expected reaction. When she got off stage, she came around; she showed it to others, and they came around. One dancer wanted to get her portrait done in oils, and I told her how to go about it.

Two dancers came up, one said, "How are you?" I said, "Uninterested." (Politely, you understand.) I told a couple of them after a few minutes of talk that they would better use their time elsewhere.

Now Grant and Dan both had the same drawing pad I had (courtesy the con or maybe the Katzii) but did they draw? No. And I, probably the least interested person in the room (unless some gay guy was in there) got all the attention. (Well, gee, guys, when you got it...) But I know it is the novelty of it is what attracts them. Plenty of guys to stick steel engravings of dead presidents into their skimpy costuming, but few original cartoons.

Later, after a long conversation with the Gillilands about current pornography, Lee dragged Alexis into the same bar. (Who knows, maybe "dragged" is not the right verb.) When they came out, she said, two guys and a woman stopped them. "You were in there?" the woman asked. Then she looked at her companions and they went in—since it was now "okay" for females to go in.

I had stupidly forgotten to extend my room when I'd decided to stay over for the Burbee Barbecue and since it was Easter, I couldn't extend. The con

was nice enough to let me sleep in one of the consuite rooms. Thank you folks.

I got to the airport two hours early, started to read—I've just discovered a pair of writers who write as one, A.E. Maxwell—and started getting ideas for T-shirts. I came up with dozens. When I got to Burbank and daughter was an hour late, I called her. She'd lost the car keys, so I real Maxwell for another hour before she got me. I was home, finding a request to check the print-out of a story I'd just sold to Analog, the first time that's happened to me in short form. The con is over. Out.

By Alexis A Gilliland

The difference between men and women is a gap narrow enough to reach across and deeper than deep.

The difference between a drinker and a drunk is a couple of drinks

The difference between city life and country life is whether you ask your neighbor why she went to the bathroom at 3 AM.

The difference between love and like is that like can be turned off.

The difference between a star and an actor is what their agents can command.

I'm sure I am missing lots in this "report," both people and events, but since I took no notes...

By Aileen Forman

Sleep is Nature's Way to make you miss morning programming.

There are three kinds of fen: Lewd, rude and friends.

Man is the only animal who picks his nose.

The difference between movies and television is nipples and tampon ads.

The difference between love and like is a raging case of herpes.

Love is letting him have an affair.

Marriage is being able to fart out loud.

The difference between city life and country life is smog and shit.

Wild Heirs #6

SILVERCON

TWO-TO-ONE IT'S A GOOD CON!

WR



OH, THE
ODDS HAVE
GONE UP!



Carrying On

A Corflu column by Joyce Katz

There was one moment, one particular second in time when I knew Corflu had begun. I was sitting in the circle on Thursday evening. Most of the fans had been ferried back to the hotel, but the room had a comfortable number of well-known faces. The third turkey had been peeled down to its white bones, and most everyone had a tripped-out, stuffed full look. I rescued *The Box* from the garage, and filled up my tribal pipe—the 3-footer that’s easy to pass in a crowd. And as I leaned back in the chair, I knew the rest of the con would be *All Right*.

A Touch of Taste

“Oh, noooo,” I wailed to Arnie about ten minutes after we reached the hotel. “I forgot the whipped cream.” And by the time I remembered again, it was far too late to dash for home.

A hotel guard noted my distress, as I pounded at the locked doors of the gift shop. Just as I was about to hurl a chair through the window, he came to see what I was doing.

As I hung like a bat on the security screen of the closed store, I sobbed, “I’m in terrible trouble,” tossing my pretty curls and batting my eyelashes. “I forgot my husband’s travel bag, and I just have to get some stuff for him before he finds out.

“Oh, you poor dear,” he thought as he knocked me off the airvent I was trying to pry open. “What a meanie he must be,” he thought. But what he actually said was, “The shop in the other tower is open 24 hours.”

I ran through the back alleys of Jackie Gaughan’s Plaza like a NY marathoner sails past the White Castle stand in Brooklyn. I grabbed my prey, tossed a wad of bills at the clerk, and ran gracefully as an Indian Maiden, back to where the opening festivities were about to begin.

And that, Dear Arnie, is why the whipped creme pie had a distinct flavor of lemon-lime shaving soap.

This is for Andy H:

As we unfurled the banner, it was clear that it was upside down. We wrestled with the unwieldy strip of paper (so carefully prepared by Ken Forman) and stumbled over each other’s feet as we struggled to get the banner upright. We crashed together, all we Vegrants, in an ungraceful heap, still twisting and turning the stream of paper, trying to get the message erect.

John, Tom, Ken and Ben leaned forward to grasp the front end, to steady the flag. Limber and quick, Aileen jumped on the backs of the *Nine Lines* *Each* boys, steadying herself on John and Tom.

Marcy sprang forward and balanced against Ken and Ben, but they still couldn’t get the banner secured . . . one edge fell over, obscuring the greeting.

Then, just as (in an act of savage and bestial brutality) Peggy slammed the pie into Arnie’s face, Belle leaped gracefully to the top and grasped the still untattered banner, straightening it for all to see the message “Welcome to Corflu Vegas.”

(You say you don’t remember the pyramid? You didn’t see it just that way? You musta blinked.)

“I really am stuffed,” said the trufan as she teetered down the corridor.

“They put out way too much food,” complained her companion, as they walked into the con suite.

“Hi, Aileen” they chorused, “Where’s the pizza?”

An Overhead Conversation

“We had tickets to Weezer,” boasted the femme, waving archly toward the stereo, “But we gave them away.” She sighed sadly, “Then the people we gave them to didn’t even go.”

“Oh, that’s too bad; they’re really great,” commiserated the second fan woman. “By the way, who is this playing now?”

“Uuuuhhh . . . Weezer.”

“Oh, I don’t think so..”

A laconic Lunney stood nearby. He questioned the first femme. “So, who do you think this is?”

“Well, I thought it was Weezer. Who do you think it is?”

Frank: “It’s Weezer.”

They Know His Name

Iwalked up to him cautiously, this Ghod-Man who could strike me with a lightning bolt anytime he wished.

“Please don’t be angry,” I whimpered, as I prostrated myself before him. I held up a drawing pad, without lifting my eyes. Perhaps he would accept the tribute.

“Angry? Why on Earth would I be angry?” smiled the genial giant among men that Hooper has designated the Las Vegas Tribal Ghod.

“They know your name,” I blurted out. “we paid for the plates, but they have written you into their books.”

I gulped. It was hard to admit the rest. “They know the words science fiction, and they know the word fandom, and now they know Rotsler.”

A fearful light sprang from his eyes. The mighty gaze circled the room, as if hunting for the ones who dared speak his name.

"What the hell are you talking about, Joyce?" A chuckle rose in his throat. The Great One was feeling merciful.

Pressing my face into the parquet floor (while noticing a little lemon wax wouldn't go amiss), I intoned the words I knew might make the Vegas totem blow up. Although it would be interesting, I preferred it happen elsewhere.

"They won't let Silvercon come back to Jackie Gaughan's... none of the casinos will let any science fiction group have space. And when they learned Corflu was connected, they warned us..."

Linda Hartman, Hotel Stodge, had quivered all over when she told me, her voice shocked. "He even drew on my (... a sincere gasp ...) my sugar-bowls, this... this... this Rotsler!"

"Will you please spare us, thou Ghodlike and Noble Talisman? Will you please refrain from drawing on their china?"

The best sport in fandom laughed deep from inside, as a big smile crossed his face. "Of course! No problem! You don't want me to do it; of course I won't!"

And at the banquet, when I carried him a big stack of paper plates and bowls, he laughed out loud to see them, took out his pen, and created a historic paper blitz of Rotsler banquet art.

About Those Typoes

It seemed like a good time for me to make a Walkaround the con areas, to be certain I wasn't needed. Of course I wasn't. It was Saturday night, the party was going smoothly, and Aileen was wowing them with the laden boards.

Bravely masking my sincere and deep disappointment at not being needed to do consuite kitchen duties, I sat down with a group of ladies in the nonsmoking parlor.

"There were a lot of typos," said one of them whom I'll leave nameless. (I really should make notes, you know.) Maybe it was Vicki. Maybe it was Alyson L. Abramowitz.

I sighed. She had me there. And, there was nothing to do but Own Up. "Yeah... I guess there were plenty..."

Before I could get any deeper into the mea culpas, Su Williams jumped to my rescue. "It's computer errors, you know." Her voice oozed reason. "If

you are working on a computer with memory problems... anything could happen!"

Her voice lit a fire in my brain; she was onto something! "Yes," I agreed, and leaped to the center of the coffee table, knocking to one side the plentiful snackery. "Low memory can make letters drop out... or introduce other, wrong letters." I took a deep breath, as I tried to determine just how much I could wring out of it. As I waved the banner I always carry with me, Don't Blame Me, I cried out with enthusiasm: "A low-memored computer can make your excellent prose turn slipshot; it can make your accurate accounting come up short; it can cause your cosmic logic to fail."

The ladies looked vaguely troubled, but I didn't let them stop me. Su was chanting, "Go, Joyce, Go" as I outlined my plan.

"I see it clearly. This will be my new religion. I will go forth and preach it to all fandom.

As I floated above the gathering and out of the door, set to save fandom with My Message, I heard one of them ask, "She is kidding, isn't she?"

A Cloud of Fans

The *and smokin'* suite was full. The circle twisted and heaved as some came and others went, but the hardware kept going round and round.

At one point I counted five glowing firebowls passing from hand to hand. My own Plumber's Pipe, Ted's Covered Copper, John's Fool, The Jeweled Bowl, and Ben's Cloud. Each contained its own spicy mixture, as fandom melded with the spirit of Corflu Vegas.

The doors opened and shut, and the group ebbed and flowed. The laughing voices from the other rooms punctuated every entrance. Someone opened the outer door, and a cleansing wind swept our fumes into the night.

And thus did Corflu end... the crowd thinned, and the hazy cloud of fandom swept into fan history. But to me, they are still here, all of them somehow gone, yet left behind here in Las Vegas. They're seated with the Vegrants, gathered in The Big Circle, just waiting for a Pepsi, for someone to light the pipe, for someone to pass the platter, for someone to tell the tales.

This particular fine moment may never come again... but there will be another Circle, and another... and another.

That is why fandom is so great. ♣

Wild Heirs #6



The IBSG

by Tom Springer

The fallow and seedy roots of the fiendishly evil Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers can be traced back to the smoky environs of room 1812 at Silvercon 3, a place of fannish wonder where this dark and hungry metamorphosis took place. I was there, along with many others, when Andy Hooper, Dan Steffan, and John D. Berry succumbed to the Will of the Creel, deciding to forsake the incredible multi-conversational room party for a limp and cheap shrimp cocktail across the street at the Golden Gate Casino.

It was with sad wonder we watched them depart, unknowing shrimp-deviants who had crossed over to a darker side. I think it was Ted White who dubbed them the Shrimp Boys.

No one can exactly say when John was dropped from the lists, unable to meet the tough gastronomic standards set by the King of Creel, but that did little to slow the diabolical plans brewing between the remaining two.

Since their metamorphosis over a year ago, Dan and Andy live the Way of the Creel, having given themselves up to their King's soft wicker embrace. No one could have imagined they would become more than the already famous fans they were, that they would evolve: actually become fraternal, and change their name to the incorporated "Shrimp Brothers" . . . and become the founders of an intergalactic not-so-secret organization spanning the entire known universe dedicated to the single most evil act known to fankind: shellfish gobbling. No one could have guessed the power they would command, and the danger to fandom that they presented.

Except, thank Ghu, for Joyce Worley Katz, the first to realize the Shrimp Bros. were more than just a couple of fans having a good time with an old joke. Joyce was the first to wade through the deceptive cloud of cocktail sauce to a growing not-so-secret society of shrimp worshipping seculars. It was Joyce who discovered that the Shrimp Bros. were recruiting simple unsuspecting fans into the shady and semi-illegal group of Intergalactic Shellfish Gobblers.

Arnie, unknowing of the Shrimp Bros. master plan (to bend warm fannish souls to the dark ways of the Creel) found the whole idea moderately amusing and jokingly went along with the basic concept, keeping an eye open for the humorous, but completely oblivious to the real danger. Fortunately Joyce saw through the silly shrimp sayings and not-so-secret hand signals to the heart of the matter: they carried and handed out membership cards. Joyce figured (and rightly so) that if they were serious enough to covertly carry not-so-secret membership cards, well then, something was definitely going on.

Joyce quietly observed the strange finger-waving recruitment speech, eagerly playing along, sucking up their crustaceous propaganda, biding her

time in the guise of a loyal Shrimp Gobbler for when she could strike back and reveal the Shrimp Bros. to fandom for what they were. She didn't have long to wait.

With Corflu over, a good number of not-so-secret membership cards distributed to key figures in fandom, the Shrimp Bros. slowly sunk out of sight, back to the murky depths from which they came.

And battle was joined!

Joyce began her attack immediately, cutting the legs right out from under the terrible IBSG by alerting fandom with her April of *Situation Normal??* (her monthly zine) to the imminent danger the Shrimp Bros. and the King of Creel posed. The first volley fired was titled "Something is Fishy in Seattle . . . Just Ask Hooper," publicly naming one of the two Shrimp Bros. and thereby delivering a devastating wallop to the IBSG.

She went on to reveal how Andy, through his zine, APAK, had promised to hit her with a fish if she didn't respond, a clear threat, and one Joyce wasn't going to take lightly. She then went on to say, "Now Andy is again showing his fishy fascination. In a recent issue of *Apparatchik*, he bragged about the nature of the fish fry in Palmyra. And, in another, he referred to the *Nine Lines Each* crew as flounders." Joyce was quick to pounce on this stating to all on Sit Norm's mailing list, "If he must intimate fish, why flounders? Is not Washington the home of the mighty salmon? We demand answers."

Joyce followed up this line of attack with another merciless assault in her May issue titled, "Fishy Plot Widens: Bi-Coastal Conspiracy Feared to be Under Way." Which went on to reveal the not-so-secret membership card of the Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers. She also divulged their not-so-secret hand signal, delivering a crippling blow to their intergalactic communications.

She replied with martial alacrity to the fishy threat made to the editors of NLE by Andy Hooper in his APAK, circa spring '95, that states, "I will hit you with a flounder." On the spot, she roughed out a first draft concerning Andy's meaningless threats to the Nelly Boys, promising to pursue the means by which she would reveal the IBSG to fandom, showing to all, even the misguided, that the Shrimp Bros. were not just evil, habit forming, hungry, bad for the back, shellfish gobblers, but really much, much more.

With swiftness born of experience (and a healthy dose of fear), Joyce continued her fight, defending isolated victims (like the NLE Boys) who had been threatened with a flounder pounding, and revealing whenever possible the inherent dangers unknown "crustaceous critturs" in our fannish future might present.

Joyce, being a ghuist if she were to be anything at all (because she likes to insert the letter 'H' into words), found herself the lonely-lit beacon of

reason along the shore of a hostile (and readily available) sea of shrimp: the only trufan prepared for the fight against shrimp eager to spread their particular brand of evil among the unsuspecting faneds of fandom.

Months later.

Through Joyce's concerted efforts, fandom became aware of the Shrimp Bros. and their secret organization, the IBSG. Gingerly fandom began to explore and consider both the Brotherhood and the Shrimp Bros., and what they represented. Much was made of it...faneds talked...articles were written (by the hundreds)...and inevitably, sides were chosen. Lines were drawn (as if they weren't already apparent enough), and fandom became divided into two camps.

CAMP A: The followers of the Shrimp Bros. and that certain shadowy philosophy of "crustacean mastication for the nation." Who live only to serve the Dark King of Creel.

CAMP B: And the hood followers of Ghu, readers of Jophan, and practitioners of trufaannishness. Who can light up a smoky room with a few selflessly shared words found in their wise fannish hearts.

Arnie, blissfully ignorant of the writhing wave of shrimp looming behind him, oblivious to the deadly battle taking place around him, continued to view the whole thing with tolerant amusement instead of the serious and deadly attitude it called for. But Joyce was careful not to involve non-combatants. She subtly maneuvered about to insure all was well between battles with the King of Creel and his crooning crustaceans, the Shrimp Bros.

Slowly, Joyce's little fannish seeds (a monthly produced Sit Norm) began to bloom and recently Creel-converted faneds were once again shown the light. One by one they reaffirmed long held fannish beliefs and took back into their shriveled fannish hearts the story of Jophan, and for Roscoe's sake, sex too, as it became apparent that all the King of Creel and his Shrimp Bros. had to offer was a not-so-secret membership card and some dead shrimp.

Still the threat remained. Though the not-so-secret Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers had been effectively disbanded, two of the most diabolical followers of the King of Creel were still at large: Andy and Dan, the Shrimp Bros.

Dan lurked far to the East in the mythic land called Falls Church, and the other, Andy (whom Joyce believed to be the more dangerous of the two), resided in his watery coastal sanctum of Seattle. Yet to confront them in their own lairs was too dangerous a proposition (living in Vegas, Joyce knew about such things), so she waited, biding her time.

She continued pubbing her zine while secretly preparing herself for the most deadly confrontation of her life. What Joyce hoped to be the final battled between herself and the Shrimp Bros. was to take place somewhere in Las Vegas during Silvercon 4.

Knowing that Joyce was there in Vegas, waiting for Silvercon 4 and their inevitable arrival, Dan and Andy began to consider preparations and other weighty matters of import concerned with the defeat of their nemesis. Things needed to be decided. This wasn't your everyday conversation after all. Joyce

was no longer considered a member of the Brotherhood, she had cast off those robes, deemed herself a heretic, and begun a crusade against the Brotherhood. She was dangerous, for she knew many fans and BNFs and presumed powers they did not possess. Frankly, they were a little worried.

The pressure had begun to build, and correspondence between the two became more frequent as they made their final plans concerning their visit to Las Vegas, Silvercon 4, and their inevitable encounter with their hated nemesis, Joyce Worley Katz. Presented below is a letter written to Andy Hooper, from Dan Steffan, arguing a new and radically dangerous strategy.

Dear Brother,

I do not think we're sufficient to the task that awaits us at Silvercon 4. Our Brotherhood has been diminished, nay, devoured, to a few insignificant (but loyal) followers. Yourself and I are the only beings of power that stand between the Heretic and Our King.

We need new blood, plain and simple. New recruits to swell our ranks so as to serve as soldiers in the battles to come. We are not yet undone, Shrimp Brother! Our intergalactic crusade is only momentarily stalled, nothing more

I propose that instead of joining you at Silvercon 4, I travel across the Pond, the Great Atlantic, renowned shellfish receptacle, rallying our brethren as I go. I will arrive in Glasgow at the Worldcon to recruit a new army, a stronger army, of shellfish gobblers. I will stay for a short time to introduce them to our not-so-secret ways, then return and prepare for the Final Meeting at Corflu Nashville, at which time I will summon our European Sect of shrimp worshippers and shellfish gobblers to do battle against the heretic.

It is a selfless thing that I ask of you, to carry on the fight, to finally physically confront the Heretic without me at your side. So I ask of you this sacrifice. Do it for me, your Shrimp Brother, our King and values and ideas that the Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers stand for. Do it for yourself and all you believe in, for all you hold close to your heart. Do it for the shrimp.

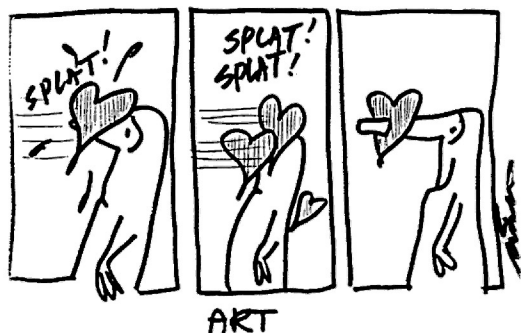
Your beloved and devout Shrimp Brother,

DAN

This letter was retrieved from one of Dan's not-so-secret couriers, who had been ambushed and subdued by a cadre of Joyce's closest fen, armed with specially bound issues of Burbee's Shangri-L'Affaires. With this information, intercepted at a time so close to Silvercon 4, coinciding with the fact that Dan Steffan won the TAFF race, led Joyce to believe that she'd be facing only one Shrimp Brother when the time came. Knowing this, she began to make preparations, deftly clouding Vegrant minds while commanding them about on her errands. What she was planning to do would remain a secret, none would know, not even her loyal Vegrants. It was her fight, and she'd fight it alone.

Secretly, without alerting even Arnie, Joyce began a special training regimen, consuming a powerful diet of trufannish zines and subtly sprinkling the letter "H" throughout her prose, Joyce never doubted herself, even during the hard times, though on occasion she'd wish someone would help her col-late. But she was a fan filled with purpose, righteous and empowered with the trufannish spirit, Joyce remained focused and positive.

As both forces prepared for the coming battle, fandom, unaware of the upcoming class, continued with its idyllic existence: a corner at a broken stoplight where two momentous powers were destined to collide. No one knew that on the second day of Silvercon 4, with the con in full swing and the Katz's room party the ball of energy to which all the fanzine fans gravi-



tated, that Joyce and Andy would meet in the very shrimp bar at the Golden Gate Casino that first lured the three intrepid fans to the dark side of the Creel, a year and a half before.

This historian was fortunate enough to have followed Joyce undetected to the Golden Gate's shrimp bar, a dark blotch near the heart of Vegas Fandom, to witness the enormous confrontation between these two titans of Ghood and Evil. I beat her out of the parking lot, and seeing where we were, made a bee-line for the shrimp bar, where Andy sat waiting, several shrimp cocktails placed conspicuously nearby. Through the smoke and background noise I saw Joyce casually close the distance between herself and Andy with a calm, purposeful stride.

As she passed me I noticed she held something gingerly behind her back, hidden from Andy, but her hand fully encompassed the object, making it impossible to identify. She stopped mere feet away. Andy turned on his stool to face her, looking grim and determined.

"Hello Andy," she said.

"Hello traitor," Andy bitterly replied. Joyce had the grace to wince.

"I'm glad I was able to find you here," she said, standing a couple of stools away.

"I wanted it to be private," Andy said "it's not every day I find myself having to put down a heretic-run-amok, who has lost sight of the Creel and its comfortable wicker embrace. Who has forgotten the glory of the masticated crustacean, the succulent juices and power found beneath the shell. Who has turned her back upon the Brotherhood and led a crusade against Dan and I, her brothers, and our loving and all-powerful King!" He intoned with an accusing stentorian voice, "You are responsible for the decline of the Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers!" Andy spit at her. "It's you who have spoiled our game, you who have dared to interfere with the Shrimp Bros. and the IBSG!" He cried, "It's you!"

