

flicker

February, 2004

Second Issue

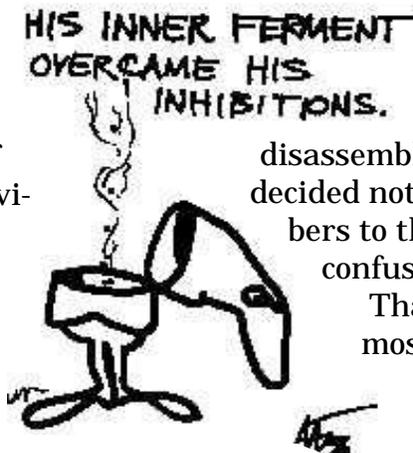
SONGS IN THE NIGHT...

The Song Remains the Same

Can it really be? Am I actually working on the *second* issue of something for a change? Yes, it can. I haven't heard a whisper about any name duplication, I don't have to wait for procrastinating co-editors and I've got no shortage of things to say. (If someone has previously published a fanzine called "Flicker," this is official notice that I Don't Give a Damn.)

The End of an Era

We designated the Satur-



day, August 16, Las Vegrants meeting as the last to be held at Toner Hall. The next one would've fallen on September 6,

right in the middle of our two-week moving period. Since Toner Hall will be in half-disassembled chaos by that time, we decided not to subject Vegrants members to the unaccustomed mess and confusion.

That wasn't the only, or even most, significant thing about the meeting. Ben and Cathi Wilson planned to

Flicker #2, February, 2004, is the latest effusion from Arnie Katz (330 S. Decatur Blvd., PMB 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107). It is as available as an aging streetwalker at the end of a cold, "no sale" night. Letters (email: crossfire4@cox.net) are very much desired as are fanzines in trade. Member: fwa. Supporter: AFAL.

Corflu Blackjack in '04!

Don't sing it... bring it. If you don't like me... bite me. — Rick Steiner

move to Simi Valley, CA, on August 30, so this was the couple's last meeting — they'll be out-of-town visitors the next time they attend — at the fan club that have supported so vigorously.

Hard as it is, in some ways, to say farewell to Toner Hall, it's a lot tougher to contemplate Las Vegas fandom without this wonderful couple. No, it won't end, but it sure will be a little less fun.

In truth, the moving van has broken up that ol' gang of mine. The departure of the Wilsons is just the latest in a progression that began with the Springers' relocation to Vancouver, WA. (They have since moved again, this time to California.) It continued with the evacuation of Ken and Aileen Forman to the great cultural darkness that is Yucaipa, CA.

Those four couples formed the nucleus of Vegas Fandom in what is so far its closest approach to a Golden Age, the mid-1990s.

The eight of us spent a lot of time together. These friendships powered a lot of fanac in Las Vegas through the 1990's and the first years of the new century..

There were many others who contributed to that exciting time in Vegas Fandom. Some are still active while gafia has claimed a few others. Yet these four couples, in various combinations and sometimes all together, spearheaded the Silvercons, Corflu Vegas and Toner, published *Wild Heirs*, *Heirlooms*, *crifanac* and other fanzines, hosted most of the town's major fan events and ran the local clubs.

The Wilsons leave behind a Las Vegas Fandom that is infinitely stronger than it was when they helped lead the city out of the fannish bush leagues into the big show. The Vegrants still include many fine fans and, led by the Vegrants alumni, will doubtless make themselves evident

through *Crazy from the Heat*. (No snickering about the current, leisurely non-schedule. *Wild Heirs*, let me remind you, had a couple of small, desultorily published issues before it got rolling.)

Actually, the Wilsons' story is a great encouragement to me as I look ahead to a Vegas Fandom without a lot of the people who played key roles in its success.

I will never forget a fanzine publishing session back in the earliest days of modern Las Vegas Fandom. I hope Ben and Cathi will forgive me for raking it up for this article, though I don't think it reflects unfavorably on them in any way.

I was hunkered over the spacious multi-leaved dining room table, collating along with Ken Forman. (Well, to be fan-historically accurate, I believe I was collating and Ken was, as he sometimes did in his neofan days, mis-collating.)