Andy, mouth contorted with unexpected fury, deftly scooped (with his trademark two-fingered hook) the small, limp shrimp (laden with cocktail sauce) from the cocktail-glasses before him, flinging them at Joyce with each accusation, putting some major spin, curve, and drop on the shrimp for added emphasis.

Joyce was quick to block with her shield of Umor, for this task, temporarily taking the form of the latest Fosfax, she adroitly blocked each shot. The pale, rubbery shrimp bounced off the heavy zine to plop to the floor where they were unknowingly smushed flat by a dancing and dodging Joyce. Cocktail sauce splattered everywhere, thick glops of it, and soon the bar was littered with the gory remains of three shrimp cocktails. It's a picture that still wakes me at nights from a restless and troubled sleep, sweating and hiccupping, the pungent aroma of smushed shrimp tickling my nose.

"Your shrimp are powerless against me!" Joyce proclaimed, tucking her soggy Fosfax into her back pocket. "You'll have to do better than that!"

Andy stood up, his knees maybe a little weak, but his gaze narrowed as he glimpsed his target (Joyce's tummy) and a look of concentration tightened his face. He raised his hands with a practiced flourish, a quick and efficient movement, and pointing his index fingers up and in, kind of creating a triangle, he began wagging those two fingers up and down.

"The not-so-secret signal of the Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers?!" Joyce asked incredulously.

Andy continued with his finger wagging, and as I watched I began to feel a craving, an urge, that almost formed into a definite need had it not been for Joyce's mocking voice. I began to salivate as the odor of smushed shrimp and drying cocktail sauce began to tickle not only my nose, but my appetite as well.

Joyce squinted at the wagging fingers, the bobbing shrimp antenna, then

from behind her back, where she'd been hiding it all along, she pulled out what I thought to be her secret weapon. A hotdog, with The Works (ala Walt Willis).

"Backed by the faannish and potentially economically powerful Chicago Science Fiction League I will not fall prey to your slavering shrimp hangers! With this dog, I do protect me, and proclaim your lowly shrimpdom a lie!" Joyce proclaimed, waving the Chi-dog about with righteous vigor. Then began to eat it. With great gusto, I might add.

Halfway through the dog Andy stopped with the finger wagging, and relaxed his stance, though his very being radiated mortal desperation. "You'll have to destroy me, you know."

"Moff nephfufarugma," Joyce chewed.

"Oh yes," Andy said, "I won't let you take me alive. I won't be put into one of those reconditioning fandoms! I won't!"

"Youg nuf hag a chomf," she said through her Chicago dog.

"I'm not going back to Madison either! You'll have to destroy me, there's no other way I'll submit!" Andy laughed hysterically, wiped his finger through the remaining sauce, and began to paint his death face.

"We'llg haf nonf othat," Joyce chawed, finishing off the last of the yummy shrimp-inhibitor. Andy continued painting, humming the Brotherhood theme song, a little ditty that went something like, "Shrimp Boys are a-snackin' — they're snackin' tonight — Shrimp Boys are a-comin' — with big appetites!"

Joyce shook her head and wiped a dab of mustard from the corner of her mouth. "That's not going to work Andy, let's face it, it's time to pay the subscription. There's no copping out to a reconditioning fandom Andy. You don't get off that easy," Joyce announced.

Andy continued painting, having traced a red smeary line from his forehead to his chin that divided his face. He crossed it, tracing his eyebrows with the sticky sauce. As he began to dab beneath his eyes, Joyce, exasperated and a little put off by this strange behavior, stepped forward and grabbed Andy's cocktail-covered hand while he drew a line beneath his left eye. Seeing her move toward him, Andy jerked back, Joyce flailed at his saucy hand, and while grabbing the red waving limb, she accidentally pushed one of his scarlet digits into his eye, nearly poking it out.

"Ouch! Hey, watch it!" he complained, eye squeezed tight and tearing from the acidic sauce.

"Oops, sorry about that," she said, deftly snatching a napkin and dabbing at his eye.

"It stings."

"Here, let me dip this in some water," and suiting actions to words she dunked the smeared napkin into a water glass and carefully dabbed at his eye.

"Ouch," he whined, but there wasn't any heart in it.

"Can you see," Joyce asked, concern writ all over her beautiful fannish face.

"I dunno."

"Well try, open your eye," she suggested, leaning close and looking at the injured orb.

Andy's eyes fluttered, he blinked hard, and rubbed at his closed eye with the ball of his finger, then blinked again and assumed a painful-looking squint.

"Well?" Joyce prompted.

"Yeah, I can see," Andy said, obviously dejected about his lousy chances for martyrdom. "It still stings though."

"Let's get you up to our room and we'll flush it out real good," she said, catching his wavering arm and clutching it to her side, maternal and possessive. "And we'll have a hotdog, and maybe some good cheer," she promised,

guiding him along.

“But what about our...”

“Don’t worry about that dear,” Joyce interrupted, “That’s already taken care of,” she assured him, patting his hand.

I followed them to the doors but thought it wise to go no further, for Joyce seemed to have things well in hand and I didn’t want to spoil her momentum with a sudden appearance. But there, at the swinging-hissing doors of the casino, I heard Andy ask plaintively, “But what are you going to do with me?” Joyce turned to him, glowing with trufannishness, keeping the door open with her hip, and said, “Why Andy, we have to keep an eye on you! We can’t do that if you’re up and away in Seattle, now can we?” Andy shook his head in the negative, moving through the door Joyce held open.

“No sweetie, and we can’t send you back to Madison either. So that only leaves one thing left that we can do.”

“What’s that?” I heard as the door began to swing close.

“You’re staying here Andy,” she said earnestly looking up at him. “You’re moving to Las Vegas!”

And that’s how Joyce Worley Katz defeated Andy Hooper and the Shrimp

Bros., breaking the Intergalactic Brotherhood of Shellfish Gobblers, and forever shattering the shellfish gobbling bond that was born to those many months ago. Backed by the indomitable power of a trufan and the CSEL, Joyce laid to rest yet another menace to fandom while at the same time bringing another misguided fan into the Vegas fold. Andy was righteously exorcised with the fanatical fervor of a trufan who not only sees the light, but reflects it as well. And so Vegas fandom gained another faned, while the Shrimp Bros. were forever divided.

Not until Dan returns to the States will Joyce have the opportunity to finish the job. And though Dan will have a complement of European Shellfish Gobblers backing him at Corflu Nashville, with Andy now basking in her trufannish glow, Joyce feels confident that Dan too, will fail his King, and cross back over to the trufannish side.

So, before Arnie could use his not-so-secret Shrimp Bros. membership card to pick a piece of shrimp flesh from between his teeth, Joyce had, temporarily, saved fandom.

Just like that. 🍀

Wild Heirs #7.5

Fans Upon the Colorado

A True Life Adventure by Ken Forman

Herein lies the tale of six intrepid adventurers. Tom Springer, Tammy Funk, Don Miller, Glade XXXX, Erica Grong and I set out one Friday morning seeking high adventure and excitement. Five of us were veterans of at least one other canoe trip down part of the mighty Colorado River. This trip we planned to travel a stretch of river that crosses the Grand Canyon National Park and Lake Mead National Recreation Area. Twelve miles of easy camping and moderate canoeing.

The Launch

“**Y**ep, it’s a flat tire,” Erica confirmed.

“So what now?” Tom asked.

“Don’t change it,” she advised, “the last thing a car thief wants to do is change a tire. Leave it.”

With that sage advice, we launched our canoes into the still, warm waters of the bay. With beautiful weather, only a slight breeze, and half a day’s paddling before us, we knew things were looking up. Erica and I started with light, easy strokes to limber up our shoulders.

Fifteen minutes later I stopped to take a look around.

“Hey, why’d you stop?” my paddle partner wanted to know.

“Sidebar!”

“What do you mean ‘sidebar’? We just got started.”

“I know,” I answered, “but I want to take a look at the map and wait for the rest of our group.

It’s amazing how quickly Ms Grong responded to the break. I hadn’t finished my sentence before she stowed her paddle, grabbed her “Carbo-pump,” and started fishing for a lighter. I appreciate a canoeing partner who is as quick to slack-off as I am. Besides, had I turned around to check the party’s progress, I would have stopped anyway. Don and Glade hadn’t launched yet. I sat there and selected stuff to sip. And as I sat there, sipping stuff, the morning’s events went through my mind.

The Flashback

Tammy Funk and Tom Springer showed up on my doorstep just after 9am. Since Tammy looked so fresh eyed and pleasant, and since Tom carried a box of donuts under his arm, I invited them in. Good Mornings went around and Tammy promptly reclined on my futon: her eyes closing even before her head fully rested on the bolster.

I offered Tom a Coke and Tammy some coffee. Tom said “Sure,” Tammy just mumbled “Ungh.” I took both to be affirmative.

“Hello, Huh-huh,” Erica’s husky voice called through my front screen door.

“Come in and have some breakfast.”

“Am I late?” she asked.

"It's only nine-fifteen or so. It's early," someone who wasn't Tammy said.

"Is Don here, yet?" Erica asked.

"No, not yet. I told him to be here at eight. I figured he'd be about an hour late, so he's actually only about fifteen minutes late."

I'm usually late to events. The phrase KST (Ken Standard Time) got coined to describe my penchant for showing up twenty minutes late. On the other hand, Don Miller is often hours late. He's a great guy and I love having him around, but the only way to keep from strangling him is to plan on his tardiness.

Sure enough, he showed up at 9:23, right on KST.

We packed Tom's Rodeo and my pick-up, loaded up with ice and were on the road by ten o'clock.

The launch point beckoned us from over one hundred miles away, and the mighty Colorado River was just beyond that. Three hours later found us at Pierce Ferry, unloading the canoes and equipment. (Pierce Ferry is, by the way, the spot where all the Grand Canyon river runners and rafters pull out.)

We left my truck a few miles away at South Cove. A few miles away by car, but twelve miles by canoe. It'd wait there patiently while we took three days to travel those twelve miles. Three days of Nature — warm water and wildlife — and partying — beer, wine, food, and sidebars.

When Tom, Tammy, Erica and I left to deposit my truck, we figured Don and Glade would have plenty of time to unload the canoes from the trailer, pack their canoe and be ready to launch by the time we'd returned. Our plan was partly successful. The canoes were on the ground.

We weren't in a hurry though, so I took it all in stride. Erica and I loaded our vessel, and started lashing the equipment down. Tom and Tammy's boat needed only a few added bungee cords to complete its preparation. Don and Glade should be only minutes away.

The Scouts

Tom and Tammy's canoe glided up to ours.

"Why the delay?"

"Take a look at the shore. They haven't left yet."

"Not yet?" Tammy wanted to know. "What's taking that boy so long?"

"Well, you know, he's Don."

We consulted the map to decide which way to go. My optimistic memory just knew that we'd know how to get where we wanted to get to. The bay, and the marsh, had other ideas.

I think we've all seen too many movies where the heroes forge across a swamp, hacking aside the flora with a machete and fending off various poisonous fauna.

"Maybe there's a way through the marsh." I suggested optimistically.

"Is that how we get out of this bay?" Tammy asked.

"The main exit is to the north, that way," I said, pointing to the left.

By this time, Don and Glade's boat was in the water and slowly approaching us, so we were all finally under way.

"Which way do we go after we get out of the cove?" someone wanted to know.

"After we get out of the cove, we head upriver — providing the current's not too strong — until we get to a good campsite." I said, indicating our route on the map in front of us. "We're twelve miles from South Cove, where my truck is; we should be able to do that in three days, easy. The first canoe trip, we went thirty-four miles in three days, so this'll be a snap. If we stay near the banks of the Colorado, we might be able to paddle against the current and make it a couple of miles upriver. There's a waterfall, and a bat cave (please, no Batman jokes) that I'd like to see, and besides, the Grand Canyon is only a couple of miles away. If we make it there, we'll all be able to say

that we canoed the Grand Canyon."

About this time, the third canoe joined our flotilla, and Tom quickly recapped our discussion. (I seem to recall that Tom actually grunted something guttural and gestured with a clawed hand in the direction of the marsh. He also succeeded in handing Don a pair of hemostats while the canoes bobbed on a small swell. Tom may be an ape, but he's a communicating, tool using ape.) After some discussion, Don and Glade volunteered to scout a way through the marsh and report back, while the four of us started moving north along the marsh's border.

We paddled for a little while, keeping an eye on the scouts. Periodically they would disappear behind a particularly dense clump of vegetation. The further we got, the more certain we were that our scouting party would return with news of an impassable sand bar.

Eventually we got to the end of the spit; the mighty Colorado River flowing by us, from right to left, as quickly as an respectably sized river might flow. My hopes of canoeing upriver drifted away on the current, but optimism and determination can overcome any obstacle. Or so the theory goes. The other canoe in the party glided up to ours for a confab.

"Now what?" asked Tom.

"Well, we want to head upstream, and if Don and Glade made it through the marsh, they'll be waiting for us. If they're behind us, they'll catch up," I logged.

Erica put paddle to water and we moved into the current. All went surprisingly well: Erica is reasonably fit, and I can do my share. We paddled strongly and in sync for a solid five minutes. I thought, "We'll be in Grand Canyon in just a little while." Then I noticed the shore.

Something along the bank caught my eye, so I turned and watched it. Ten strokes later, we were still even with the same spot. I started paddling a little harder to make some headway.

I watched that spot on the shore for nearly fifteen minutes before I'd let myself believe that we weren't going anywhere. Looking around, I noticed that Tom and Tammy had moved further into the current and were now struggling to move to the opposite shore. That seemed like the best idea, so I

THIS FANZINE HAS
BEEN REGISTERED WITH
LOCAL AUTHORITIES
AS A FANNISH DEVIANT



turned us into the current and aimed for the spot Tom was aiming for: a nice little sand beach, just big enough for our three canoes when Don and Glade catch up.

Tom's experience with a canoe is matched only by my own, which is to say, this trip marked our third trip together, and our third trip ever. Tom landed smack on the mark and I reached the shore a little way upriver. By the time Erica and I tied-off next to their canoe, Tom stepped out onto the sand bar. Suddenly the quiet of the outdoors was filled with Tom's loud laughter. We all looked toward him to see what was so funny (we all like a good joke.) Lo and behold, Tom stood thigh deep in the deceptively solid looking bank. You know what I'm talking about, that hollow sounding, wet sucking, found only along the banks of rivers mud/sand that looks firm but isn't? I've always considered it semi-quicksand. Needless to say, we sat in the canoes, Tom stuck his foot in the mud to anchor us, had a sidebar, and waited for the scouts.

About two hours later, one of us spotted a red canoe with two people in it about a half mile upriver. Thinking quickly, I gout out my handy-dandy-super-duper-authentic-WWI-emergency signal mirror, handed down from my grandfather, to my uncle to me. Taking careful aim, I flashed the spot of sunlight at our lost companions. Don later said, "Damn, that mirror's fucking bright."

With the party reunited, we tied all the boats together into a raft, broke out a six-pack and relaxed. Honestly, these canoe trips are fabulous and the getting back to nature is fun. The camping and swimming are great, too, but the best parts are when the current's swift enough to get us where we want to go, and we can just float. We talk, listen and generally have a great time. These are the best parts.

While we relaxed, Don and Glade told their story.

The Marsh

I'm sure Don was thinking, "The thickets of willow don't seem too bad. A little effort here could save us a lot of time." Such a noble thought.

The further they got into the marsh, the thicker it became.

As the glimpses of the main party got fewer and further between, Glade started to become a little worried.

"Is this going to work?" he asked nervously.

"I don't see why not," Don replied.

"I'm not so sure we can find a route through this marsh."

"Sure, sure. We can do this, look here, on the map," Don reassured.

"Here, let me look at that thing," Glade said, reaching back.

"Catch..."

Don tossed the map past Glade's outreaching hand, straight into his chest.

The map, taking its cue from Laurel and Hardy, bounced off of Glade's chest and into the water.

Fortunately Don had the foresight to purchase a map mad from plastic rather than paper. They just fished it from the lake, shook it off and continued navigating.

"See, we're here and we want to get here," Don said, pointing to the map.

"Okay," said Glade, rather unassured.

They continued moving through the ever-thickening marsh, fending off low hanging branches and paddling their canoe. The water grew shallower as the moved on and they soon grounded their canoe. The mud scraped and sucked at them, impeding their progress, and it seemed that poling themselves along would be their only option.

Glade, seeing how difficult their passage was getting, started looking for

ways out of the marsh and back onto the river.

"Maybe if we went that way," Glade pointed to his left.

"Keep going," Don chided. "Do you want the others to think we're not able to..."

Don's chiding was suddenly brought up short when the canoe slammed into one of the submerged trees; shaking debris into their boat.

"Yawh!" Don cried when he realized that the debris was alive: hundreds of small gray spiders had fallen onto their heads and into their canoe.

The spiders scuttled and scurried. Of course, they weren't planning on leaving their little tree domain quite so abruptly.

"Maybe we ought to get out and push," Glad offered.

"Sure, you do that and I'll push from inside the boat," said Don.

Don has a very reassuring 'sure'.

While Don steadied the boat, Glade stepped out into the mud, mud the very same consistency that Tom experienced almost a mile away. But that didn't deter our intrepid scouts. They were determined to find their own Northwest Passage.

Two hours of slogging through mud, avoiding muck covered trees and fending off hordes of small spiders, gnats, and bugs found them several hundred feet closer to the river and covered with brown mud from mid-thigh down.

"Look," a tired and muddy Glade called, "the river."

Sure enough, the trees parted to reveal the Colorado.

With a Herculean effort, the two grunted and pushed the canoe, now brown instead of red, through the last stand of trees and into the river.

"Aahh!" exclaimed the two unexpected falsettos. The river was much colder than the marsh had been.

"What now?" Glade asked.

"Why don't we stay here and clean some of this gunk off while we wait for the others to catch up?"

Finally, after some time and much water splashing, they decided to start down river, planning to meet up with the rest of the party. The swift current made short work of the mile they had saved by going through the marsh. Finally, rounding a bend in the river, a flash of light caught Don's eye. Moments later, the party was reunited.

The Campsite

"See that over there? That's called 'God's Pocket,' best fish-

ing on the lake. And look, there's a Great Blue Heron."

"There goes Ken, again," Tammy laughed, "we brought him along just to point things out."

I nodded toward the redhead, smiled my thanks, and continued my impromptu tour. "See that cliff face over there, the one to the north? That's the north run of Grand Canyon, the Shivwitz Plateau is on top..."

Three red canoes, lashed together, floated down the Colorado. The six of us talked, drank and ate lunch. The lunch part proved to be an exercise in cooperation.

The menu called for a light lunch of salami, hard sausage, two or three cheeses, apples and sourdough bread. Each adventurer took u a knife and an ingredient. With deft moves and true style, we commenced carving on our respective food stuffs.

"Here."

"Take this."

"Can I have a slice of cheese?"

"Who's got the bread? Thanks."

"How's that salami?"

"Mmmmfggll"

You can imagine the rest.

Tom Springer, bless his heart, brought a bota bag filled with Tropical Rum and a cooler of Capri Sun's Tropical Citrus Twists. We'd take long pulls from the rum bag and chase it with fruit drink. The afternoon passed in a kind of haze, pleasantly pierced by calls from songbirds and splashes from fish.

Eventually we reached a part in the river where the banks started to widen out and the current slows. The red mud and silt that flows with the water, starts to settle down and the water takes on a beautiful blue-green. It warms up, too. This area is also popular with skiers who use this part of Lake Mead. The last thing we wanted to do was get swamped by some inconsiderate skier's wake, so we untied the raft and went back to the paddling part.

A hour's effort saw us nearly to our first night's campsite.

"So, where're we camping tonight?" Erica asked for the third time in fifteen minutes.

"See that big black rock? That's Lava Point," I explained. "The river goes to the left of it, we're going to the right. I remember a cove on the left, just after the point, that's nice."

When the water's flat, and the canyon walls stretch off into the distance, there's no reference so it's hard to tell distances. The near end and the farthest may seem right next to each other, when they're viewed from an angle and some distance. Consequentially, I could understand Erica's mounting disbelief in my navigation.

"You always say 'just one more cove over,'" she whined.

"Yeah, but don't I take you on interesting adventures?" I countered.

"Like the last one, where we nearly got stranded in a wild canyon with almost no food or water?"

"Look, we got out of that one alive, didn't we? And you're a better person for having experienced that trip. Besides, I was there, too. I don't feel like repeating that trip. Just paddle and we'll get there."

"Let's take a break and wait for the rest," she offered wisely.



Soon, the other two canoes floated next to ours.

"Ken sez 'one more cove over,'" Erica teased.

"We have to go around that," Don said, pointing at a bluff in the distance. "That's Lava Point."

"What're you talking about?" I said. "Lava Point's behind us and we're just outside of Cormorant Cove."

Don didn't agree with me, even though we were looking at a map, using a compass and reading the Indian smoke signals in the distance. We looked toward Tom for resolution.

"Don went through the marsh," Tom chuckled. "I'm following Ken."

"Come on Don, let's take a look and if it's not a suitable site, we'll continue on," I reasoned.

We rounded a couple of protrusions and found a little inlet that served our purposed: a small beach just big enough for the three canoes, flat campsites for more than the six of us, and plenty of firewood. We didn't waste any time discussing it, we all knew this was the site. We unloaded the canoes (with appropriate breaks for sidebars) and took a look around.

Basalt cliffs, 200–300 feet tall, surrounded our little inlet on three sides. Tall, columnar basalt — similar to Lassen National Park, or the Devil's Tower (as seen in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*) — majestically thrusting into the sky. Talus slopes, from broken columns, flanked the base of the cliffs. And firewood, except the wood was forty feet or so up the steep talus slopes. Glade and I volunteered to collect some.

We set up camp, built fires and started dinner preparations. A vulture lazily glided into the cove and bounced off the updrafts caused by the cliffs. I'm not sure if he was eyeing us for future reference or just looking for scraps. Either way, we watched him glide without flapping for about fifteen minutes, just using the local wind currents. It's no wonder early man wanted to fly, birds make it look so effortless.

The menu called for me to be the cook so I set up the kitchen and started dinner. The odor of chicken stir-fry soon joined with the smells of a campfire and smoke from the pipe. Unfortunately someone (me) forgot to pack the rice, so dinner was a little short. Luck for us, Don's habit of over-packing worked in our favor and he broke out the hotdogs we'd told him not to bring. Thanks Don.

I don't know how late the others stayed up, but I passed out under the light of a nearly full moon.

The First Morning

Mother Nature is kind to those of us who appreciate her wonders, either that or she cuts lots of slack for fools. We hadn't even noticed the night before, but the basalt bluffs extended to the east, right where the sun rose. We got to avoid the early morning sun and heat.

I awoke sometime after sunrise and before noon, give or take a few hours. Don't ask me for more accuracy, I don't wear my watch when I'm camping. I awoke, but I wasn't in a hurry to get up, so I just lazed in bed for a while. Then I heard the sound of Tom releasing a long exhale, almost as if he had inhaled a lung-full of gas, and then held his breath for a spell. He was obviously enjoying the morning air, so I decided to join him.

"Wake and bake," he said when he saw me poke a head out of my tent. I think he was forecasting what the day would be like.

"Don't mind if I do," I answered. "When we're done enjoying this morning air, how about a swim?"

"Sure."

Twenty minutes later we were knee deep in the water discussing the wisdom of our decision.

"Damn, this is c-c-c-old," I chattered.

"I don't know, Ken, my feet don't feel cold any more," he replied.

"It's called frostbite."

Nevertheless, we knew we needed to wash the previous day's sweat off.

I held my breath, and did a Nestea Plunge backwards into the water. I've been in colder water before, but not on purpose. The shock caused me to exhale, but wouldn't let me take in a full breath.

"How's the water?" Tom queried.

I wasn't about to let him know how cold it was, but all I could manage was "wwwho, wwho, wwho, it's, wwho, f-f-f-fine."

Being a good swimmer and always trusting me are two of Tom's finer traits. He jumped right in.

After his heart restarted, we swam around enough to loosen our muscles.

Tom's face kept contorting into . . . I don't know, but he seemed to be doing more than just swimming.

"I can't do it," he cried with anguish.

"Can't do what?" I asked, merely for the purpose of this article. I was having similar problems so I knew what he was grimacing about.

"I have to pee so bad my teeth are yellow, but I can't get anything to come out."

It should be noted here that the waters of Lake Mead are very alkaline. So much so that urine is instantly neutralized in the water. The park service posts notices around the lake advising people to urinate in the water rather than on the shore. It should also be noted (for the women) that when a man's genitals are subjected to cold, they shrivel up and try to recede into the abdomen. Right then, our balls were above our kidneys and heading north.

Eventually everything came out okay and we came out of the water.

"I need a sidebar before I start breakfast," Tom stated matter-of-factly, so we sat and contemplated life while the others started to wake up.

"I think a swim is just the thing I need to wake up," said Glade, yawning.

Tom and I looked at each other, smiled and encouraged him to jump on in. At least we were kind enough to throw him a towel when he got out.

Tom's breakfast burritos—scrambled eggs and sausage rolled in a tortilla—were as filling as they were tasty. Everyone ate their fill and even a little more.

Day Two

After eating and breaking camp, Erica was more than ready for a day canoeing. Tom and Tammy launched their canoe, and we were moments behind. We assumed Don and Glade would follow shortly. We paddled slowly for a while, looking at the wildlife and the geology. Looking ahead, we saw T2's boat, and we were sure D&G would be right behind.

By the time we reached Lava Point, just before the river proper, we were ready for a break. T2 slowed to a stop so we joined them and had a sidebar. There was no sign of the third canoe.

"Shall we wait for them?" Tom asked.

"Sure, let's float here for a while and see how long it takes."

We waited, and talked, and waited. If we drifted too far from Lava Point, we'd slowly paddle back, and wait some more. After the third time of paddling back, we decided to go a little further, just around the corner.

"What if they can't find us," Erica wanted to know.

"There's only one way for them to go," Tammy reminded her.

As we rounded the point, I started "pointing things out" to the others.

"Lava Point is a lava extrusion. When the lava flow got to this point, some of it was squeezed out of a crevasse or hole—just like toothpaste. That's

what the point is." Perched on rocks sticking out of the water near shore, a large group of cormorants watched our leisurely progress.

Tammy chuckled, knowing that I was doing what I like to do.

Once around the corner, we found a little beach to wait for our lost third. Twenty minutes had passed when someone suggested we go look for them.

"I don't think I want to paddle back the way we came just to find Don and Glade. After all, it is Don, you know." Tom chided. We made the decision to continue down river.

About a half mile later we found a very nice sand beach, a great place to have lunch. We landed and prepared to eat. Tammy and Erica both looked royally pissed off about our wayward friends. Tom and I, being the stalwart fellows, and strong paddlers that we are, volunteered to take a canoe back to Lava Point to look for D&G.

It took only a few minutes of serious effort for us to reach our destination. We boated past a small rock sticking out of the water. Cormorants and grebes perched on the rock felt we were a little close for comfort so they unfurled their wings and took flight. If only we could do the same.

As we rounded the point, Tom spotted a red speck in the distance. I got out the binoculars and verified that the speck was indeed the rest of our crew. Once again I flashed my mirror in their direction figuring that if I blinded them, at least they'd have an excuse for being so late.

While we waited for them, Tom turned around to face me, called for a sidebar and said, "Okay, let me get this straight . . . We got to the launch site in the early afternoon, unloaded and packed the canoes, launched, and then waited for Don to launch."

"Yes . . ." I prompted, hoping he'd get to the point.

"When Don and Glade finally caught up with us," he continued, "they decided to venture off into the marsh."

"What're you getting at?" I asked, a little impatiently.

"I'm just trying to get the story straight, you know, so that when we tell it to our friends, it'll be accurate. Anyway, they went through the marsh and went around. We waited for them for . . . how long?"

"Two hours," I reminded him.

"That's right, two hours. When they finally showed up, they're covered in mud and spiders. Then, after that, when we found that perfect campsite, Don wanted to go somewhere else . . ."

" . . . but we didn't listen to him," I said, finishing the sentence for him.

"That's because he went through the march, instead of going around," Tom answered.

"Okay, so you launched this morning," I prompted, "we caught up and got to Lava Point where . . ."



“...we waited for them, again!” Tom stated. “What’s the deal with him?” he wanted to know.

“I’ll let you know when I figure it out, but I think that Don’s so proud that he can’t admit when he’s made a mistake and he is so scatter-brained that he makes lots of them.”

“Let’s make sure we don’t follow his lead ever again.”

“I agree,” I agreed.

“So we went further down river without Don and Glade, hoping they’ll catch up,” he added.

“I think you’ve got the right of it so far.”

“The ladies got pissed off, we stopped, had a bite to eat, and then you and I,” he said indicating me, “decided to rescue them in case they’d capsized or drowned or something.”

“That sounds like it to me.”

By this time, D&G’s boat was nearing ours and we could see the weary grimaces on their faces as they paddled.

“Where’ve you been?” Tom wanted to know.

“Oh, we decided to see what was at the north end of Grand Wash,” Don said.

“Bullshit!” Glade erupted. “This Bozo didn’t know where he was going and turned left instead of right. We’ve been looking for the river since we left. It took me forever to convince Don that we were going in the wrong direction.”

“Well, have a drink and a sidebar with us,” I said, handing them the necessary equipment to do so. “After you’ve rested a bit, we’ll catch up with the ladies.”

The Second Night

We paddled the rest of the day, past Driftwood Island, past Driftwood Cove and into Iceberg Canyon. It seems funny to name a desert canyon “Iceberg” especially since the air temperature must’ve been hovering near a hundred, nevertheless, the rock formations did look just a teensy bit like icebergs so I can’t fault the name.

Wild burros grazed near the waterline and cormorants and grebes dived for fish. Above our heads, a turkey vulture glided lazily overhead. We canoed easily but steadily past the weird geology that is so prominent in the Southwest.

Erica asked me where tonight’s campsite would be.

“A wonderfully pleasant place called Devil’s Cove. If we can’t find anything there, just beyond it is Hell’s Kitchen. Either one would be fine.”

“Oh joy, sounds charming.”

“Actually they’re very nice, with sand beaches and warm coves.”

“Beaches? Sand Beaches?”

“Yea, sand beaches with nice, hot sand.”

I don’t think she believed me, but I knew she’d come around. “Hey,” I reminded her, “wasn’t I right about the last campsite?”

She paddled on in silence.

An hour or so later, we entered the mouth of Devil’s Cove. It is quite large, being half a mile or more across, so it took us another thirty minutes to actually get into the cove proper.

Devil’s Cove splits into two smaller (I say smaller only because they are only a quarter of a mile across) bays, much like a forked tongue. We (all six of us, we were careful not to let Don and Glade get too far away from the rest of the party) took our time before we settled on a landing site. We slipped into the middle of the main bay, looking for possible campsites. It didn’t take us too long to determine that all of the best campsites were already claimed.

“Where to?”

“I indicated the point between the two main bays. “How ‘bout there?”

I don’t think the rest of the group was convinced, but they followed my lead and we landed on a beautiful sand and gravel beach.

Of course, it took Don and Glade another fifteen minutes to get from where they were to the shore. By then, the other four had started unloading our boats.

“Is this it?” Don demanded. “We’re not going to stop here! It’s the first place we’ve stopped. Surely there’re better places than this. C’mon, let’s check somewhere else.”

“Look Don,” I said tiredly, “we paddled most of today, the sun will go down in a few hours, this beach is nice, what with the sand and water. What’s wrong with here?”

“It’s the first place we’ve looked,” he explained again.

At that, I turned around and continued unloading my canoe.

As it turned out, Don later apologized for whining and admitted that the site was indeed a “very nice place to camp.”

Just inland from the beach, the sand formed a tall dune, over one hundred feet tall. The view from atop the dune is simply spectacular. At the top of the dune is a memorial dedicated to two friends. The sign under the pictures tells a story of four fishing buddies who’ve “fished these waters since the thirties.” The first of the four died in 1990, the second just a year later. Surprisingly enough, the sign, the pictures and the whole monument is untouched by weather or vandals. I can only imagine that the remaining two friends must visit the hill regularly to maintain the landmark.

Once camp was set up, Tom and I decided to do some cliff diving. O, did I mention the cliff? Well, Tom and I took turns jumping off a cliff into some deep water. I know some people wouldn’t have what it takes to dive from a precipice into a lake, but Mr. Springer and myself couldn’t resist the temptation. I suppose the fact that the cliff was only nine inches above the surface of the lake helped us overcome any apprehension we may have felt.

For dinner, we planned on chicken fajitas and beer. We ended up packing more food than any of us could possibly eat, but we kept cooking and eating until we all felt full enough to imitate bloated, beached whales.

The Last Day

When the heat from the morning sun made sleeping impractical, the camp started stirring. Tom’s breakfast burritos once again got us started with carbohydrates and protein. Sandy Point, just north of our final destination, could be seen across the river and a mile or so downstream. The day’s endeavor was shaping up to be just a couple of hour’s labor and we’d be done. It almost seemed too soon, but by then, we all looked forward to hot showers and cold air conditioning. After an after-breakfast swim, we loaded up and started on the final leg of the journey.

Fortunately for us, the third day proved to be the least traumatic (and consequently the least interesting.) Suffice to say, we made it across the river and downstream without incident.

Pulling into South Cove felt like an anticlimax, but I think we were all ready to finish the trip. Jet skis and fishing boats cruised back and forth in the cove, their wakes making the last three hundred feed some of the most difficult. Perseverance and perspiration won out over these final obstacles.

Once out of the water, Tom and I hopped into my truck and drove back to his. Sure enough, it was still waiting there, flat tire and all. Oh how nice it was to return to civilization. 🌻

Wild Heirs #8

The Las Vegas Garden of Fuggheads

by Arnie Katz

The rich variety of Las Vegas Fandom startles many the first time they encounter the Fandom of Good Cheer. A big city is expected to boast a few fans, but Vegas has sprouted one of the country's largest urban fandoms in the last four years.

When I tell people that the Las Vegrants, the invitational, informal fanzine club hereabouts, has over two dozen members, they ask how many of them are imaginary—and there are many local fans who are totally outside the Vegrants orbit. The sight of 50 or more at a Social has rendered more than one visitor temporarily speechless.

Besides fanzine fans, Las Vegas has serious students of science fiction, sf gamers, media fans, filkers and just about every genus of the fan species that breathes air. (Out at Area 51, we are developing an anaerobic fan. They'd be ideal for smoke-filled SmoF rooms.)

Amidst all this plenty, one type of fan is in short supply: fuggheads. We haven't produced any who are worthy to carry the banner of stubborn stupidity across the stage of international fanzine fandom.

Before going further, we must differentiate between the unregenerate, dyed-in-the-wool fugghead and the person who occasionally says or does fuggheaded things. Everyone makes mistakes, so we should be charitable when it's someone else's turn to step over the line. This article concerns permanent residents of Fugghead-land, not daytrippers.

Also out of bounds this time are the merely bumptious and improperly socialized. Bad manners and body odor are common enough in fandom that it's impossible to chronicle overachievers in those areas in any feasible number of pages.

I thought David Wittman had promise as Las Vegas Fandom's first fugghead of stature. Alas, as I explained in "The Call," in *Rant #2*, he has bolted back under the rock from which he sprang.

I still believe that publication of David's "The Proposal" will enshrine him among the wrongheaded immortals. Alas, reading "The Proposal" will be like viewing a supernova hundreds of light-years away. By the time you see the blinding glare, he'll be long gone. Fandom-at-large will never actually experience Wittmania.

Vegas Fandom's fuggheads have all been local villains, though a few have reached out and inflicted themselves on one or more non-Vegas fans when the opportunity arose. While none of Vegas well-known fans, including me, is free of the taint of occasional stupidity, none has made a fan career of it, unless this article has tipped the balance in my case. One or more of them may develop their sporadic fuggheadedness into a full-blown case of the disease, but that hasn't happened yet.

We've had our local fools, though. Vegas Fandom has a few modern-day

Ackermans who'd like to project a nicey-nice image. This somewhat insurgent fanzine seems like a good time to shoot that illusion to pieces. Like many families, we've kept our more frightening relations stashed away in the attic during your visits. They've escaped into public a few times with uniformly disastrous results, but few out-of-towners experienced the full effect of our local fuggheads.

In truth, our local fuggheads were like Vegas fandom itself. If the newly minted trufans were still too inexperienced in the ways of fandom to cope with true villains, then the city's fuggheads were equally incapable of inflicting much real damage.

They're like first level monsters in an RPG campaign. They strut around, look menacing, and expire readily in the party's first assault.

Beth Brown, her husband Alan, and their two children moved to Las Vegas from the Deep South, where they were evidently minor wheels in *Star Trek* convention fandom in that region.

Her boundless power hunger showed right from the start. In a group noted for its absence of fan politics. She tried to create factions by setting people against each other. Joyce and I weren't directly involved, because we always gave Beth a wide berth, but I lost count of the overwrought phone calls her handiwork inspired.

The calls all followed the same pattern. The person would wail about what some close friend of theirs was doing to them. I'd ask them how they came by all this information. The answer was invariable, "I just got off the phone with Beth," or the equivalent.

Beth is a "total immersion" roleplayer. She thinks she's a dragon named Elsepth. She participates in RPGs, but this round-the-clock posturing is much, much more than that. Her roleplaying is a way of life rather than a pastime. Beth responds to most of what's said to her with quasi-irrelevant monologs about her dragon-hood.

After attending a single SNAFFU meeting, she started a lub called Fairytales Are Us which met at the same time. When SNAFFU gave a party at Westercolt 45 to plug Silvercon 2, she not only renege on her promise to help with the event, she threw a competing party! These may seem like small things, but they are indicative of the attitude Beth took toward the rest of us.

Her undoing came after Silvercon 2. Beth bullied her way onto the Silvercon 2 committee, forced a minor writer friend of hers on the convention as a special honored guest, and then did almost nothing for the con before, during or after. Well, she did throw a tantrum on Friday, prior to the official start of the convention, but the histrionics happened before too many people arrived.

Tantrums were a major form of fanac for Beth. And to give her her due,

she really has a flair for them. I doubt many will forget her public display at Westercolt 45. She was upset at something in the Silvercon 2 flyers, so she positioned herself in the middle of the elevator area on the hotel's main floor and bellowed her rage to the heavens while hundreds of con-goers wondered if the stairwells were a good alternative to waiting in the vicinity for an elevator.

Joyce and I weren't officially part of the Silvercon committee, because we resigned rather than put up with her rumor campaign. It had little to do with our actual contribution of work, but she stopped talking about us once we made it obvious to her that we had no aspiration to Run Things.

So I wasn't at the meeting when Vegas Fandom got a bellyful of Beth Brown. She didn't attend the meeting, either, but sent her husband Alan, whom Ken dubbed "the flying monkey boy," as her messenger to our plane of reality. Alan dutifully delivered a sealed envelope to each committee member.

It was a jubilant session up to that point. Silvercon 2 had drawn raves from attendees like Robert Lichtman and Bill Rotsler, and it hadn't gone into the red like the first try.

Beth's letter, which she signed "Elspeth," told off the con committee in the strongest possible language. Everything went wrong, and they were all awful people. She mentioned, in her fuzzy-minded screed, that she felt compelled to share this wisdom with everyone she knew in fandom.

Carol Kern and Rebecca Hardin — and since he pays me heavy cash for this phrase, "not related to John Hardin or any other members of his family" — were the daily double of fuggheadedness. The two women were what I call landmine fuggheads.

The truth is, I don't call them that. To my knowledge, I've never called anyone a landmine fugghead, until I called Carol Kern and Rebecca Hardin (no relation to John Hardin whatsoever) landmine fuggheads in the previous paragraph.

Maybe it'll catch on, like "sidebar." Then I'll copyright "landmine fugghead," the way Barry Friedman did with "Digiverse," and sportscaster Len Berman (no relation to Ruth Berman or Len Bailes) who trademarked "threepeat."

If you had bet me a month ago that I would call them landmine fuggheads, I would have branded you a rash speculator. Then I would have asked you to get away from me in case the rash was contagious.

But now I've called them "landmine fuggheads." There's no putting the wine back into that bottle. I have coined a term. Now in the tradition of fanish blowhards, I will describe the complex system I have devised to allow me to use that word, and perhaps others, relentlessly in this article.

There are three types of fuggheads. (If there are more than three, and if I somehow learn of this fact, I'll tell you about it in another article.) Secure in the knowledge that these neologisms will be forgotten before you're two paragraphs into the next article, I present the Fugghead Classification System (FCS).

The FCS is a bonus. I'm throwing it into this article at no additional charge. That's how I rate its value to fandom. I'm sure, when you have fully ruminated on the FCS, you'll realize the price was right. I hope the crew compiling *Fancyclopedia III* is ready to take notes . . .

The most spectacular type is the Mortar Fugghead. Mortar Fuggheads, like Claude Degler, burst on fandom with the suddenness of an exploding shell. One minute all is serene, then *Cosmic Circle Commentator* arrives, and you must explain to everyone that you are not now nor have you ever been Philosopher King of the Lower Southwest Missouri Ozark Imagineers.

The One-Note Fugghead, or Crank, is not a true fugghead. They are part of this system because they frequently act like they are fuggheads in one, limited sphere. Away from their Subject, Cranks are generally fine fans, admirable people well-respected by most fanzines. They blunder into a form





of fuggheadedness on a single issue. They aren't fuggheads per se, but if the subject becomes a major bone of contention in fandom, One-Note Fuggheads can cause no end of trouble. Their overall credibility and stature in fandom give them more license to spew forth embarrassing commentary than fandom usually allots to its Pickering and Wetzels.

The Incremental Fugghead often prospers for many years before a fan consensus drops the hammer. The Incremental Fugghead seldom does anything that rivets the attention of people who write articles like this on them. No one notices their low-level, but steady, fugghead activity over the years build up a track record of habitual fuggheadedness.

Seth Johnson, of 1960s N3F fame, and New York's Robert Sacks became regarded as fuggheads without doing anything as splashy as trying to Clean Up Fandom (Russell K. Watkins) or besmirch the name of Willis (G.M. Carr). It was only after they'd been around for years that fans began piecing together a complete picture and branded them fuggheads.

Finally, just when Andy Hooper has despaired of my ability to get back to the point, there is the Landmine Fugghead, the category to which Carol and Rebecca belong. These fans give no inkling of their fugghead potential until they burst forth in full cry, when something sets them off. The trigger can be an incident, another fan or merely increased opportunity. The metamorphosis is sudden and total.

Rebecca and Carol were already attending meetings when Joyce and I went to our first in August, 1991. No one knew much about them. Vegans occasionally forgot which was which. Carol and Rebecca arrived together, huddled in the corner, and spoke to no one. Although Carol was in her early 20s and Rebecca was 20 years older, they did seem remarkably similar, both plump, pallid and shy.

Vegas fans, ever friendly and generous, looked upon these two somewhat mournful women and took pity. We tried to draw them out, include them in the various social events, give them our fanzines. It was "Pygmalion" with propeller beanies.

We opened Pandora's box. With everyone's encouragement, Rebecca took over *Situation Normal??*, SNAFFU's newsletter. It was all right at first, neofannish but promising. Las Vegrants took it as a sign that Rebecca's inner depths were cracking through the ice, rising to the surface.

The trigger for both Rebecca and Carol was Silvercon 3. They requested, and received, appointment as convention security co-directors. Security, as the committee explained to the volunteers, had very little to do at a small, friendly convention like Silvercon. It boiled down to discouraging blatant felonies of various types and making sure the items for sale didn't walk away without a stop at the cash register.

One of them made a reference, in the last SitNorm before the con, about the power Security wields at a con. When pointed out by several Vegrants, the rest dismissed it as a feeble joke that hadn't quite come off as planned.

It was a plausible analysis.

Unfortunately, it was incorrect.

On the first day of Silvercon 3, Carol and Rebecca performed their work with a zeal not seen since Himmler and Heydrich. They had a harsh word or a nasty look to suit every occasion — and they found many, many occasions. At one point, it seemed as though they were about to handcuff John Hardin and, perhaps, beat him with truncheons. His offense? He was not wearing his badge — which Rebecca and Carol knew for a certainty he had purchased — while he was scurrying about doing con work.

The Dirty Harriets were happy to spend the day intimidating people, but they reacted much differently to the first genuine security crisis. The huckster room wasn't as secure as promised, and emergency provisions had to be made to keep the goods safe at night. That was when Carol and Rebecca announced they were done for the day and went home. This forced Aileen Forman, who had a few other duties as con chairwoman, to spend the night in the huckster room doing their guard duty.

After Silvercon, *SitNorm??*'s shrinking violet editor became a paper tigress. Insults, attacks and whining complaints filled every page as Rebecca displayed an impressive ability to hate everything and everyone.

Like Beth Brown, their animosity focused on Silvercon. I guess they didn't have a very good time, though it is just to attribute that to the extremely negative, even hostile, attitude with which they approached the event.

In *SitNorm??*, they assailed the con committee for its role in staging Silvercon 3, which, as already noted, the rest of fandom subsequently judged the year's best regional.