We were chatting about prospects for Las Vegas fanzine fandom's future prosperity. The ever-optimistic Ken was telling me that the cupboard was bare. There would be no more no more wonderful new fans to swell our ranks and join the joyous parade, he informed me, voice dripping with genuine regret.

He allowed as how there were some fine folks on the fringes of Las Vegas Fandom, but he couldn't see any of them making the leap from where they were to active participation in fandom.

Ken is a scientist, so he organizes his arguments along logical, scientific lines. I felt helpless before the inexorable flow of his arguments as they washed over me like a river of burning lava, dashing my feeble hopes for a bigger and better Las Vegas Fandom.

Ken knew he had me on the ropes. This was the right time for



the clincher, an example drawn from life. (Or as close to life as fandom gets.) As an example of such a fine fellow who was not in any way fannish material, he put forth the name Ben Wilson. I'd never met Ben, but Ken assured me he was a fine fellow — and also guaranteed that “you'll never see him do anything fannish.”

I'm looking for about six more of those “never be a fan” guys. If half of them turn out even close to a Ben Wilson, Vegas Fandom may be on its way to its next Golden Age. Something even surer is that Las Vegas Fandom, and Joyce and I most particularly, will greatly miss Ben and Cathi living so close and being around so much. Golden Ages come and go; good friends are far harder to replace.

The Last Supper

It turned out that Toner Hall hosted one final event after the Las Vegants meeting. Since Ben and Cathi (and helpers including Ken Forman) spent all day August 29 loading up for the trip to California, Joyce invited them, plus Sue Williams (and the Wilson's angelic daughter Megan) for dinner.

We kept it pretty light, as you'd expect, but there was a lot of emotion around that dinner table. Yes, we'd all be seeing each other soon and frequently, but we all knew it would never be quite the same, quite like this.

You Got to Move

That's what the old blues song says. Yet as much as I love the blues, I have to disagree with the sentiment. As someone who has only moved once in the last 30 years, when we came to Vegas, I can't say I feel that imperative to relocate.



I feel it even less now that the two-week ordeal is over. Not that I can feel much besides pain, stiffness and weariness. I'm used to sitting on my butt in front of the computer and tapping the keys, not heavy grunt work. Two weeks of lifting, pulling, pushing and sweating have left me in somewhat better shape, true, but I have more bruises and scratches than a sub slave after an S&M convention.

The actual move started over the Labor Day weekend, though we'd packed what seemed like a prodigious

number of boxes in the week leading up to it. We were greatly aided by our Lawn Care folks, Michael Bernstein, James Taylor, Laurie Forbes, Michael Bernstein, Su Williams, Johnny Williams (her now-strapping son), Woody Bernardi and a SNAFFU member named Janole (who helped mightily even though I'd only met her twice before at Vegas fan functions).

We also had a lot of support from Stan the Inferno, Alan White and Roxanne Gibbs. And mammoth quantities of empty boxes, which became as precious as gold to us as Joyce and I tried to stuff our numerous collections into cartons for moving.

During the early stages of packing, I almost told people to stop bringing the boxes, but I wisely kept my tongue in check. “Wisely,” because our books, fanzines, glassware, CDs and software hobbled up those giant stacks of unused boxes like a bunch of confans at an all you can eat buffet.

We finished the bulk of the move the next weekend, when Ken and Aileen Forman and Karl Kreder came all the way from California to shlep boxes and transport computers and lots of other essential



tasks. Not that they were the only helpers, because just about everyone from the previous weekend returned.

Observers of the fannish condition have often remarked that nothing makes a convention successful like a taste of adversity. It makes everyone feel righteous, provides a rallying point for the group and offers a socially acceptable outlet for fans' chronic griping and whining.

Seen in that light, the death of the air conditioning system in the new house did a fabulous job of creating that special mood. It gave some of those hard workers the chance to say that they survived unloading heavy objects into a house that sweltered near the 110-degree mark. The breakdown of the automatic garage door opener was icing on the cake.