Carol's bid to become SNAFFU president failed, when Joyce defeated her in the February, 1994 election. Carol attacked savagely in the weeks prior to the vote, but Joyce refused to campaign beyond announcing her candidacy. When Joyce won, she offered Carol any post in the new regime that interested her, but the loser went into full pout anyway. Rebecca and Carol, as might have been expected, gaffiated together. They have shown up only once, at the Forman's 1994 SNAFFU Christmas Party, since ceasing participation.

So here we sit, temporarily bereft of inflammatory local fuggheads. Yet we do not abandon hope.

Fandom will provide. ☺

Wild Heirs #9

We've had some fans who've lost their way. Peggy Kurilla aka "The Lost Fan" still resurfaces now and then, but as soon as her presidency in SNAFFU (Vegas' sf club) runs out so will Peggy fade away into stale Mundania. Her husband Tom has exerted a field around her, neatly trapping her in his mundania. Not a pretty sight. That she's a failure as a club officer and in turn dragging it to certain doom, writes *Star Trek* episodes reminiscent of previous episodes and that she left the Glasgow Worldcon on Saturday morning are only to be recognized as signs of the inevitable, realized when she married Tom Kurilla. If she had married a fan, she would have become one, exhibiting the chameleon-like attributes that she possessed, but she didn't, so she never really had a chance to stick around.

Tom Springer, Wild Heirs #10

Oedipus Rocks

by Marcy Waldie

“I have rehearsal tonight,” Ray announced one Friday afternoon this past summer.

“Rehearsal for what?” I asked.

“For the movie I’m in,” he informed me in his start-in-the-middle-of-the-subject manner.

“What movie?”

“The one I saw an ad for in the paper. I auditioned and got the part.”

“What’s the movie about?”

“I don’t know,” Ray answered in his what-difference-does-it-make-any-way fashion.

“Who’s producing it?” I queried patiently.

“There’s no producer, just a filmmaker.”

“Does this movie have a title yet?”

“Yeah.” Pause. Pause.

“Well what is it? I yelled, my arms flailing.

“*Oedipus in Las Vegas.*”

Trying not to laugh openly, I managed to ask quite sincerely of my then unemployed spouse, “Will you be compensated monetarily for your time and talent?” I asked.

“Yeah.” Pause. Pause.

I closed my eyes and uttered through clenched teeth, “How much?”

“Thirty bucks.”

My hopes were dashed and I wanted to cry. “What part do you play?”

“The bartender,” he answered.

“There’s no bartender in Oedipus,” I stated in my I-may-be-stupid-sometimes-but-I’m-not-ignorant tone of voice.

“There is now, and I’ll be playing him for the next six Friday nights.”

“Well, if you don’t know what, specifically, the movie is about, do you know what kind of a movie it is?” I ventured to ask, with visions of an X rating on its opening frames.

“It’s a dark movie. That’s all I know right now.”

I’ll bet it’s dark. “What time is rehearsal?”

“Nine o’clock.”

Oh boy, I was getting jealous of somebody, somewhere about something of which I knew very little.

During supper I thought about how Ray loved the theater and about the plays in which he had many parts in many cities over the years. I felt guilty and hoped that I didn’t quell his well deserved and overdue enthusiasm. But as he prepared to leave, the only thing I could think to say was, “Be careful.” Boy, was my jealousy showing.

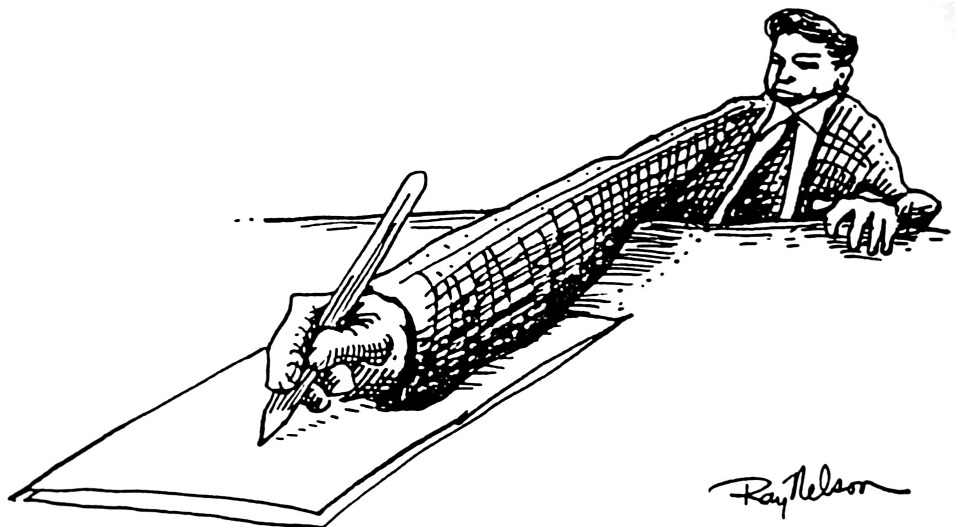
Act II

One night about a month later Ray announced, “The location person is coming over to check out our yard.”

“What for?”

“They need to film someone climbing over a wall.”

“With all the walls in Las Vegas they picked our property to shoot?” There was something he wasn’t telling me. “Did you check with the neighbors?”





“No need. I figured that they could film the climbing part from one angle and the jumping down part from another.”

I sighed in relief. One of our neighbors is tolerant only of his own actions.

“Well if it’s just the yard . . .” For some reason unknown to my conscious mind, I do not like spur-of-the-moment visits, especially from unknowns. In fact, four of the five people in this house do not.

Michelle showed up a few minutes later. I casually mentioned that we had three day sleepers and joked about her not letting Ray get too carried away vocally in his enthusiasm. All the while I was wondering why she was IN our house.

“This is the sliding patio door that gives access to the back yard,” Ray explained to her as he whipped back the lace drapes. “Through the doorway here is the kitchen, and through there is the family room.”

Many questions immediately surfaced, but I said nothing as the house tour continued. Upon her exit, I was ready to burst.

“Why did you show her the inside of the house,” I asked nicely.

“They might want to do some shooting inside.”

“Please give us all early warning,” I pleaded. Although the other family members in our home have known Ray for many years, nobody really knows him.

“Of course,” he replied.

Just half an hour later, my sister answered the phone and took a message for Ray. “Shiffon will be right over,” she reported.

In a slightly higher than normal pitch, I asked the man to whom I’ve been married for twenty-five years, “Who’s *Shiffon*?”

“The director.”

It just slipped out, “Is that her real name?”

“That’s what everyone calls her.”

Safe answer, Ray. “And why is she coming over?”

“Michelle probably called her and gave a favorable report on this location, so Shiffon wants to check it out for herself.”

Great, the home into which we have invested sweat, tears and blood and have sacrificed time and money so that we few remaining members of this family may have a modicum of creature comforts in our middle years is now referred to as a location. Not only was I jealous, I was pissed. I busied myself in the bedroom during her tour and hoped that she wouldn’t demand to see the sleeping quarters.

“Well, how did she like the house?”

“She loved it. The whole crew will be over in the morning to shoot.”

“What do you mean by ‘the crew’?”

“You know, the filming, lighting, sound and costume folks and the

actors.”

“When will they be here?”

“About 5:30. It will take a few hours, and they want to be done before the hottest part of the day.”

A few hours to film someone jumping a wall? He was definitely withholding information.

Act III

I awoke several times during the night and checked to see if Ray had come to bed. He had not, which is always the case when he is either extremely upset or excited about something. At 4:15 I was disturbed by strange voices in the house and much flushing in the hallway bathroom. Wicket, our cat, bolted from the bed and scooted underneath. It had begun.

I tried to keep as close to my morning routine as was decently possible—not running around in my jammies or undies and trying to control my hair before someone saw me and became frightened. It was difficult; I function by routine and try to keep to it, no matter what. I didn’t even look outside. I didn’t want to know who was trampling my lawn.

The three others in the house work the graveyard shift and usually arrive home together at about 6:00. At 6:30 I got concerned.

Within minutes they came in a bit winded. A Las Vegas Metro police officer in front of our house closed off the block and instructed residents to park in other than their usual spots.

Penne, my sister, spewed forth, “There are about twenty people in our yard with all sorts of equipment and all the neighbors are out wondering what’s going on and who got robbed. This is so neat. Our house is going to be in a movie.”

Our *house*? What about the wall climb?

Brother Willie became even more charming than usual and rapped with some of the crew in silent hopes of landing, at the least, a cameo.

Brother-in-law Don grunted and went to bed.

Just before it was time for me to leave for work, Ray came in from outside. “I moved your car onto the street so it wouldn’t be a problem for you to get out of the garage.”

The wall nearest the garage is only a two footer. Who’s doing the climbing, a midget?

The first thing I saw upon opening the front door was a grape mumuu. It was covering a bun haired lady who gave me the halt sign with one arm and the silence gesture with the other. I closed the door and envisioned myself explaining to Arnie and Joyce the reason for my being late for work. “You see, there was this film crew in my front yard, and they wouldn’t let me out of my house.” Yeah, right.

A few minutes later, I was the only attraction as I walked self-consciously from the house to the car and pulled away as forty eyes watched and waited. I thank heaven that the work day was normal.

Soon after arriving home in the afternoon, I washed a load of laundry. While loading the washer, which is located in the garage, I notice that the wheelchair that Willie no longer used was missing. Of all the things in our garage to nick, why a wheelchair?

“Ray, did you notice that the wheelchair is gone?”

“Yeah.” Pause. Pause.

“Any ideas?”

“The camera crew is using it. It’s better than hand held. The actors need some clothing, too; my army raincoat and my silk sport coat. Oh, and they’ll be back tomorrow to finish shooting.”

Instead of blurting, “How much is this going to cost us in lost goods, “ I

inquired, "Did they get the wall climb?"

"No, they decided to shoot a jump over the low one in the front yard."

"What's there left to shoot?"

"Something inside."

"What inside?"

"I don't know."

"When will they be here?"

"I don't know."

"Do Penne, Don and Willie know?"

"Not yet."

What's new?

Act IV

After work the next day, I eyeballed the aftermath of the filming episodes. Not bad. A couple of footprints in the rosebed, a strange glass on the kitchen counter, and the aluminum can bin in the kitchen was full. Hmm. Heavy soda drinkers. The wheelchair was even back in its storage spot. When an occurrence out of the ordinary has passed, one that I believed at the time inconvenienced me, I reflect on its relevance to my life and inevitably conclude that it was no big deal as far as I'm concerned and that I should try harder to live and let live. As far as Ray was concerned, I think I faked my true feeling quite well, thank you.

I had survived, Ray was pleased that he could assist in something that he enjoyed, and there was no damage. I rewarded myself with a bowl of ice cream.

"Ray, where's the chocolate syrup? We had two full bottles."

"We used it for the movie." Pause. Pause.

"Was it used for a soda fountain scene or what?"

"Blood"

"Real old blood, huh?"

"No, fresh blood shot in black and white."

At this point there was nothing left to do but to laugh.

Encore

"Do you want to go to the wrap party with me?"

Unlike many people my age, I enjoy rap songs, not the gangsta crap, but the good stuff. "When is it?"

"Tonight in about three hours."

"Did you just find out about it?"

"No."

"And you didn't ask me earlier because..."

"I forgot."

"Who's playing at this rap party?"

"Some reggae group since it's at a reggae bar."

"Shouldn't a rap group play at a rap party?"

"Not that kind of rap. A wrap it up party. You know, it's a wrap."

Remembering how much fun we had at all of the theater cast parties over the years, I acquiesced.

The bar was far from being crowded at 9 PM, but about a dozen of the movie people were there, and I was really looking forward to meeting them and having stimulating conversations (expecting them to be like theater people).

Donald, a balding man in his thirties, went on about how amused he was when he attended a Roman Catholic mass in China. The mass was celebrated in Latin, you see, but the congregation responded in Chinese. Ho-kaay.

Ray introduced me to a well endowed gal in her late twenties whose name I didn't catch because of the extremely loud music.

"Ray, you finally get to see me with my clothes on," she twittered.

"Excuse me?" I said as forcefully as Joy-Lynd Chamberlain would have.

"Just kidding. I played a stripper. In real life I'm an aerobics instructor, but I have a degree in geological engineering. Can't get a job."

On that note she was gone and was replaced by an interesting looking young person who spent a few minutes chatting with Ray. I heard nothing of their conversation although I was sitting next to them. I admired the clean, crisp white shirt, colorful vest, tailored slacks and below shoulder length, well groomed hair adorned with a fashionable wide brimmed hat. All right! Someone who appears to have it together. Let's talk.

A long fingered hand with manicured nails was extended toward mine.

"Hi, I'm David," a gentle voice spoke. "It was really a pleasure working with Ray." And with that, he moved on.

"Ray, what part did David play?"

"A transvestite. Did you say David?"

"That's how he introduced himself to me."

"All this time I thought he was a girl."

That's my Ray.

That basically was the night. Theater people they weren't, but interesting all the same.

Coming Attraction

A letter from Desert Wind was delivered to the house recently. That's the drum and bugle corps that's organizing in Las Vegas. I just know that Ray contacted them first as a former corps instructor. I hope they have a place to practice. 🌟

Wild Heirs #11

Dramatis Personal

by Ross Chamberlain

Sure, I had a good time at SilverCon IV and if, between the fertilization of the Mardi Gras courtyard a day before that memorable longish weekend, and Arnie & Joyce's subsequent similar refurbishment of their lawn, my nose was so assaulted that for weeks it kept telling me it was in some proximity to an outhouse, why, then I just had to remind myself that I did bathe that morning, and it was all in my head.

(I'd actually prefer to select another cliché, but nothing occurs to me at the moment. Besides, there are those who suggest I'm full of it anyway, so why make an issue? Let's just say my ol' factory was working overtime.)

Perhaps the best moments for me at this convention comprised the opportunity I had to make a ham of myself instead of the usual ass. Andy Hooper invited to participate in a reading of his inspired "radio" drama, *Ten Zines that Shook the World*. I shared this honor with a dozen or more fans, not all of whom, I'm embarrassed to say, I could recount when I reached this point in my first draft. This was undoubtedly due to my active participation in some of the other popular activities at the con and the consequent impairment of my little gray cells—not that I ever laid claim to Herculean powers of the mind. At any rate, Ken Forman, Nevenah Smith, Victor Gonzalez, Ben Wilson, Peggy Kurilla, Bill Kunkel, Pat O'Connor and JoHn Hardin were in fact the players, with Andy himself providing the narration. (I checked with Andy and added two or three names to the list before this saw print.) For the same reasons, I cannot recount here chapter and verse of the events at the con that led up to the public performance. But perhaps I can give you a bit of the larger picture that made it special for me.

There was a time, dear friends, when I Aspired to the Stage.

In part this was the usual case of claiming, on having seen performers who made it look easy. "Hey, I could do that!" But there was a little more to it.

To put it semi-succinctly, I was a shy and troubled kid who, by my mid-teens, was so buried in a shell that therapy was advised. Because I seemed to like to draw and write, Dr. Spencer, the psychiatrist, recommended I go to Buxton School, a small private co-ed preparatory school in Williamstown, Massachusetts (about 50 miles from where I was living at the time) that emphasized creativity. My folks were not well off, but after an interview with Mrs. Sangster, the head mistress, I did get a scholarship to go there. Mrs. S. was a remarkable woman, and sometime I'll have to write more about her.

Illustrative of the shell I spoke of, I remember an evening shortly after arriving at the school, still very much withdrawn into myself, sitting in the main house's living room by myself. One of the students, Terry Smith, came in and asked if there was anything wrong. I said, "No, I'm okay." I was grateful for the attention, but he of course took it as "Leave me alone," and went

away annoyed, clearly feeling that his offer of help had been rebuffed.

Among the creative endeavors promoted by the school was (you guessed it) drama. There were only about 20 or 30 students altogether, over the four grades, freshmen to senior. Each year the entire student body would prepare and present a play. They not only put it on in the school's own theatre, rebuilt from an old corn crib structure, and sometimes in churches or auditoriums in one or two neighboring towns, but they would also take it on the road for a couple of performances in some distant but interesting place. I came to Buxton as a senior, but, on the recommendations of the therapist, stayed for a post-grad year. So I was in two such productions, one of which was a homegrown musical based on the story of Rip Van Winkle, and the other was Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*. In addition, there was usually a second production put on by a smaller group of interested students.

The first effort I was involved in was *Rip*.

The late actor John Cazale (1935–1978), who played Fredo Corleone in the *The Godfather*, Sal in *Dog Day Afternoon*, and guys named Stan in both *The Conversation* and *The Deer Hunter*, graduated from Buxton the year before I arrived. Johnny was brought back to play Rip because he had a strong tenor singing voice. Because I sang bass, or at least could hit some low notes, I was selected to play St Nicholas, who was a pivotal character in this version of the story. (Washington Irving might have shaken his head dolefully at some of the embellishments, though in fact his works were the source for many of them.)

Johnny and I got to put on bushy white beards. I had mine for my two appearances on stage; he, of course, only had to wear his in the second act. They also encouraged him to let his hair grow long for the part... bear in mind that this was in 1956, well before the Beatles revolution. Everybody thought he looked a little strange!

I also had to wear padding (I was a skinny kid then; today the suit would fit without the pillow). The costume I wore was not the classic Santa Claus suit; rather it was an outfit that reflected the period, all in fall colors—browns and oranges and grays—and including a tall hat, a long-stemmed pipe and leggings that were improvised out of dyed long johns.

I was first cautiously interested in the project but didn't know about this idea of getting up in front of people and making a jerk out of myself. Mrs. S, who had written the book and lyrics herself (Jerry Bidlack, our musical director, wrote the music), called me into her office to offer me the St. Nicholas part. I didn't know what it would entail, and she explained some of it. There were a couple of songs, or maybe one long one and a reprise, and I'd basically be providing the motivation for Rip to go into the moun-

tains — something about seeking a golden ball to help his daughter get married, or *summat lika dat*. I was demurring about all this, or trying to in the face of Mrs. S.'s enthusiasm and she was getting me to read some of the lines of the script, I think. I did some little silly business with one of the lines, and her eyes lightened. "Yes! That's good!" she encouraged even as I blushed at my temerity. And thus she began to chip away at that shell . . .

I introduced myself to Rip on stage with the following chorus and verse:

*Oh, I am St. Nicholas, jolly and fat,
With my long, long pipe and my high, high hat!
With my long, long pipe and my high, high hat,
I am St. Nicholas, jolly and fat!*

I wait all the year 'till the snow piles up high
And then with my reindeer and sleigh off I fly
Through clouds and through moonlight, avoiding each star
To the houses of children in lands near and far
Where my well-laden belly I tighten and shrink
As I lower myself through the chimney's square brink*
And fill all the stockings that patiently hang
While the children are waiting to see what I brang . . .**

*Oh, I am St. Nicholas, jolly and fat,
With my long, long pipe and my high, high hat!
With my long, long pipe and my high, high hat,
I am St. Nicholas, jolly and fat!*

This was followed by another verse, which provided expository information for the plot. I had trouble remembering that verse even then (I blanked part of it out during our last performance), and it promptly disappeared forever after the final curtain calls.

We took this play to Quebec City, commandeering a passenger car on a train to Montreal, while the props and materials were driven north in the school's old truck. The car was divided between girls and boys overnight, but at least a couple of couples succeeded in crossing the line — and got in trouble for it. Disciplinary trouble, I hasten to add. There's only so much one can do in a passenger car.

This was my first time out of the U.S. We stayed at a small hotel in the old town, L'Hotel du Jardin des Gouverneurs, a block or two behind Le Chateau Frotenac (my memory of these names may be faulty after all these years), the great building, now a hotel, that dominates the skyline over the city. It was winter, and we had just missed being in town for some winter games — there were wooden frameworks for some sort of skiing or skating or sledding contest that had been held in the courtyards surrounding the Chateau.

I took many pictures around the city (upper and lower, the Citadel and the Plains of Abraham), but I was still a self-styled loner and failed to get any snapshots with my fellow students in them — I regret this yet today. Most of the pictures might as well have been black-and-white postcards, though many were from odd angles that probably most real postcard photographers would not have taken.

Our first performance was at the French school, Université Laval. It went well — I remembered all my lines, as did we all, I think. Some of us, not I,

* This sank to a very low note, which I didn't always succeed in hitting squarely.

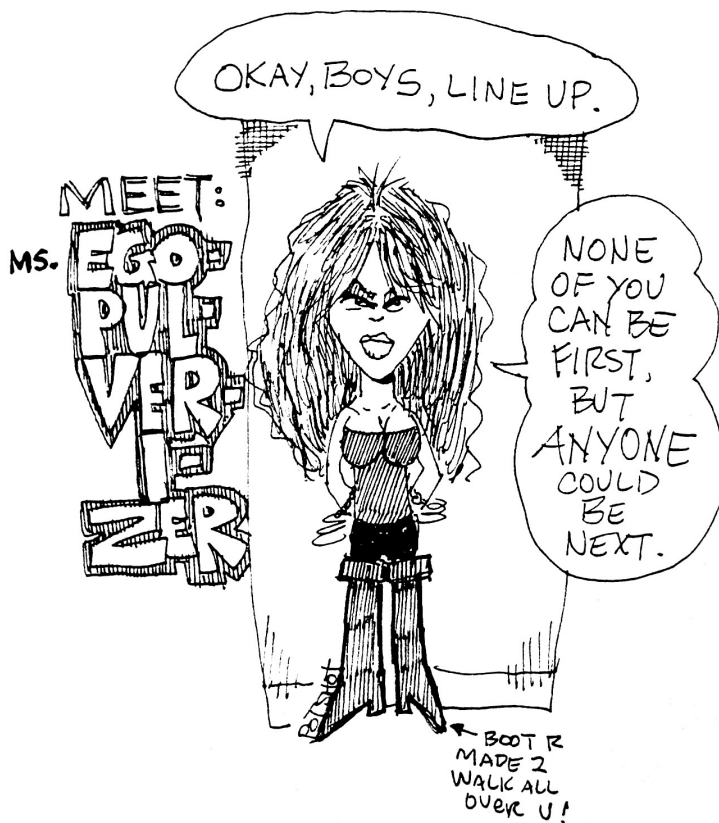
** You cringe, I cringe, the audience cringes. I tried to add a sentence "elbow-in-ribs, wink-wink, it's all in fun here, folks" to this, but it probably made it sound like a sour note in addition to the barbaric grammar.

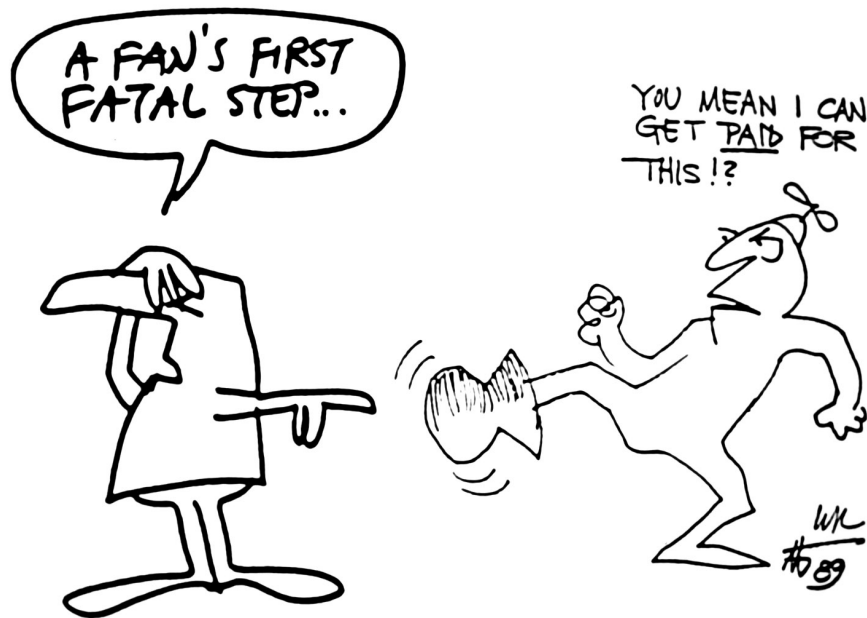
had memorized French lyrics to some key songs, and that was well taken by the audience. Afterwards we were treated to an evening at a nightclub. Each Buxton student was hosted by a student from the school. I now only remember that I enjoyed talking with the lovely girl who was my hostess but she could not draw me out to the dance floor, and eventually she disappeared. Before that, there was a comedian who elicited much laughter but, since his act was entirely in French, most of my fellow troupers and I missed much of it. My hostess did try to explain one observation that got a good laugh: Something about how all their U.S. guests who did speak French spoke with a Parisian accent. I guess you hadda be there. And speak French.

Jerry Bidlack, our musical director, who had written the music for Rip and played piano accompaniment to our performance, made one big mistake. At the end of the evening, someone decided we should sing our national anthems. The Canadians stood up and sang theirs, verse after verse, strongly and proudly and with gusto. We didn't do too badly with ours until, after we were proudly done with "... and the home . . . of the . . . brave!" Jerry started to play for second verse! Do you know the second verse? Neither did we . . .

The second performance was at an English school and it was a disaster. I regret to say that I've now forgotten specifically what it was that turned them cold, but it had to do with a radio interview the night before, with one of our faculty members, who inadvertently said something out of line. I think it addressed the excellent welcome we had received from our French hosts, but in such a way as to slap our English hosts in their collective face. Mrs. Sangster's autobiography, which I got a copy of many years later, explained it, but that explanation has faded from me and the book is inaccessible.

One of our group did, I know, speak French, and probably a Parisian dialect; Sidsel Abbot was the daughter of a diplomat (Swedish, I think — her home address was in Stockholm). In the second half of our school year, a smaller group of us interested in acting (I'd more or less been hooked) put on a production of *The Night of January 16th*, a play by Ayn Rand that dramatizes a sensational murder trial. I played the Prosecutor; Peter Hammer,





whose voice hadn't changed yet, was the Defense Lawyer. In the play's several performances, both in Buxton's theatre and in a couple of churches in nearby towns, the Jury (chosen from the audience) always decided in favor of the defendant. . . . I guess I wasn't cut out for the law. (But churches tend to make excellent courtroom sets).

Sidse was my legal assistant or deputy D.A. or whatever, and in the course of rehearsals, as well as several shared classes, we got to finding each other's company very easy to take. Laughing together a lot. One of those things. It wasn't really anything more than a good friendship developing, but her boyfriend took a dark view of it. This was Terry Smith, the fellow who'd thought I'd rejected his offer of friendship when I first arrived, and who had been pretty much cool toward me subsequently. He stopped me between classes or something one day and issued an ultimatum: Stay away from Sid. That's it.

Sigh

Actually we got things straightened out a month or so later and became good friends after that. But I missed laughing with Sidse.

The next year, we took *The Skin of Our Teeth* to Nantucket, traveling this time by bus. Borgny Hammer, Peter's kid sister, one of two girls who played Sabrina in alternate performances, distinguished herself by climbing up into the overhead luggage racks. One of the guys, Bill Mackay, was the first person I knew to wear Mohawk haircut. We changed for a ferry at Woods Hole, Mass, on the southern shore of Cape Cod, and soon enough we were out of sight of the mainland . . . another first in my life. And the last, to date.

I played a news reporter who introduces the play. There are supposed to be movie clips to accompany the reporter's spiel, but we were on too tight a budget to get those from the company that handles those things. On our first performance, back at Buxton, the one for parents and some locals, we had a miscue—I was sitting in the front row, wearing the new trench coat I'd gotten for the part. My folks were in the audience. Someone was supposed to flash a spotlight that was set up above and in front of the curtain, for my cue. It was on, but I kept waiting for it to flash, and it never happened. Finally the curtain opened, and they started the play without my intro (Sabrina, the maid, duster in hand; "Oh, oh, oh! Six o'clock and the master's not home yet!"—or something like that). They had been waiting for me while I'd been waiting for them. Bother!

There were no miscues in Nantucket. Our performances were well

received there indeed; we got rave reviews in the local paper, comparing us favorably with a Broadway production. All of us felt pretty good about that, to be sure.

Our other production for the year was *The Swan* by Ferenc Molnar. Later that year (1956) the movie with Grace Kelly as Princess Alexandra, Louis Jourdan as the Tutor who falls in love with her, and Alec Guinness as Prince Albert (not, incidentally, the Prince Albert—nor, for that matter the other one, of tobacco can incarceration fame) was released, and most of us went to see it. I played the Prince. One of our faculty had a tuxedo that he let me wear for the part. He was a tall man; we had to roll up the trouser cuffs for me. And we found broad crimson ribbon and some gold trinket to look like an emblem, for me to wear across my chest over the standard white shirt (if Mr. Sears had a dickey for the tuxedo, he didn't let on). For the life of me I can't remember what I wore at the neck of the shirt.

It was at one of the performances of *The Swan* that we experienced The Click; the only time on stage I've ever had that good fortune. Our soccer team got it once in one game. It's one of those extended mutual satoris where everything Works. Kind of a gestalt thing. On the stage that evening, suddenly, we forgot the fourth wall; we were all in character; the interaction flowing quite as I'm sure the author would have had it given his druthers.

I've actually seen it happen on television, a couple or three times; once on the Dave King summer replacement show for the Kraft Theatre, when a new young singer called Shanie Wallace came out for a solo spot, and blew the audience away. As far as I know she was never again able to capture that excitement. Another time was on the Dinah Shore show in duet with some other singer you wouldn't normally expect to blend so well with her; and a third time it was Jane Olivor in a guest spot on some variety show in the mid 70's or early 80s. She did a fantastic cover of "Over the Rainbow," which normally I have trouble dealing with when done by anyone other than Judy Garland. When I finally got one of her albums with the song on it, it wasn't the same—nevertheless I was rather a fan of hers for a while.

At one point in the last act of *The Swan*, at the confrontation of the Prince and the Tutor, the Prince is supposed to approach the Tutor and kiss him on the cheek, sort of a la the medal-awarding kiss of the French army (tch! Those French!). This was definitely an awkward element for me, even though there was in fact no kiss per se. Whenever I get one of those rare moments of self-doubt about my sexual identity, I look back on those occasions as an

early reassurance of heterosexuality. (I've had better and more convincing, since, by the way.) I trust the stiff manner with which I approached Larry Koenig at that point was properly perceived as the essence of noblesse oblige in the character I played.

On the other hand, the young man who played Father Hyacinth (Brian Aherne in the movie) would have probably have had no such problem. While I never saw any hint of it during our school days, during which I guess he was as much a friend of mine as anyone—and I had pretty well broken out of my shell by that time—the first time I saw him, in Boston, a year later, he had somehow acquired all the mannerisms of a flaming queen. Disconcerting to say the least.

This was still the '50s, and, truly, I was still naïve to many of the ways of the world. And still rather prejudiced and ignorant about some things (which is the same thing, perhaps).

Besides our standard schooling at Buxton there were other creatively oriented classes. I had an art class, of course, but our teacher was so occupied in his own endeavors that he did little in the way actual teaching. They did provide materials; so I pretty much went my own way with that. Mrs. S, taught a creative writing class, where, again it was mostly a matter of writing what one wished and reading it aloud in class. Perhaps the chief impetus to improved writing there was competition, though I believe at the time I thought of it more as seeking Mrs. Sangster's approval. I had only one or two real competitors, at least in my mind, and one of these, it later proved was inclined to crib stuff from books. She read it well... (I met her again many years later. Still a ditz.)

One of the occupations of the last year at Buxton was, of course, the selection of colleges to apply to. I remember that Oberlin, in Ohio, was a popular candidate, and my folks and I did look into it. The financial aspects were certainly a consideration, far more that it was for many of my fellow students at Buxton. We finally settled, however, on a two-year school in Boston called the Leland Powers School of Radio, Television and Theater. The "Television" part had been relatively recently added; I know the school had been around a while. I believe my late grandfather, himself a performer in the 20s and 30s (Charles Ross Taggart, the Old Country Fiddler, as he was called on his Victrola records, or, on the Redpath Circuit, The Man From Vermont), had either known or at least been acquainted with Leland Powers himself. Not that this gave us any in at the school!

I've told some of this part of the story in one fanzine or another from time to time. I did not do well at Leland Powers, not from any lack of ability, but definitely from lack of self-discipline. There were weekly parties to go to—the kind of party where one stood jam-packed in the middle of an overcrowded apartment, juggling a drink and shouting to be heard; the kind of party that could be and occasionally were closed down by the police for being too noisy.

I was assigned a room with a roommate. His name was Russell Parly, but he was generally known as Ross... Since most of the time when anyone called "Ross" it was he that was wanted, I fairly quickly returned to my self-effacing ways. He was classically handsome in a Julian Glover sort of way, though thinner. We got along pretty well, studying the International Phonetic Alphabet and practicing lines and things like that.

(By the way, Seattle fen, do me a favor and look in your telephone directories to see if there is a hairdressing firm or chain there called Ross of London. The London referred to his London, New Hampshire, where my former roommate hailed from. It seems, he, too discovered homophilia after school (I could be wrong, but I inferred as much from a couple of things he said in the last letter I had from him, written from Seattle). My, my. If nothing has happened to him, things being what they are, and the business was a success

(hence still around), I think I'd be interested in saying hello, sometime, for old times sake.)

I did okay at Leland Powers for a while. But if wasn't too long before I began to get behind in my studies. Then in a particularly susceptible mood, as I was realizing I was screwing up and unable to tell myself how to fix it, I saw the film *Lust for Life*, with Kirk Douglas as Vincent Van Gogh, and it was so powerful that, much to the consternation of my folks, I quit the school. I'd decided I was going to be an Artist, you see.

Damn fool kid....

This story being about my brushes with the theatre, I'll pass quickly over the next few years—my first "real" job, a summer with my married brother in North Carolina (where he was involved with a theatre), New York City and my second job, business school (*if u cn rd ths*... yeah, a speedwriting class), and then after a while back to New York and a job with a book wholesaler, Bookazine, where Mike McInerney and rich brown worked. Hence and thence, fandom....

One day in '65 or '66, some interesting girls (we didn't know from women's lib yet) visited a FISTFA gathering. They were slumming in the Village from Sara Lawrence, a College for Young Ladies in Bronxville, which is a few miles north of the city (and several miles beyond the Bronx). I got the word from Mike or rich that at least a couple of them were interested in hearing more from some of us guys and one had left her name and number (well, that of her dorm phone at SL), which he passed on to me.

I've often wondered what might have happened had I called that number. "But" says someone who knew me at the time, "you did, didn't you? Isn't that how met Marion?"

Yes, it was, in fact. But that was a couple of weeks later. Some of the girls (gimme a break; they weren't in their 20s yet) came back to the next FISTFA. I remember noticing one, whose short skirt rode up very interestingly as she sat on a window ledge on the far side of the room. She was plump, redheaded (almost auburn) with long hair parted in the middle in the style of the times (well, one of the styles). A snub nose and an easy laugh. I wasn't introduced at the time, but I was told she'd noticed me and I had a new number to call...

Marion Edmonds was a drama major at Sara Lawrence. She also represented at least a couple of interesting firsts for me—not my first love, no, no, but the first one to ever stay the night... Ah. Reverie!

Okay, that's enough. Back to the story.

It seems that her drama class was working on a trio of one-act Noel Coward plays from the *Tonight at Eight O'Clock* suite. I don't remember the individual titles, now but one the one I remember best involves two bickering actors, a husband and wife team, whose performances suffer from their jealousies, and like that. The set is in their dressing room, and the scene breaks take place while the two are "on stage."

They (Marion's class and director) were looking for someone, a male, to play a blustering theatre manager, one Mr. Edwards.

I went to read for the part. The director (I regret to say I've long since forgotten his name) wasn't too sanguine about me and my bushy beard (a real one, this time) and soft voice, but waved me on. I got to my first cue and knocked on the scaffolding of a backstage flat in lieu of the dressing room door.

"Who is it?" called one of the actors.

"Mr. Edwards!" I responded in my best stentorian voice.

"Wow!" came the voice of the class director from in front.

Okay, I'd learned to project back at Buxton. I was accepted. And then they learned, as rehearsals went on, that I had trouble learning my part...

I was trying to learn it by rote. I use a tape recorder, with the other parts

taped for to respond to. I had never really learned a better way to do it, but the method really wasn't flexible enough for me to stay with character if I, or anyone else, fluffed a line.

Ad lib? Me? Forget it! I blow it in normal conversation if I try to talk off the cuff without some mental rehearsal! (This is the real reason I'm so quiet most of the time!)

They tried me out with a little improvisational bit, where the actor who played the male half of the couple and I were supposed to have a confrontation in my office. Details have escaped me, but after a moment of setup in which I managed to maintain my (Mr. Edwards') haughty demeanor, it went something like this:

"Tell you what," he said. "Let's have a drink on it."

I drew myself up. "Certainly not!" I replied.

"Aw, come on," he winked. "I've seen that bottle you thought you'd kept secret in your drawer!"

I cracked up—and out of character. It was no good. But it was too late to find someone else, so I remained, and played the three or four public performances, all of which were at the Reising Auditorium at Sara Lawrence. Several fans came to one of them at my request, though whether any of these are among the readers of this opus, I'm not sure. I think I played the part okay without many serious screwups. But Marion did not seek my help with any further productions, though I did come to visit her as she got into another play—*The Killing of Sister George*.

Should any one wonder about it, I didn't meet Joy-Lynd until a year or so after Marion broke off with me. It was a little while before she got around to asking me to take down Marion's picture from my wall . . .

She was just known as Joy, then—Joy Sennet. She added the Lynd, herself, several years later when she got fed up with all the jokes on her name ("Joy to the World" got kind of old), and with having no middle name. She was (and is) quite adamant about people using both names; the hyphen came a little while later when it became clear that people weren't going to use both names without it.

It took me awhile to get used to that, I can tell you!

The closest I ever got to any kind of acting again was at a playwright's

workshop in the Village (Greenwich, that is) six or seven years ago. A friend at work, Alison Graves, was involved with it, and asked me if I'd like to come and read one part in a play she'd been working on. I did, but the circle of readers I joined were mostly semi-pros, and I fear my amateur status was obvious. My part was that of a Midwestern farmer (Alison hailed from Wisconsin, I think), who was bewildered by and hated to see his wife turning independent. I couldn't get the accent—it came out a pretty generic Southern, basically. It was a serious drama about personal relationships. I liked it a lot, and I hope she actually succeeds with it one day.

So, anyway, the chance to ham it up as a character named Samstinov ("Artist and Red Guard block captain. A visionary who paints cigar-shaped lights hanging over haystacks and suspects Reed {a time traveling fan} of being an alien.") in Andy Hooper's strange Firesign Theatre-like comedic melodrama of an alternate-universe, proto-fannish revolutionary Russia was welcome.

Yes, even when our first rehearsal was held in the Mardi Gras Gazebo, situated in the very heart of dung country! Especially memorable on that occasion was Jack Speer's enthusiastic rendition of Lenin, which made V.I. Ulianov sound more like Huey Long. He was standing in for the otherwise occupied Bill Kunkel, who did well enough in the final, public reading.

Pat O'Connor played one Capt. Athelstine Jinnantonix (an inspired surname), whom Andy described initially as having a regrettably Belgian accent, but the stage direction when he is introduced is, "his accent defies description." Pat succeeded astonishingly well with this.

The subsequent spot rehearsal and the final reading on Sunday afternoon went well, though Andy noted afterward that I'd swallowed a key phrase. Next time—?

It's been rare for me to share in a project that pretty much everyone involved not only found fun to do but was enthusiastic about. That's what drew me to dabble with drama over the years—it's a great shell-breaker, as Mrs. Sangster and Dr. Spencer knew forty years ago.

Come to think of it, maybe that's what drew me to fandom . . . ?

Perhaps. But, enhh—maybe I'm still waiting for *The Click*. ☹

Wild Heirs #12

I did try to write a country song once, when I was a teenager in Texas:

*There's a gal I know, she's in the grade below me,
She's the kind I'd dearly love to squeeze
But though I'd like to date her she's as cold as a 'frigerator
And all I ever get from her's the Deep Freeze.*

There was another verse that referred to Frigidaire and Serval, but I don't recall exactly how it went just now.

Ross Chamberlain, Wild Heirs #15



The Midwestcon Open

by rich brown

Unless my cast-iron sieve of a memory is playing tricks on me, I believe 1965 was the year of the Great Fanoclast Trek—the first of two trips, actually, which would link the Fanoclasts with attendance at both the Midwestcon and Westercon (drumming up support for our Worldcon bid for New York in '67)—and, if so, it was also the year of the first (and so far, to my knowledge, only) Midwestcon Open.

Never heard of it? No surprise there—it did not get the write-up it should have, the one it truly deserved, partly because of something else nearly equally phenomenal that happened on that trip—my roommate, Mike McNerney, demonstrated that he had the luck of the Irish. We stopped off at an inexpensive motel on the outskirts of Las Vegas, not out of any premonition that any of our number might ever settle there, but simply because we had been traveling a hard day in +100 degree heat and we thought to stop off for a meal, a bath, a swim, a short rest before tackling the desert into California at nightfall, when it would be cooler. And, if any of us had a desire to gamble, why, we'd be there for three hours, which should be plenty of time to get it out of our systems.

I had a desire to gamble but decided to limit myself to either \$5 or \$10 in losses and play only one-armed bandits. So after 15-20 minutes of *that* sort of entertainment, I went back to the motel, either \$5 or \$10 poorer, where I decided to cool off again with a late afternoon/early evening swim. I caught a cold there that lasted me three weeks and had a devastating effect on my life, for all that I'm still not able to write much about it.

But before I knew any of this, Arnie Katz came to tell me that we were having a slight degree of difficulty getting Mike to leave—he'd hit a small jackpot on a slot machine for about \$200 and was using that to play blackjack, at which he was also doing particularly well. Mike was to be our first driver that night; my skills as a negotiator were required.

I got out of the pool and was getting dressed when, fortunately, Mike came in. I say "fortunately" because I had never ever been successful at getting Mike to do anything he really did not want to do. Mike hadn't started to lose or anything like that—he'd just become aware that he was holding us up. Once we were out of town, coming slightly downhill, across a great flat desert, Mike had Ted's Greenbrier doing over 100 for most of the trip.

Several of us, Mike included, had not had time to eat dinner in Vegas, so we stopped at a combination diner/gas station that proclaimed itself to be the last available before the California border. Mike ordered the best steak they had and a bottle of wine, by way of celebrating his good luck; his bill was just short of \$21. As he went to pay it, he stuck a quarter in a one-armed bandit and hit it for \$25—i.e. enough to pay his bill, including a reasonable tip.

That sort of luck—not just the fact that Mike won fairly big (by our standards) but this added touch of winning again, and just the right amount—pushed something almost equally phenomenal into the background. At least, I seem to recall that lucky bit of Mike's being mentioned a few times in fannish print, yet I can't recall anyone even mentioning the Midwestcon Open.

It took place at a miniature golf course within walking distance of the Midwestcon hotel—whichever one it was. And there were only four of us: Ted White and Andy Porter vs. the team of rich brown and Arnie Katz. (We would have been the *Focal Point* team, except that at that time I was co-editing FP with Mike, who [as noted] was also on that trek.)

The Midwestcon Open took on tournament stature because it was to be the best of three rounds. And we named it the Midwestcon Open, as if we intended to make it some kind of tradition, because that WAS our intention, although we never did it—the Midwestcon moved, I wasn't in attendance on the next trek, we all forgot: take your pick.

The amazing thing, the fantastic thing, the out of this world adventures thing was that it was won by Arnie and myself, not by Ted and Andy. But the phenomenal, incredulous, really hard to believe thing is that I was "carried" by my partner, Arnie Katz: I had the "highest" (i.e. worst) score, Arnie had the best and his score was enough better than Ted's and Andy's that, when added to mine, we beat their combined score.

For those who might not be familiar with it, miniature golf is 18 "holes" of putting-strip "golf," played only with a putter, with various obstacles (some stationary, some moving) in the putting areas, not to mention uneven sections with "rippling" hills and odd angles, many requiring a combination of golfing and billiards/pool skills to either use or avoid in the attempt to reach the hole and sink the ball in the smallest number of strokes.

And Arnie, as some people may recall, only relatively recently underwent an operation which improved his sight to the point where he can make people out as more than just vague blurs. For most of his life, Arnie has been either "legally blind" or so close to it that the distinction hardly matters.

Believe me, I would take more credit for it if I could, but all I did—all WE did; Ted and Andy chimed in from time to time—was describe the logistics of a hole to Arnie as best we could.

"There's a miniature windmill, about 5' high, in front of you." I began; Andy interrupted to say it was about 15' in front of him, "and," I went on, "you want to time it so that the vane, which is moving, doesn't reach the ground and block your ball as it's turning around. There are a couple of bumps or mini-'hills' between you and that point, so you want to hit your ball about medium hard." Ted might then add the information that Arnie

might want to aim a little to his right, because there were some boards on the left that would bounce his ball back to him if he hit them.

Arnie would smile, shrug, draw his putter back about four or five inches and hit the golf ball firmly and crisply, but not too hard, and his ball would curve off to the right, slide smoothly over the bumps and roll into the hole while the vanes of the windmill were at four and eight o'clock, respectively. Then the three of us would take our shots — and, more often than I'd like to report, mess up on the very points we'd "warned" Arnie about — i.e. my ball would almost make it but get hit by the moving vane and knocked half-way back the length of the green, Andy hit a ball that looked and sounded every bit as good as Arnie's but would stop six or seven feet short of the hole,

while Ted would aim to the right and have his ball carom off his putter to the left and hit those boards which, even as he had predicted, would bounce his ball back in his direction.

Arnie had a phenomenal *t*h*r*e* holes-in-one, including one on the last hole which won him a free game, and never took more than three or four strokes to sink his ball. The rest of us were lucky to get a three or a four on an easy hole.

One wonders what scores he might achieve at pinball. . . ♣

Wild Heirs #13

Tales from the Yorkshire Grey

by Rob Hansen

In my report of Mark and Vijay's Feb '95 visit in *Wild Heirs*, I mentioned how impressed they were by the wide variety of (to them) improbable flavours we Brits give our snack foods. (As I was typing the previous sentence, my eye happened to alight on the wrapper pinned to my office wall, one from a pack of Baked Bean Pizzas — now that's improbable!) Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden reacted the same way during their visit here in August/September, taking great delight in collecting and sampling as wide a range of these wondrous comestibles as possible.

I wonder how they'd have reacted to the discovery recently made in the toilets at the Yorkshire Grey during a Fanhattonites meeting? Anyone who considers chocolate flavoured condoms risqué would have been stunned by what was on offer from the vending machine. Flavours included (I swear I'm not making this up) whisky, lager, lager & lime, champagne, custard, and curry. Whether the curry flavour on offer was korma, madras, or vindaloo (which, as we all know, is French for toilet wine) wasn't specified.

Predictably, Martin Smith fed the machine vast quantities of coins in his frenzy to acquire new exhibits for his condom collection. (I am not making this collection up.) I hear this expertise will soon be put to use producing a range of flavours more commonly associated with sex. The first they'll be releasing, after spending large sums figuring out exactly how to get that flavour into a condom: rubber. When we told Avedon about the vending machine she demanded the bar staff explain why the women's toilet didn't carry one. Being Avedon, she didn't actually bother going over to the bar to ask them this, preferring to shout across the crowded pub. Sadly, I didn't hear the answer, having slid under the table.

Talk of condoms reminds me (see if you can figure out why) that, following problems with her thyroid last year, Avedon had to have it irradiated. This left her sufficiently radioactive that she wasn't allowed to sleep with me for a few weeks. Seriously. Still, being a fan I realised there was a plus side to the situation and I gleefully looked forward to writing a fanzine article about this called "I Married the Incredible Radioactive Woman". The day Avedon was irradiated I met her at the tube station afterwards and gave her the once-over

with a dummy Geiger-counter, to puzzled looks from other passengers and giggles from her.

When we got in I turned the lights off and cried out in dismay.

"What's wrong?" asked Avedon, worriedly.

"You don't glow in the dark!" I wailed. "There go the savings I was expecting on our lighting bills."

What with all the American fans who've passed through town since late-July, the last few months worth of Fanhattonite meetings have seen far more visitors than usual at the Yorkshire Grey. The biggest of all occurred on Thursday 31st August when attendees included Moshe Feder, Lise Eisenberg, Frank Lunney, Dan & Lynn Steffan, Christina Lake, Pascal & Christine Thomas, John & Eve Harvey, Jim Young, Owen, Cedric, Martin, Avedon, and me. I showed around a copy of *Radio Times* (our equivalent of your *TV Guide*) pointing out the entry for that Saturday's 'Dyke TV' stuff. (Over four successive Saturdays, one of our four national network TV stations was devoting its evening schedule to lesbian programming.)

"Is this a gag?" asked Frank Lunney, who seemed to think my *Radio Times* must be a hoax issue. I assured him it wasn't.

"They make it sound," said Lise, reading the write-ups, "like being a lesbian is this fun thing you can choose to be."

"Well, it might require extensive surgery in my case," I replied, dubiously. "But, no, you're right. We have evening classes in it over here. In fact you're not allowed to practice lesbianism unless you're qualified in it to at least City & Guilds level and have been duly certified."

"It's really annoying," added Lise, "that you get something like Dyke TV, whereas all we get is Moron TV — every night!"

Well, that's a tad harsh. Your sitcoms (*Roseanne*, *Grace Under Fire*, and *Frasier* being particular favorites here at Gross Manor) are generally a lot better than ours, as are your SF shows (after the wonderful second series, I've come to the conclusion that *Babylon 5* is the best SF show TV has ever produced — not that that's saying much, alas), while many of your drama series (*Homicide: Life on the Streets*, *E.R.*, *Chicago Hope*, etc.) are at least

as good as the best the UK produces. I suspect Lise doesn't actually watch much TV.

I suggested to Moshe that he and Lise ought to put out a fanzine called *Motion Lease* but he was no more impressed by this idea than Geoff Ryman had been when I suggested that he (Geoff) put out a fanzine called *Ryman Reason*. What's the matter with these people? I have a name that doesn't lend itself to punning (anagrams, yes — I may yet do an apazine or a column called *Brash Neon*) but those who do show a marked lack of interest in running with my suggestions. Poot.

Then I told Moshe about one of the ways Avedon and I had raised some money when I was unemployed in 1994, which was by reading the slush pile for a publisher of erotic novels. Many husbands, when engaged in the serious business of ceiling gazing have been nagged by wives who've formed the curious impression that they're goofing off, but I must be the only one to be nagged, "Shouldn't you be reading pornography?" ("Oh, that it should've come to this," I said to Avedon at one point, back of wrist pressed firmly to brow, "that we should be reduced to reading filth for a living!") Reading so much awful porn would be a sobering experience if you didn't need a drink so badly afterwards. Some of these people had no idea of basic anatomy, and I find it impossible to believe that anyone has a big enough mouth to suck on a 7" diameter dildo. Not even Jerry Pournelle can do that (though it might be fun to watch him try). Then there was the guy who described "separating her clitoris" and "caressing the twin nodes" (?). Perhaps his girlfriend is a mutant. None of the descriptions were quite as naff as the (genuine) examples given in the publisher's guide sheets ("then he fucked her sopping grotto") but they sometimes came pretty close. Needless to say, the worst stuff in the pile was the SF porn.

One person Dan Steffan had been particularly pleased to meet was Avedon's pal, Cherie Matrix (known to some of her friends as 'cherry cake-mix') a beautiful, blonde Californian exile who shares his interest in tattoos and body piercing. Moshe didn't get to meet her and, given the conversation we once had about tattoos and body-piercing, I'm not sure he approved of her interests.

"The Jewish faith frowns on body-modification," he told me, frowning.

"Really?" I replied, raising an eyebrow in surprise. He laughed.

"Well, apart from that one." Since circumcision is only carried out in the UK either to relieve specific medical conditions or for reasons of religion, most British men remain uncut. It was the curiosity my prepuce plainly held



for various American lovers — most of whom had never encountered a foreskin before (one was so taken by it that she announced it had inspired her to call her next fanzine *Extra Moving Part*) — that first clued me in to just how ubiquitous circumcision is in the US. We were talking about this at The Yorkshire Grey, when someone mentioned that Harry Andruschak is a member of a group dedicated to reversing this trend in the US and to defending their own foreskins. The idea of 'defending' your foreskin amused me greatly.

"God," I said, "I wonder if he has a bumper-sticker that reads: 'The only way you'll take my foreskin from me is when you prise it from my cold, dead fingers?'"

I wonder if he does.

Condoms, lesbianism, tattoos, body-piercing, radioactive women, circumcision, TV, and pornography. All in all, a fairly standard evening's conversation for the Yorkshire Grey. We've even been known to talk about science fiction. But not very often. ♣

Wild Heirs #13

The whole country is Jurassic Park crazy. Michael Crichton's major plot gimmick is that scientists generate dinosaurs from DNA from fossils. Couldn't we apply the same concept to fandom? Why not clone Laney, McCain, Carr, Ellik and others now attending the Enchanted Convention? Sticklers for scientific accuracy and other nuisances may deride this project. "They won't grow up to be fans," they scoff. "They will have the heredity, but not the environmental influences. It is the Law of Science."

Well, I skip the science in Jerry Pournelle novels, and I say that they were all born to their calling. They were destined to be fans, and their clones will become fen, even if I have to read *The Enchanted Duplicator* to them at every feeding. By the way, I lied earlier. I don't really skip the science in Jerry Pournelle novels. I don't read Jerry Pournelle novels.

Arnie Katz, Wild Heirs #2

Friends

by Aileen Forman

Her name was Janine. She was one year younger than me and I thought she was the prettiest thing ever. Not a day went by that I didn't go over to her house to be with her. She was always Wendy and so I was Peter, rescuing her from the clutches of Captain Hook, leaping through the lilac bushes with a bare twig brandished as a sword. We'd play with her Barbie dolls, shrieking when a head accidentally fell off, sure that some quiet night Barbie would take her vengeance. We even looked alike, both with bright red hair and brown eyes. Although her mother and mine didn't get along, our friendship meant so much to us that they put their differences aside and made sure that we always had time together. I kept other potential friendships cool, letting Robin know that I didn't have time for her, telling Cindy that our friendship was based on a mutual love of horses and nothing else, so not to get too attached. Janine and I dressed in each other's clothes and whispered secrets and promises to each other and I thought that I would have her as my friend forever. Then, when I was twelve my family moved across town and I had to say goodbye, hugging her and crying and promising to call her. But time and distance proved too great even for such an intense friendship, and it wasn't until high school that I finally saw Janine again. I hadn't made other friends, keeping myself faithful to her. Even in my first year of high school I remained aloof from possible friendships, waiting for the next year when Janine would finally be coming back into my life. At last, the first day of my Sophomore year came and I waited in front of the brick school building, watching the new Freshmen come off the bus. Finally I saw her red hair and smile and I ran over to her, but a group of girls blocked my way and I could tell by the way that they acted that she was "in" and popular. Still, I edged forward and caught her eye.

"Nini?" I whispered and moved to hug her. "Oh, hi Aileen," she cut me off and with a quick smile she walked away in the middle of her adoring friends. I felt destroyed, embarrassed, betrayed. How could she find other friends after all we'd been to each other? It was then that I learned the dark side of friendship. I'd never been one to make friends lightly and the knowledge that other people didn't necessarily feel as much for me as I felt for them made me even more wary. And so I progressed through life pretty much alone, afraid to get close enough that it would hurt if they rejected me. I had friends, but they tended to be more like acquaintances and if it seemed that they were getting too intimate, I'd back off, sometimes even moving to another state to get away from someone that I thought was getting to know me too well. Even dating was a casual, easily put-aside thing, never getting my heart involved.

One day I wandered into a book shop in Phoenix and struck up a conversation with one of the employees about science fiction. Ken Forman was

the first person I'd ever met who spoke of reading with the same enthusiasm that I had, and I went back several times that week, not wanting to seem over-eager but unable to help myself. He asked me out the following weekend and although as a date it was a disaster, I felt like he was someone I could really be friends with. I was disappointed to learn that he was moving to Flagstaff within a month. But during that month, he taught me his version of friendship, calling almost every day, picking me up at the airport, introducing me to his friends, and boy, did he have a lot of them! I felt that he was pushing me too hard, trying to get too close, but for the first time ever, I didn't squirm away, even when he very casually told me that he loved me as a friend. He obviously had more in mind than just friendship, but friendship was a very big part of the relationship. I saw the way he opened himself up to everyone, never fearing that they'd hurt him. He welcomed new friendships, grieved lost ones, worked to maintain current ones. He was always there with an encouraging word, a dry shoulder for me to cry on when I lost my job, a kiss on the forehead and a hearty hug every time he saw me or any of his friends.

I was amazed at his courage – to be so vulnerable and open with so many people! Well, it wasn't long before our friendship evolved into a love affair, and by another year we were married. Ken knew how shy I was about relationships and chose to ask me to marry him when we were at a courthouse waiting for me to testify as an expert witness. He said later that he asked me there because I couldn't just leave, so he had time to try to convince me. Well, he didn't convince me to marry him then, but he did convince me to think about it and not run away. It took about a month of asking me to marry him for me to finally give in and take the risk, but eventually I said yes.

One of the first things that Ken attempted to change about me after we married was my attitude toward friendship, but it took a long time. I've always felt that once burned, two thousand times shy. We had two roommates that became our close friends, in fact acting as our Best Man and Maid of Honor at our wedding. Knowing Ken's famous knack with friendships, I never worried about losing them. That's when I learned that your friends have to try too. While I was away for a month, training for American Airlines, they became non-friends. I learned that the best way to stay friends with people is not to live with them, husbands excepted. When you live with friends they learn things about you that you never wanted them to know, like, you vacuum only on leap years or that you're more possessive of your cereal than most people are of their ancestors' jewelry. We lost Ken and Kate mainly because they disapproved of Ken's lax attitude toward house cleaning. That's a crappy reason to lose a friend.

I sort of had a problem with Ken about this nondiscrimination policy

towards friends. Many of his friends I didn't want to let in the house, never mind accept them wholeheartedly. Nevertheless, I made serious attempts to please him and try to learn how to be a good friend. Pudge was one of those challenges. Ken became friends with Pudge because they had so much in common – they both enjoy playing with calculus and they both enjoyed altering their reality through water pipes and paper. Unlike Ken, though, Pudge felt that he was an extraterrestrial, so he shouldn't have to follow the human rules of correct conduct. Whenever someone took exception to his antisocial behavior, he would go off on some rambling soliloquy about the pettiness of humans. He was also painfully shy around women, myself included, and after I decided that he wasn't going away and forced myself to get to know him, he would bitterly go on and on about how hard hearted and cold women were, obviously because they (sensibly) didn't want to go out with him or often didn't even realize he was alive. Pudge moved to Vegas after we moved here and it was then that Ken realized that extraterrestrials don't make good friends. Pudge was a depressive alcoholic and had very little self control, so Vegas wasn't the town for him. Unfortunately, he didn't come to that conclusion until after many drunken midnight phone calls in search of help or sympathy. Eventually we began to dread his voice and when he moved back to Flagstaff, neither Ken nor I were sad about it. What we were sad about was the obvious fact that sometimes friendship isn't enough to keep everyone sane. Sometimes the best thing you can do for a friend is to push him away to stand on his own two feet. The trick is learning when a friend needs a shoulder and when he needs a push.

Nonetheless, Ken's only friendship fault is a tendency to support too long. I don't think that's so bad. Through the years, I've had times where I've gotten exasperated with Ken's insistence on maintaining friendships that I felt were lost causes, but when I remember the luck he's given me over the years, I guess I'm glad he's so persistent. I won't claim to be as good a friend as Ken. He's had more practice and he's more optimistic than I am. What I do know is that if our marriage ended tomorrow, I'd be richer for having had Ken as a friend. I know there are a lot of other people in the world who feel the same.

Many of these people have come into our lives through our local science fiction club. In fact, it's only since SNAFFU started that I've had both the opportunity and the impetus to learn true friendship. When the club came

together, I found that a common interest can rush friendship past the comfort zone, though. I found that a good friendship needs steeping like tea. I've rushed people into too close a relationship (I plead inexperience) and in doing so, scared them away. We kept the club going, though, and I got better at friendship. I found that, given a little patience, the shy members often became the best friends. And I found fandom.

I guess the first good friend I made in Vegas fandom was Will Ryan. It was easy to be friends with him since our temperaments were similar. Unfortunately, I discovered that attempting to get close to people too quickly often drives them away. Other things contributed to our loss of friendship, but mostly it was because I tried to be in his and his wife's life too much. I still think they moved to Denver just to get away from "that clingy broad in Vegas." So I learned to take my time with friendship. Ken has it easier. It comes naturally for him and he doesn't push it. John Hardin became my friend more slowly and our friendship cemented itself firmly when he stayed with us for a month before moving back to Texas. He's volatile, empathic, shy, easily led, sweet, emotional, intelligent, and complex. John's friendship has probably caused me more problems than any other friendship I've had, including Ken and mine, but it's given me many occasions to practice what Ken's preached. Just when I think, "Okay, that's it, John's more trouble than fun," I give him one more chance and he proves what an exceptional human being he is. Being a real friend isn't always easy and often not overwhelmingly rewarding, but the longer you're friends, the better it gets. I've finally gotten to that point with many people. Now I'm giving this long-distance, never-really-met, tentative-hi-there, who-are-you fanzine friendship stuff a try. It helps that I've met a lot of you.

Ken's better at this fanzine fandom friendship thing, but as I've said, he's had more practice. He truly feels that the people he trades fanzines with are close friends, even those he's never met face to face. I've suddenly found myself way behind again. Is it because I give too much of myself to those people that I consider friends? I'm not sure, but I'm willing to give this bizarre new friendship a try. I have to warn you though that I won't travel more than fifty miles to help you new fanzine friends change a tire. I might bake you cookies, though. ☺

Wild Heirs #13



I Touched His Piano

By Tom Springer

“Burbee died this morning, Tom,” Arnie said to me over the phone before I made my way to work.

The air in my lungs pushed out an “uh.” After a moment Arnie and I talked a bit more about what had happened and we hung up. I’d just seen him at ManureCon not so long ago. I sat at the kitchen table for several minutes before I picked up the phone and called Tammy. The news didn’t brighten her day any either.

“Are you gonna be okay, honey?” she asked me.

“Yeah, I’m okay. We knew it was gonna happen,” I told her.

I just didn’t want it to happen. After saying our goodbyes I set the phone back in its cradle and heaved myself up from the kitchen table. I had to go to work. Since then I’ve had plenty of time to think about Burbee. I know from what Cora told me he was more than ready for the end, it’s just that I wasn’t.

Charles Burbee’s writings were instrumental in gaining my interest in fanzine fandom. The Incomplete Burbee was the first fanzine I had ever read, given to me by Arnie at one of the monthly socials. I went home that night with my curiosity piqued after listening to Arnie and Joyce talk about this fan they knew by the name of Charles Burbee. I flopped into bed and flipped open my copy of TIB, bypassed his “Editorials from Shangri-L’Affaires” and soon found myself engrossed in Mrs. Qwerty’s problems concerning her attitude toward canine intercourse in “Not in Sin.” It made me laugh.

On the next page I dove into Burbee’s description of Stanley Stibbard in “Stibbard the Gay.” I laughed at that too, even while devouring the illusion of Stanley that Burbee had “striven so manfully to build up.” I didn’t have to know any of the fans Burbee mentioned for me to hugely enjoy his sense of humor, style of writing and grasp of dialogue.

“Stibbard the Gay” had warmed me up so I read “Downward Slanting Eyes” despite the bold type signaling to me that I was going to come across fanzine titles I’d never heard before. With only momentary trepidation I submerged myself in Laney and Burb’s conversation about a poem called “The Bixel” sent to them by the two aspiring Evans-baiters Don Wilson and Howard Miller. This too I found entertaining and amusing despite being 44 years old, way past my time.

Later in the fanzine that very night I came across “Don Wilson, Humorist” which brought “Downward Slanting Eyes” full circle, and clued me and the rest of his readers in to what he thought about Don Wilson, “the #1 humorist in FAPA,” and Howard Miller, whom Burbee suspected were one and the same.

Before I came across “Don Wilson, Humorist,” I devoured “What Kind of Kings,” “Gas Jet Annex,” and the piece which I take to be the originator of the term “Their Sensitive Fannish Faces” which also happens to be the

title. In it, Burbee writes of first meeting Andy Anderson, James Kepner and F. Towner Laney on his front porch, after his wife Isabelle reported to him that “There are three people down there,” she said. “They have funny wild looks on their faces. I think they’re fans.” The ending was complete closure. The quintessential identification for fannish fans.

Next followed “Jesus in the Ditch,” and then “Watermelons and Cable Cars.” I could go on listing all his great works that I’ve read and reread and still talk about with Arnie and Joyce and the rest of the Vegrants but I’m stopping at “Watermelons and Cable Cars” because it truly reminds me of fandom’s loss. I’ve never heard the famous WATERMELON STORY and probably never will.

At Manurecon Burbee was incapable of surviving his legendary story and Bob Tucker who used to ask him to tell it countless times (sixteen times in one day), and heard it, couldn’t remember it. This makes me realize that by losing Burbee we’ve lost more fan history than we’ll ever know. Everybody in fandom has heard of THE WATERMELON STORY but how many fans remember it? And how many could tell that legendary saga that Burbee didn’t think was much good . . . thinking his 45-minute buildup was far better? No one I talked to at Manurecon could.

It’s fascinating how quickly I latched on to this man through his writings. He was so good I felt I could know him (but I can be so presumptuous as to say I did). Eventually, I’d meet him. After several short visits I felt that I was getting to know him, but we both knew it would never really happen. It was too late. He was going, fighting all the way, but it was inevitable and nothing could be done but to accept it.

I remember the first time I met Burbee. It was over at the Katz’s. Burbee and Cora had come to Vegas for some gambling and visiting. I remember very clearly stumbling through the door to see Charles Burbee in all his fannish grandeur plopped amidst the gabbling Vegrants, couched in his wheelchair with a Budwesier clutched in one hand. He would raise a finger to make a point as he spoke while everyone would lean close so they could hear. Every Burbish pronouncement would end in laughter and reminiscing between Cora, Burbee, Arnie, and Joyce, while the rest of the Vegrants gathered round and pitched in their two cents when they could. It looked like a cosy, comfy little party.

I approached as someone jumped up to run an errand and took their seat. Arnie helped me. “Burb, I want you to meet a friend of mine, Tom Springer.”

Burbee looked up at me, his blues eyes thinking back and remembering. He gave me his hand and nodded to me. “You’re Tom Springer. I’ve heard about you.” I had Arnie to thank for that. A brief firm handshake sealed our

introduction. "I want to talk to you later," he informed me. "Right now I have a story to write." And with that Peggy Kurilla wheeled him off to Joyce's office where he would dictate a article to her. With Arnie and Joyce to help the conversation along, Cora and I were soon chatting away and eventually ended up at the kitchen table, filling our plates with food for dinner. I fetched Burbee a cold one and we sat in the living room after his dictation session and had our dinner while I quizzed him about Laney, Perdue, Rotsler, Stanley Stibbard, Dirty Old Kepner, Ackerman, EEEvans and all the characters he'd written about through the years I found in TIB.

"You'll come help me with this next article?" he asked me, wiping mayonnaise from his upper lip. I nodded, my mouth full of food. "Good! Let's go." He held our beers as I pushed him down to the Katz's hallway to Joyce's office where a Macintosh sat with an already completed article. Together we would write "Note Bene," one of his machine shop stories about Burbee and Laney's superior intellects. We spent three hours going back and forth about this and that throughout the dictation. The first thing that got me was the title. He'd already had the damn thing written in his head, but unlike Al Ashley, he was committing it to paper. I knew he had the whole thing in his head when the first words out of his mouth were "Note Bene."

I typed that in and turned to him. "Latin, right?" He nodded and sipped his beer.

"That the title," he informed me.

"Okay, what's it mean?"

With that one question I embarked on a fascinating wild ride with the classically educated Burbee, whom I had no trouble at all speaking with. Jesus, we got along like gangbusters writing that damn thing! That's when I knew my instincts were right, I did want to know this man. Throughout the entire article we would shoot off in some other conversational direction, eventually looping back around to continue the story only to run across something else I didn't know, and that he would patiently inform me about.

This was after his first stroke, before the second, and while he still had a bit of a stutter, once he got going he was what I imagined him to be like in his house in Whittier, drinking homebrew and talking fannish. He was the Burb.

It was a magic three hours I would trade for a complete run of "-s". Later visits revealed his gradually degenerative condition and all of us knew Burbee was not long for this world. He sure hung in there, though. We managed more visits, and in the early summer of 1995, Bill Rotsler, Robert Lichtman, Ken Forman, Tammy Funk, myself and the Katz's cruised down to the Pechanga reservation for BurbeeCon 1. It was a fine visit to a beautiful home hosted by the warm, loving and caring Cora, whose gifts to fandom are quite unfathomable. If she didn't stand by her man in his declining years, who would have?

That visit will be with me for a long time to come. Walking the garden path around their house beneath the towering oaks of the region, Tammy and I held hands and spoke of our love. We sat with Burbee in his living room and listened to Rotsler and Burbee reminisce long into the evening. Before we left Cora took Tammy and I on a walk around the house to the back guest building where many of Burbee's things were stored. She showed me the stack of shoebox-like piano rolls that Burbee had collected over the years, then, wiping the dust off with an old rag, she showed us his player piano. I ran my hand along it thinking of I could join the ranks of stefnal characters who had preceded me and "had touched it with fantasy."

I smoothed my hand along the old faded wood longing for what I only knew in the pages of Burbee's writings but desperately wished to experience for real. It felt good though, knowing my hands rested where Burbee's once had, and Perdue's, Grennell's, Lee Jacobs', Gordon Dewey's and Max Dancy's, and though I missed the grand times in which Charles Burbee brewed his own beer and wrote about the LASFS, I didn't miss him. But I do now. 🍀

Wild Heirs 15.5



Charles Burbee
Our Founder

Zonked — A Column

Auto Memories

by Ben Wilson

For many a year I've kept hidden a dark secret. Knowing that my secret was best kept quiet. You know, stereotypes and all. As such, my interests have suffered. I have denied myself for far too long. No longer does it have to be. I can set my secret free: I'm a motorhead of sorts. Now I can't recite you the Chilton's manuals, engine sizes, give you a list of the best production vehicles or any other categories of the automotive occult.

What's left?

Put a race on, any kind; superbikes, motorcross, Offroad, stadium truck pulls, IHRA, NASCAR, INDY or anything else with a motor including swamp-uggies and I'm hooked. I could sit and watch all day.

I remember watching races with my old man all through my early years, occasionally sharing a beer. Mom usually left the room mumbling, smiling and shaking her head. Sometimes I caught that phrase that mothers seem to like so much: Like father, like son.

My father was connected to an automotive career for most of my life. Driving trucks for Blue Water Metal out of Port Huron, Michigan, he made more than a few deliveries to Connie Colita racing. I learned a few years later that Dad was into amateur top fuel drag racing when I was very young. In his mid-twenties, his paychecks came from driving a cab for the Blue Water Cab Co. I believe it was then he began driving charter buses back and forth to Florida—and that led to driving a local bus for—you guessed it—the Blue Water Transit Company.

We relocated to Tower, Michigan, an even smaller town of less than 200. There were few jobs and all had waiting lists. In Tower, there were a few years when he'd do any job, and even received state certification as a cook. Later, he teamed with my best friend's father and started a repair garage.

Here's where my own interest swung to motor sports.

Yeah, I helped out a little in the shop when I could, but that was just common sense. Northern Michigan is, like I said, dirt poor for the most part. Practical automotive knowledge is vital.

No, what got me into racing was out back, behind the shop. The Moreals, one of those fortunate families that had access to money, built a quarter-mile paved oval track in the back of one of their hay fields. Next to the field with the track was a similar sized piece of land that belonged to the County following a tax seizure.

On the opposite side of the County property, conveniently studded with paper birch trees, stood our shop. We rented the property as well as the shop, and lived there, too. (Ask me about that story some time.)

It's only logical for you to assume what a 16-year-old poor boy would do with a race track next door, and that's exactly what I did. Every Saturday

night for eight weeks, I sat in my favorite tree, a tree I'd groomed while they were building the track. I insured that I would have best seat in the whole place.

I'd picked a tree the right distance way, and with a clean line of sight. In order to ensure this, I had to modify a few limbs. Then with an old chair, some bailing twine, a couple of lengths of two-by-four, a nice soft cushion and some ingenuity, I had myself a really comfy perch.

With a pair of low power binoculars, I was able to fill up my view. And the best part was that I didn't have to move them to be able to see the whole track.

By the second week I had a place to mount them, and all I had to do was put my eyes up to the lens.

Like I said, I did this for eight weeks. The ninth week, everything changed.

To celebrate passing all my sophomore classes, my father had saved enough money to buy both of us tickets and pit passes. (At the beginning of the second term, this had seemed very unlikely.)

After that night, I was no longer content watching from the trees. So I began to sneak in. At first, I just went into the stands. I didn't want to brave the thinner crowd and risk being singled out by track officials if I got even closer. But even being in the stands wasn't enough, I needed to smell the hot brakes and the clutches that had been slipping for the last dozen laps while their drivers fought for first place.

A week or two in the stands, then it was into the pits. It took me longer to get in unnoticed, but I soon found a drainage ditch that never seemed to have water in it. After a while everyone expected to see me in there. Even the officials gave up trying to catch me coming in.

Near the end of that summer, Ronnie wrecked his Camaro. It was a spectacular wreck. I got to see his car's undercarriage 15 feet away and five feet up the wall from me. He came down off the wall nose first. Momentum, and the angle at which he hit Mother Earth, made the huge hunk of metal roll over sideways three times, coming to a stop on its wheels directly in front of the gate to the pits.

Knowing Ronnie, I ran to give what help I could. I didn't know what I was getting myself into. Rumors were flying before they even had the wreck loaded. "Ronnie's never going to race again." "Ronnie's not going to be able to race the rest of the year. He just doesn't have that kind of money," and a hundred more.

Well, Ronnie was pissed—and not because of the rumors that were starting. You see, he didn't hit the wall because he made a mistake. No, they were being rough and someone got a little carried away.

Dean Palmer was in second place at the time. He was always in second place; Ronnie was just better. Dean got frustrated and came down on to the apron of the track and under Ronnie. Then back up on to the track he came, leaving no room for the orange-and-white Camaro.

Ronnie was loaded (with the help of his brother and their combined crews), packed up (with help from me) and out of there (with the help of his truck) before they finished the race. He had to be. We all knew that if Dean got back into the pits before Ronnie was out of there, one of them would be going to the hospital after all.

I stuck around to watch Virgil, Ronnie's big brother, run his race. Overall, a very exciting night.

Seven a.m. came really early.

As a kid, I never answered the phone. That was Dad's job, but the sound always woke me. Shortly after that disturbing ring, there was an even more disturbing knock at my door.

So much for sleeping in. Before I did more than grunt, my father stuck his head in.

"You want to make some money?"

Yeah, right. What 16-year-old kid doesn't want to make some money? But I wasn't going to go into it blind. "What kind of work?"

"Top Secret . . ."

"I'm not going to agree to any work before I know what it is," I butted in. I had learned the hard way by blindly agreeing to clear a patch of poison oak. I itched for weeks.

"If you'll let me finish, I was saying that it's top secret and that if you don't want to do it, you still have to keep your mouth shut." My Dad was now going through the things in my dresser, great. "Ronnie is going to put his car back together. He wants it raceable by next week. He called and asked if we could help. I could use the extra money . . . what about you?"

"What could I do?"

"Mainly you'll be doing Ronnie's chores and be an extra pair of hands. Be ready in 20 minutes. I told him I'd be there by eight."

Thanks to Mother Nature, we ended up having two weeks to prepare the car. Good thing too, because we still weren't done.

Ronnie, being a Moreal, had keys to the track's gate. On Friday afternoon of the second week, we stole down to the track to test the car.

We covered the car, borrowed someone else's truck, and headed out. Getting to the track undiscovered was the hardest part. Once we got in we had no worries, as Ronnie's folks, including his big brother who lived at the front of the property, were all out of town.

Ron took the car out, warmed it up and brought it back to the pits. He adjusted this, that and those, then took it back to the track for another go. After a dozen trips back and forth, he felt he had it in line.

He asked me if I wanted to drive. With all I did to help him, he felt I deserved to try it out. After changing into a firesuit—talk about uncomfortable!—and getting my Dad's okay (good thing Mom wasn't around!), I climbed behind the wheel of a stock class race car.

I was scared, really scared.

Ronnie had told my dad he wasn't worried about the car. He figured that I would be so worried about wrecking it that I'd never get up to a speed to do any damage if I hit something.

He was right. For the first two laps.

I gained confidence as the car gained speed. After a dozen laps or so—I lost count—they waved me in.

Ronnie was impressed, and told me I had done extremely well. My Dad reminded him that although I had just gotten my driver's license, I had been driving for six years: everything from farm equipment to a '71 Caddie after

Mom and Dad had too much to drink at a wedding reception.

Ronnie told us that he would pick up our pit passes for the rest of the season, in exchange for helping him out. He said he'd pick us up on the way in.

Everyone was surprised to see us towing the car. It was cool. Everyone was watching us, marveling.

While Dad unloaded the truck, Ronnie had to attend the driver's meeting. He asked me to come along so I could check it out. I'd asked him what the meetings were about earlier in the week. They cover the track rules and then move on to the various league rules.

Boring stuff. I took off right after meeting to help Dad finish with the car.

Ronnie went out and qualified on his first go. Outside pole position.

After everyone went out for their second try, Ronnie sprung the real surprise he and my Dad planned. And it became clear why I had to go to the driver's meeting. In short, he let me drive the car on a qualifying run.

Now this was awesome. I got to hear my name announced as the driver in front of a thousand-plus people. I did pretty good, and recorded the sixth-best time of the night. But that's not that hard when there are only 14 cars to compete with.

There were two 15-lap heat races, to set up for the ten-car, 25-lap feature. Ronnie won his heat, but I didn't do as well, coming in third. That was enough to qualify for the feature, but of course I had to drop out so Ronnie could drive his car. But I was absolutely hooked on racing of any kind, just as long as there is a motor involved.

This year Richie Clyne, with his daddy Ralph's money, has built a major racing complex, with 24 venues including Indy cars. The main facility is huge. When I first saw it, I experienced the same thrill I had when I was racing all those years back. It's that same sensation you get when you go off that first drop on your favorite roller coaster. I glimpsed it incomplete from the road, and just anticipating the events that would be held there was enough to thrill me.

When finished, the place will have a seating capacity of 107,000 around a 1.5 mile tri-oval banked track. They have two more tracks under construction out back. One will be a quarter-mile clay oval, and the other a 1/2 mile paved track.

Richard Petty's driving school will also use the facility. Yep, you got it, a school to learn how to drive NASCAR and possibly other styles. I've seen the prices for classes. They're pricey, but within reach with a little saving. I'm looking at doing one course for approximately \$1,100. It'll give me three ten-lap tries with coaching in between each run. There will be five different levels of activity, some cheaper and some definitely more expensive. The flyer I saw priced on program at more than \$5,000—I didn't even bother to see what you got.

At another part of the racing complex, legendary car and engine designer Carroll Shelby is building a research and development plant adjacent to the speedway. It'll be the first time he has been able to use anything other than airport runways to test his vehicles.

As for me, this is the first time I've lived anywhere with a major racing complex. Now all I have to do is figure out how to pay for all the races that I want to see.

A parting shot. Just last night, I saw that Formula 1 wants to sign a ten-year-contract with Las Vegas, to host the USA Grand Prix. I'm praying that the city officials don't mess this up. 🍀

Unwound—“Bride of Formanstein”

by Ken Forman

Picture the scene in the old, B&W version of *Frankenstein* when the Doctor finally brings his creation to life... The castle is dark, a fire flickers in the background, electric equipment sparks and hisses all around the place. Outside a storm rages. Slowly, ever so slowly, the creature raises a shaky finger, then the whole hand.

The camera flashes back to Dr. Frankenstein's face and he exclaims, "It's alive—alive!"

We all know how the story ends: the creation becomes corrupt and—in the end—destroys his creator.

I experienced something similar to this just the other day.

For years, I asked Aileen if she wanted to contribute to fanzines. "C'mon, it'll be fun. Who knows, maybe you'll be some BNF someday," I'd laud.

She resisted.

"Try it, Aileen," Arnie would suggest. "You're a great writer. Other fans want to read what you write!"

She rebuffed his efforts.

Joyce successfully convinced her to co-edit a fanzine. Aileen agreed and helped produce BBB. But that wasn't enough for my wife to fully take the plunge.

Time and again, various fans (Las Vegas types and out-of-towners like Robert Lichtman) assured her that she should write. Aileen didn't want to play.

This opposition didn't come from disinterest. Rather, Aileen likes fannish types. If you were at Corflu Vegas, you'll remember the beautiful red haired hostess forcing chocolate on any and everyone. (Yes, I know Lynn Steffan, who is also beautiful and—at that time—red haired, was there, but she wasn't pushing candy.)

Aileen loves to host, and everyone at the con loved her. I just knew she would be as big a hit in print as she was in person. My only problem was convincing her to write.

My wife is stubborn, and cautious. Forcing her to do anything is pointless. So I bided my time. I followed the patent-pending, Arnie Katz method of fan creation. Just a little bit at a time. It began simply enough back in 1994.

"Hey honey," I called into the other room, "this guy sez he wants to hear more about your horse."

"What guy?"

"Bill Rotsler. You remember him. He was at Corflu Vegas—drew on all the plates."

"Of course, I remember Bill. Why does he want to know about my horse?" she asked.

"You talked about your horse at the con, and I think you've mentioned

him a few times in various one-shots. And I did that piece about him in *Dalmatian Alley*. I think you should write more about him."

Just a little at a time.

Before I knew it, fandom's encouragement worked its magic. Aileen started to write a little more often.

The next thing she knew, she was addicted. That egg-of-boo is some powerful stuff.

Aileen started contributing regularly to *Wild Heirs* and responding to the lettercol. She even sent off a few locs to other people.

All the while denying her own fannishness.

"I'm not a fanzine fan!" she'd proclaim. "I'm a science fiction fan who happens to like all aspects of fandom. Fanzines are one part of my fanac."

It's hard to argue against such logic.

She even declared these things in a recent issue of WH. Yet one undeniable fact existed. As Lichtman points out: if you write for and to fanzines and you read fanzines, and you hang out with fanzine fans, then you must be a fanzine fan, regardless of your other hobbies.

Fanzine Fandom has her now.

Even death will not release her.

Cheers rang far and wide throughout fandom. Hooray, hurrah. Aileen Forman is a fanzine fan! The final nail was driven home just a few months ago, when she produced a perzine called *Glamour*.

No way she could deny her true colors now.

Aileen asked me to teach her how to use my desktop publishing program so she could do it herself without my help.

How could I refuse the request of a new trufan?

She sent a copy to Rotsler who, of course, sent her numerous cartoons. Many of these toons included jokes based on the title, some were specific enough that they would only work in future issues. That Rotsler has a devious mind, he has.

Others sent locs filled with praise and suggestions. She had to pub more.

Aileen's second issue came out last month, looking better than the first. The next is coming together even as I write this. This is very exciting, watching a fan blossom.

So how does all this relate to Frankenstein?

Picture the scene in a new suburban house where a fan is about to spring to life... The room is lit, a fire flicks in the background... The computer beeps and boops as the fan types out her stories and does her layout. Outside the wind blows. Slowly, ever so slowly, the fan finishes a page, then a whole zine.

The camera flashes back to me as I think, she's a fan... a fan! But don't

forget that the creation destroys the creator.

We only have one computer in this house! Only one fan at a time can commit fanac around here. Lately, it seems that when the fannish muse visits me, my wife is working on my computer. I say my computer because prior to this new transmogrification, she resisted touching the thing. So I'm stuck on the prongs of a dilemma. Not a comfortable place to be, either.

Do I encourage Aileen to write more, and thus inhibit my own fanac? Or do I deny her access to the tools necessary to commit her own? Quite the sticky wicket.

My temporary solution is to sneak around, behind her back to do what I have to do.

In the middle of the night, I'll slowly roll out of bed (it's a full-motion water bed, so this is a very delicate operation) and creep into the living room.

Half the time she wakes and asks where I'm going.

"Just need a drink of water. Go back to sleep, sweetheart," I mutter. This usually placates her, and she falls back into slumber. This ruse gains me the needed computer time.

Sometimes a noise will wake her, and she'll notice I'm not beside her under the covers. She'll sleepily wander into the living room, rubbing her eyes, and ask why I'm up and at the computer.

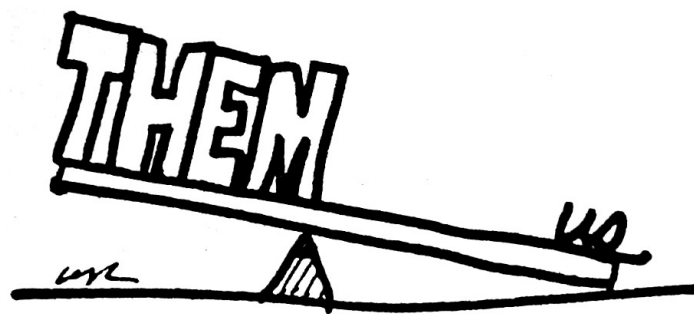
I just lie. "I'm just browsing the Internet, looking for dirty pictures," I say.

"If I do it at night, the downloads are faster."

She mumbles something about being married to a pervert and stumbles back to bed. I don't know if she buys the bullshit, but she leaves me in peace and I go back to my fanac.

Let my story of woe stand as a warning to all married fans. If you want your significant other to share the joy you've found in fandom, get that second computer first. ☸

Wild Heirs #19



That Old Fannish Line

by Arnie Katz

The passing of a fannish legend is never easy to bear. They are with us, so clever and lively, and then they are *gone*. The ultimate gafiation conjures an image that faan fiction about enchanted conventions and netherregionals can't dispel.

I heard about the death of Bill Rotsler in the usual way. I was dictating my column for the *Wild Heirs* 30th annish, February the year before last, when Andy Porter suddenly popped up in the middle of the computer screen.

"Guess who died?" he intoned. His eyes were downcast and a frizzle of gray hair hung over his forehead.

"Not you or me," I said, hopefully. We had had these lugubrious conversations many times over the years. He had called to tell me about Ron Ellik and about Terry Carr. He had tolled the bell for 60 years of fannish deaths.

"It's — it's Rotsler." He nodded slightly as if to assure me that this was no joke.

I banged the desk in frustration. "Not Bill!" I said, although I knew he'd been ailing since '23. "How did he . . . how did it . . . happen?"

"He was drawing a cartoon," Andy said.

"Did he finish it?"

"Tom Springer says he just keeled over, dead. Then he drew one more line, signed it 'WR.' Then nothing."

"Was there a caption?"

"Something about how death is life's greatest surprise, I think," he said.

"Geri Sullivan plans to print it."

"That's good," I said, though I didn't care right then. I thought about the good times I'd shared with Rotsler and about the mountains of laugh-out-loud (and wry smile) cartoons he'd done for my fanzines from *Quip* in the 1960s to *The Overly Compleat Arnie Katz* that the Vegrants published for Toner 23.

About a month after that, his friends scattered the ashes at Anne-Margret Park in Las Vegas, near her 50-foot-tall statue. One of the fan artists drew a face on the statue's left knee. "I have higher aspirations," the critter is saying as he looks under the statue's marble mini-skirt.

That was the day the envelopes stopped. No more decorated white packets with "Reseda, CA" postmarks. No more zingers at the letterhacks. No more maverick hearts and ironic lightning bolts. No more aliens showing their right profile.

At first, fans hardly noticed. Every faned had a stockpile, and it took a lot of publishing to run through accumulated vintage Rotsler drawings, even though it had grown more difficult to find uses for the one about Harry Warner locs. *Rotsler Faces Left*, 64 gigabytes of sci-fi creatures, signaled that fandom had exhausted the backlog.

Some faneds continued to include Rotslers, generally reprints from decades ago. Scanned images from plates, rocks, walls and waxed fruit pro-

vided a trickle of illos, but editors gradually turned to other fan artists.

That's the way things stood until one day, about 10 months ago. The illustrated envelope jumped out of the mail pile at me like a jack-in-the-box. Surprise froze me.

At first, all I could do was stare at the big white rectangle with the unmistakable illo and lettering.

Both were unmistakably the creation of . . . William Rotsler!

It read: "Las Vegas Fandom has the strength of 7.5 because the 20 are getting old and tired."

I slit one edge with the electric opener and slid my hand inside. My fingers touched a clump of paper and I pulled it out.

I'd seen batches of artwork before, but I never expected to see one like this again. I sifted through the stack, illo by illo, as my incredulity mounted. Then I came to that oh-so-familiar printed rectangle:

Please take what you want and can soon use and pass on the rest. These drawings are sometimes drawn a bit larger than perhaps they should appear, so remember, these can be Xeroxed down. Please do not return the original.

**M. William Rotsler
Box 770
Las Vegas, NV 89109**

My detective skills, honed by 30 years of Andre Casino cases, detected three things: Rotsler had finally inserted the missing "be," he'd moved to Las Vegas, and his first initial was now "M."

When I looked at the illos themselves, I got another surprise. The familiar signature wasn't quite the same. Every cartoon had a little "MR," though it certainly looked like Rotsler's handwriting.

I didn't know what to do, so I put the illos back in the envelope. I stowed it in the art cabinet and hit the info highway.

Was this merely a tasteless hoax — or something more? Was I the only one who'd heard from "M. Rotsler"?

I had to know.

I video'd a mass e-mail to every active fanzine fan in my address file. "Hi everyone," I began. "Sorry to send a multi-vid, but I need rapid action. I think you'll agree once I explain.

"I got illos from Rotsler, a whole envelope. It's new stuff, not something

the post office just found.

"Any of you get anything like that?"

"They look real, but the signature is whack — and so is the address. I'll stick close to the machine and wait to hear.

"Talk to you all soon."

The first replies came in before I'd finished looking at the day's mail. Gary Farber was first, of course. His squirt blossomed in the lower right hand corner. "I don't know what you're talking about," his image said to me. "I hope this isn't one of those Vegrant jokes."

He had more to say, I'm sure, but I hit the delete key and the window vanished. Another, with Geri Sullivan, replaced it.

"Funny you should ask, Arnie," she said. "Jeff and I got something like that this morning. Who do you think this 'M. William Rotsler' is?"

"This is weird," she finished. "This is exceptionally weird."

More messages came that afternoon, and a queue-full awaited me the next morning. The verdict: six fans had gotten envelopes. The rest, mostly occasional publishers, expressed various mixtures of alarm and curiosity.

Two days later, Lucy Huntzinger sent a follow-up. She'd gotten an envelope from Rotsler that morning! A day after that, Ken Forman and Rob Hansen reported the same thing.

That opened the floodgates. Within the month, almost every fanzine fan had an envelope of fresh Rotsler illos. I had three. (He always did like Vegas Fandom.)

At first, editors were reluctant. It didn't seem right, this unnatural season of Rotslers. Eventually though, need triumphed.

The trouble was that they were good Rotslers, as funny and pointed as ever. Faneds deprived of the abundant supply of surefire Rotsler art cast wistful looks at the unused art that had arrived so mysteriously.

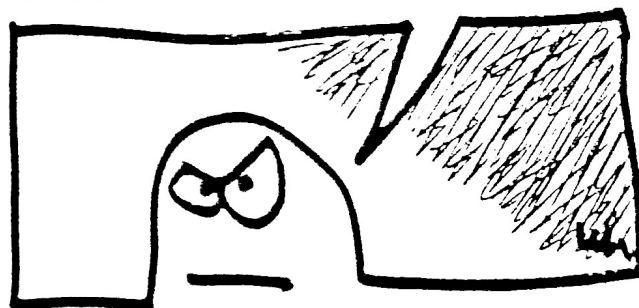
It wasn't long before Rotsler cartoons were once again common in fanzines. The funny thing was, as soon as the first wave of Rotslers broke in the fanzines, another round of envelopes arrived.

"I don't know who this 'M. William Rotsler' is," said Joyce,

"but he may be even more prolific than Just Plain Bill."

"I know what you mean," I replied. "The more we use, the more we get. We may have to revive *Wild Heirs* just to keep those envelopes

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FILLER. DO NOT TRY
THIS AT HOME. —**



from piling up too fast. He could churn out the graphic crifanac in the old days, but I don't remember him being so compulsive, so single-minded."

"It's like he doesn't have anything else to do," Joyce offered.

"This isn't where we go out to the cemetery and check out his grave and find that he's some sort of trufannish ghoul, is it?"

"No, that's Night of the Living Old Pharts," I corrected. "We can't check out the grave, anyway, remember?"

"Maybe they weren't really his ashes at all!" Joyce offered.

"We can check that out if all else fails, but Bill is drawing badges at the enchanted convention until we can prove otherwise."

"So what are we going to do?" she asked.

"We're going to Corflu Formula 44 this weekend and see if the Virtual Fanclub can figure this out."

"A good plan," she declared.

A good plan? It was a great plan. We got to the hotel at a little after 4:00, and we had the answer to the enigma by dinner time. Not that the solution was due to my detective prowess. We'd only just broken into the honor bar when the phone in our suite rang. I got it on the second shrill tone.

"Come to room 1814," said an urgent voice. I heard the hang-up click. The line was dead.

"I don't know what this means, Joyce, but that was one strange phone call."

"Who was it?" Joyce asked. "Are they coming up here?"

"No. Not that kind of strange," I said. "I didn't recognize the voice, but we're supposed to go to room 1814."

"Sidebar first?" she inquired.

"Nav," I replied, waving off the suggestion. "Maybe it's just an invitation to a party or something. Let's go."

I knocked. Ben Wilson opened the door. "You're not going to believe this," he promised before we could even exchange greetings.

He was right.

We walked into the suite's main room. Joyce's grip tightened on my arm. "I don't like this," she said.

"I'm not crazy about it, either," I admitted. "Look at that thing!"

The big metal cabinet, a little taller than Joyce, made the large room feel crowded. A smaller, square box on a pivot topped the bulkier base. Its two lights—eyes?—swiveled toward us.

"Hello... Arnie and Joyce Katz." The metallic, yet oddly familiar, voice came from a rectangular grill positioned below the glowing eyes.

"H-hi," I managed.

"Did you get the envelope?" it asked.

I turned to Ben. He nodded. "This is 'M. William Rotsler,'" he said under his breath. "I call him Mecha-Rotsler."

"You call him?"

"I built him," Ben said. "Found the plans in an old Martin Alger fanzine."

"Wasn't Alger's plan for a \$2.98 mimeograph?" Joyce blurted.

"I modified it a little," Ben said. "Came out pretty cool, though, don't you think?"

I was still too stunned to do more than nod.

"This is M. William Rotsler?" Joyce asked. "This gizmo is doing all those cartoons?"

"Pretty good stuff, huh?" Ben said, proud as a poppa.

It was only after I'd weathered the first shock that I noticed the two articulated arms that jutted from each side of the lower cabinet. One hand in

each pair ended in a pen, while the mate on each side held a drawing pad.

As I watched, each hand finished off an illo and dropped it onto sizable heaps to the left and right of what I had to start thinking of as Mecha-Rotsler. I bent down next to one of the piles and picked up a clutch of illos.

"Don't take the second one from the top, Arnie Katz," it said. "That one is for Robert Lichtman."

"S-sure, B-bill," I managed. Before I replaced the illos on their proper pile, I noticed that they were part of a series called "You Know You're a Fakefan if..." I moved around to the other side and, much as I expected, the other stack contained aliens, sketchy figures standing on otherworldly landscapes and a lot of tiny ones featuring a teeter-totter.

"This is fantastic, Ben!" I exclaimed.

"Thanks, Arnie," he said. "I saw a need in fandom, and this fills it."

"They certainly look good to me," I conceded, "but are they authentic Rotslers?"

As if in answer to my question, the door opened and the frail, wizened form of Steve Stiles, the dean of fan artists, stood in the doorway.

I will never forget the way color drained from Steve's face as he beheld Mecha-Rotsler for the first time. His knees buckled a little, and he clutched his chest. Fans rushed to him and helped the old gentlefan to a comfy chair.

Ben went through his explanation. Steve could only sit there, shaking his head. "It just can't be," he kept muttering. "It just can't be."

"That's why we wanted you to come here, see Mecha-Rotsler for yourself," Ben explained.

"I see it," said Steve, "but I can hardly believe it. You in there, Deindorfer?"

"No," Ben assured him. "This is a special purpose robot that mimics the artistic expressions of the late, great William Rotsler."

"That's incredible!" Steve said. "Can it write, too?"

"No, not yet," Ben said. "I'm working on that. It did pat a femmefan on the ass this morning, though."

"But the art," Steve said, returning to the main point. "Are they real Rotslers?"

"You're the judge, Steve," Ben said. "We want you to examine them, and tell us what you think."

"Bring 'em on," Steve said.

Soon he was studying a batch of samples, his head bent low over the slips of paper.

The room was quiet, except for the sounds Mecha-Rotsler made while producing its two steady streams of artwork.

Finally, Steve looked up from the illos. "It's can't be," he said. "This is the authentic Rotsler line!"

The room burst into spontaneous applause. We clapped as much to relieve the tension as in appreciation of Steve's analysis.

A couple of celebratory sidebars launched us into Corflu Formula 44. We talked about the robot, clipping along merrily back in the special Mecha-Rotsler suite, but other topics eventually edged into the conversations, too.

It was a typical Corflu in that, old as some of us are, we chattered like magpies until we couldn't keep our eyes open and then staggered off to our rooms at about 3 am.

The pounding on the door roused me from sleep. "I'm coming, I'm coming!" I shouted as I threw on my robe.

I unlocked and unbolted the door. I opened it to discover that my early morning caller was Ben Wilson.

"Too excited to sleep?" I suggested. Few fans had ever received such a concentrated dose of primo egoboo as Ben had gotten for Mecha-Rotsler.

"Well, in a way." Now that I looked closer, Ben had a stranger-than-usual expression on his face. "Something's happened."

"Give me a moment," I told him. He sat down on the couch while I grabbed some clothes. Five minutes later we were riding the hotel's only working elevator to the 18th floor.

The doors slid apart.

And an avalanche of Mecha-Rotsler cartoons poured into the compartment.

"It's getting worse!" Ben shouted as he battled to keep from getting buried under four thousand seven hundred and eighteen Corflu-themed cartoons.

"What the hell happened?" I shouted as I added my efforts to his.

"I think Mecha-Rotsler is enjoying Corflu," he said as he frantically tried to get the elevator doors to close.

"Where is it getting the paper?"

"It makes its own and forms them into pads in the big chamber," Ben said. "It seemed like a good idea at the time!"

"If you hadn't done that, we wouldn't have wall-to-wall Rotslers by now!" I continued to push the illos out of the way. "What happened?"

"I stayed up so late last night that I forgot to shut it off," Ben said. "I never ran it for more than an hour before. It was drawing all night!"

Our combined strength finally got the doors together, and the car started back down again.

"That was close," I said between heavy exhalations.

"You can say that again," Ben agreed. "We could've been buried alive under 20 tons of rampaging Rotsler illos!"

"And then Mecha-Rotsler would've drawn a few hundred variations on our deaths," I said.

"Make a nice Tattooed Dragon," Ben observed as the elevator delivered us to the lobby.

"Too bad we wouldn't be here to enjoy it," I said as we exited.

"That's a point," he acknowledged.

Then the creaking started.

No fanzine fan will ever forget that morning. I raced up one hall and down another, rousing sleepy fans from their beds. I herded them into the elevator, through the lobby and into the street.

By the time all the hotel guests retreated to the safety of the sidewalk, the shrieks of stressed metal were as loud as a freight shuttle at full throttle. We stood there, our hastily packed bags at our feet, and gawked at the unfolding disaster.

"It's all those illos," Ken Forman judged. "The floor can't hold all that weight."

"But Rotsler always had a light touch," Joyce countered.

"Two tons of feathers still weighs two tons," Ken said.

As if to punctuate his comment, the entire 18th floor imploded. The crackle of exposed wires was followed by a whoosh of fire.

The fire copters did their best. Pilots inched in almost to the window sills to send fire-smothering missiles into the conflagration.

Then the 17th floor gave way and Mecha-Rotsler and its illos plunged another 12 feet closer to the ground.

For a little while, it seemed that the firefighting efforts would be successful, but there was just too much paper, too much fire.

Soon other floors were burning, too. Interior pressure blew out windows on the entire front of the hotel. I sheltered under a genuine facsimile reproduction of Geri Sullivan's Roscoe petition from Toner 1.

If only that plucky Beaver could help us now!

He couldn't.

Nothing could. Floor by floor, Mecha-Rotsler and the still increasing mountain of illos crashed through the hotel, floor by floor.

Three hours later, it was over. The illos were ashes. Mecha-Rotsler was a molten lump in the basement of what had once been the Tucker Hotel.

Ben stood there, shoulders slumped. I went over to him, still the fannish uncle of 30 years past. I put my hand on his shoulder. "These things happen," I said, because I couldn't think of anything else to say.

"It could've been so cool," Ben said, forlornly. He wiped a tear from his eye. "I never meant for this to happen."

"Of course you didn't," I soothed. "And no one was hurt. That's something."

"Yeah, that's something," he repeated. "But my Mecha-Rotsler is gone."

"That's true," I admitted. "But we still have all those envelopes."

"That's true, that's true," he said, his spirits lifting.

"It'll take years to use up the backlog," I said. "You've given fandom an extra decade of Rotsler."

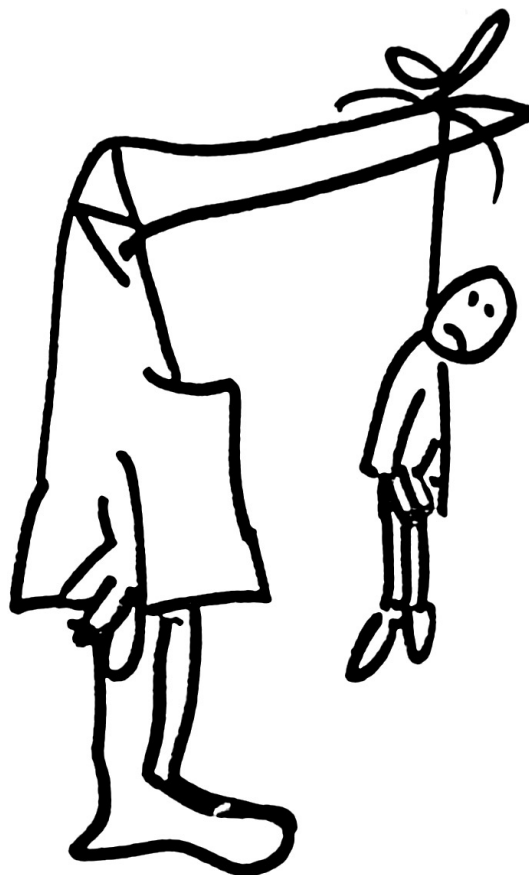
"You're right, Arnie," he said. He turned to me, new enthusiasm on his sensitive fannish face. "And by then, I'll have Mecha-Atom ready to fan!"

I left him there, standing in front of the once-magnificent Tucker Hotel with his new dream.

Suddenly, I wanted to go home and publish a fanzine about it all.

I had Mecha-Rotslers to scan. ☘

Wild Heirs #19



Drugs and Sex and Rock and Roll

by Joyce Katz

I was right there on hand for the invention of Drugs & Sex & Rock n' Roll, back in the fall of 1958. It happened when Ben Thacker pulled out his stash and some rolling papers and asked, "Would you like a little toke?"

Duggie, who'd encountered pot in college, then again while studying photography in L.A., allowed as how he wouldn't mind, and lit right up.

So there they were, tokin' and a jokin', putting on like a couple of musicians from the 30's, with a lot of "oh, maaaaaan"s and "alll riiiiight"s and holding their breath until their lungs were coming out there ears. I believe "Work with Me Annie" was playing on the radio, but it coulda been Mingus or Parker or Miles Davis. Hell it mighta been Mendelsohn, or Strauss. Whatever, it was Cool, because we were Cool.

'Bout then there was a hammering on the door that sounded like someone was trying to bash it in. Quick as a paranoid junkie in a police lineup, Ben swallowed the rest of the still-burning roach, while Dug waved a magazine in the air to scatter the miasma of smoke they'd raised. It was probably an Analog, but it coulda been F & SE. Whichever, it didn't do much for dispersing the fumes.

The door flew open, and in rushed big George "Tarzan" Henby. "Man, I could smell it all the way 'cross town," was his only comment as he held out his huge fist to take the joint

Grass was hard to get in Poplar Bluff in the 50s. Now and then, someone'd make a trip to the Border, but it was a long way from Mexico to Missouri. Once in a while, some would drift down from St. Louis, or Duggie'd pick some up at the Blue Note R & B bar down by the railroad tracks. Usually, though, we'd just wish. That's really what got George started on The Quest.

George still mostly went by the name Tarzan at this point, because of his mighty strength. He was famous for swimming the Black River upstream against the current every Christmas Day for the last decade or so. He'd dive in off the Vine Street Bridge. Then while well-bundled friends yelled and cheered, he'd muscle his way upstream, under the Pine Street Bridge, past the power plant all the way to the railroad bridge on the north end of town.

He was also famed for his prowess with the bow. Once he shot an arrow all the way over the County courthouse. It came down on the other side, barely missing Sheriff Bill Brent. Bill was pretty doggone mad, too. He ran around the courthouse to see who'd been such a damned fool. When he saw Big George, he calmed down in a hurry. All he said was, "Now Tarzan, you ought to be careful where you're aiming." But he took care to keep his voice mild: wouldn't do to rankle the big man.

Anyhow, George was a grass-loving man. It was uncanny how he'd know.

If anyone had even a smidgen hid away, there'd be George, knockin' on the door, ready to get down and get stoned.

But, there really wasn't much of it around. So George started his great hunt.

The man never rested: He always had his ear to the ground, his nose in the air. And, he always kept his eyes peeled to spot it growing alongside the road. George knew it was there, and by god, he was going to find it.

The next really big score was thanks to George. He'd been walking the tracks north of town and came upon a patch of what looked like weed to him. It was shaped right, the leaves smelled right, and it had tiny little yellow flowers on it, since he caught it in bloom. Not a man to leave incriminating matter around, he harvested the whole crop right on the spot, bundled it into burlap bags, and hauled it on his back right down to Ted Borth's Pharmacy.

Ted was a cautious kind of head: he always wanted to know exactly what drug he was using before he scarfed it down. So he put a sample of it under the microscope. "Swamp Marigold!" he cried out as he looked at the specimen. "It's nothing but wild marigold plants!"

"But it sure smells nice, doesn't it," said George. He was certain he had discovered something significant, and wasn't ready to give up his proud moment.

Ted allowed as how he didn't care to smoke it. He thanked George politely and declined to buy anything out of the burlap bag. So George brought it



to Ben.

Smokables were really hard to come by. Neither man was willing to give up without a thorough experiment. They smoked it, ate it, boiled it and cooked it into cornbread, but the most they could get out of it was a strong headache. Finally, they decided to give it The Treatment. They spread the marigold plants on pie plates, then sprinkled them liberally with opiated parigoric, and carefully dried the grass in the oven.

Suddenly they had something. It still caused a pretty potent migraine and even some nausea, but first it gave you a kick in the head that sent your senses reeling.

I smoked some that night. It didn't have a bad taste, sort of earthy with spice. I liked it, and put away a fair amount all by myself. Next thing I knew, George and Ben were on either side of me, holding me upright, and we were outside. They were walking me back and forth in the cold night air. As my mind began to clear, I saw the sky: it seemed to blaze and all the stars looked like they were falling toward me.

That was some pretty potent smoke.

Well, after that, there was no stopping George. Having succeeded so dramatically once, he was primed for an unending hunt.

Every time he'd walk past an open lot, he'd have to stop to examine every weed. "Man, I know it's here. I just gotta find it," he'd say. Driving with him became an ordeal. We'd tool along the highway, and he'd slam on the brakes, shouting "That's it . . . look at that . . . it's here" He'd jump out of the car and attacked some poor innocent piece of greenery like a Hun at the Battle of the Bulge. The he'd stomp back to the car, huffing his disappointment in quick angry breaths, and he'd be still for a few minutes. Then, a mile or so down the road, he'd slam on the brakes again, shout "There it is!" and the whole performance would be repeated.

Once, after Dug and I had moved to St. Louis, George and I rode the bus downtown to go shopping. His face was pressed to the window all the way. When we went past the Hiroshima Flats (the name we gave the area where the slums were torn down, waiting for new buildings to be constructed) he couldn't stand it anymore. He jumped off the bus at 12th Street, saying "I saw it! I know it's here! I just gotta look!"

When he came walking up to the apartment, he was stony faced and silent for a couple of hours. I never did want to ask him too carefully about what happened. The only thing I know didn't happen was him finding grass growing wild in downtown St. Louis.

But if you try hard enough, and you hunt long enough, you're bound to find something. Finally, George had his day, and we all had to quit laughing.

George talked Jim Wray into driving him up toward Kansas City. He'd heard about the Battle of the Hemp Bales up that direction during the Civil War, when bales were used as breastworks. We liked to imagine how it must have been. The battle raged until the fire started some of the bales to burning. Then, we figured, the battle would have just dwindled away, as everyone breathed the fumes and mellowed out.

Anyhow, George wanted to find and raid the legendary hemp fields of Missouri. He and Jim tooled along the highway in their rattletrap car, north of the Kansas City area. I figure George must have been hopping out of the car every half mile, trying to test every plant growing from Kansas City to St. Joe. And then he found what he wanted . . . a whole field full of marijuana.

The two men started cutting and packing, cutting and packing. They filled the six burlap bags they'd brought and stuffed them into the trunk. Then they stuffed as much as they could carry into the backseat.

So, there they were, driving west to east across Missouri, scattering plant debris from one side of the state to the other like modern Johnny Appleseeds. They were toking as fast as they could drive, just stuffing whole pods into

their pipes, and they were feeling pretty good.

"Bout then, they got the idea that they wouldn't go directly back to Poplar Bluff. George knew a couple of girls in St. Louis; they'd drop in for a friendly visit.

So, they parked the grass-filled car on the street in front of the ladies' apartment building, and went inside. They were ready to party.

The next morning, when it came time to leave, they walked out the door and the car was gone. They searched for blocks in each direction . . . not a sign.

What were they to do? They couldn't call the police and report the car missing. What would they say? "You'll know it when you see it; it's the car with six hundred pounds of pot in the back seat."

Broken, ruined, grassless, they caught the bus and returned to Poplar Bluff.

But now George knew where to go, and he knew there was more pot waiting for him.

He hopped a bus and took off for northern Missouri again. This time he managed to fill a couple of suitcases, and carted them back to Poplar Bluff without incident. He passed it around liberally to his friends: he didn't save any, because he was aiming for one more big score.

Somehow he got ahold of another junker car, and the whole process was repeated. He and Jim drove back to the hemp fields of Northern Missouri, stuffed the trunk, and filled the back seat.

This time, as they drove home, they took a turn in Kansas City and started down a one-way street, going the wrong direction. Luck was against them; a brief siren, and up walked a patrolman.

Before the patrol could say a word, George panicked and blurted out, "You got me fair and square, copper." The policeman was a bit nonplussed by this sudden confession. He glanced in the back seat, saw the burlap, and reached out his hand to pull it back, exposing the payload of marijuana plants.

George got out of that one, eventually, because the cop was found to have made an illegal search and seizure. But he was a ruined man. Every step he'd take, there'd be six Treasury boys behind him, like a conga line moving through Poplar Bluff. He couldn't shake them off his tail. They figured he was transporting the grass for Mr. Big, and that he'd lead them to the master criminal behind his movements. They figured that sooner or later he'd score another big haul, and they intended to nab him with the goods.

That pretty well spelled the end of drugs & sex & rock n' roll for George, and for us, too. The local cops got it into their minds that maybe Dug was Mr. Big, and for two weeks, they parked a patrol car across the street in front of the Fisher Family Home. Finally, their presence unnerved him so much that Dug burned his own stash. Carried it out of his attic, built a bonfire in the driveway, and burned the whole burlap bag right in front of their eyes ☹

Wild Heirs #20