The temperature at the new house scragged our original plan to sleep there on Saturday night and let the Formans and Karl bed down in other rooms. We all ended up taking rooms at the nearby Fiesta Hotel/Casino, where we celebrated the day of backbreaking work with a Subway hero sandwich and the largest diet cola I have ever purchased. I drained it to the ice dregs, though I didn't get to the equally large back-up until the next morning (when I shared it with Joyce.)

Isn't it funny the way our society's view of soft drinks has changed in the last half-century? As a fan of Old Time Radio, I've

heard quite a few shows, originally broadcast in the 1940s and even early 1950s, in which parents treated consumption of soda by their offspring as one step removed from beer binging.

And the size of the soft drinks has increased exponentially. An 9-oz. Coca-Cola filled up most 1950s kids, while the heavy duty consumers flocked to Pepsi's "gigantic" 12-oz. bottle.

There are now convenience stories that serve up individual containers of Coke or Pepsi that are equivalent to an entire six-pack. The next step will be to put the drink into a double-walled, thermos-style container that can be strapped to the back and sipped through an apparatus like a scuba mouthpiece.

Geez, that adds up to one hell of a lot of gas. If you could harness that power, you could send a rocket to Mars.

The move greatly restored my wilting faith in fandom. The way so many pitched in to help us really touched me. The Internet and the "big con" movement may be leeching the humanity and the tribal affinity out of fandom, but the old hobby ain't dead yet.

Egoboo Has No Stale Date

On September 18, I received the following email from my old buddy Pete Weston. We were neofans at about the same time in the mid-1960s. He made a mark with the serious and intelligent science fiction fanzine *Speculation*, while I waved the banner of fannishness in a sercon era with *QUIP* (co-edited by Lenny Bailes and later, Lon Atkins and Johnny D. Berry.)

Peter wrote:

"Courtesy of the great Gregory Pickersgill

Fanzne Museum, I've just been reading Quip-5 (The 'Quish') from February 1967. Great stuff. Where has the time gone!"

To which I replied: Where has the time gone, indeed!

Your belated LoC on QUIP -- there is no such thing as "too late" when it comes to egoboo -- takes me back to those bygone days when you and I were the Young Guns. You were knocking 'em dead with Speculation and QUIP was the beacon of fannishness,

And now? Now, we are the Elders, the semi-mythic presences in the virtual world of Fandom. (Not that "All Known Fandom with its 250,000 customers, but the one that has maybe 250 actives, 250 slackers and 500 alumni.)

You know, it sort of shocked some people back then that we were such fan friends despite the enormously different approaches we took in our fanzines.

With 20-20 hindsight, we should've blown their minds by guest editing an issue of each other's fanzines or something like that. I think you would've done a better job of it than me, but I imagine fandom would have crogged at an Arnie Katz Serious Science Fiction Fanzine.

First Fandom Opens Its Creaky Door...

Least entertaining of all the passages in life may be that day, when you get that little letter from AARP. It arrives the week of your birthday, looking all innocent and innocuous and informs you that, by the definition of the American Association of Retired Persons, you are officially an Old Phart on your 55th birthday.

Fanzine Fandom has its own version of AARP. It's called First Fandom and I have eyed it with a mixture of awe and fear since I

first entered the hobby around age 17.

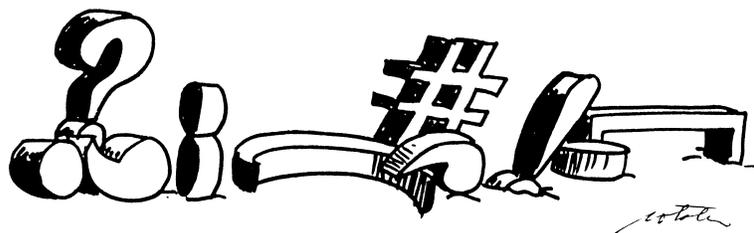
One of the aspects of fandom that most appeals to me is its multi-generational structure. As someone who never even got to meet my grandparents — Mr. Hitler met them first — it was astonishing to think that the people who started fandom were still around, still part of the subculture. I thought mundane amateur journalism had the better name for its alumni group, The Fossils, but First Fandom still had a wonderfully impressive status to the teenaged me.

Ah, but First Fandom seemed remote and unattainable. I could write reams of articles, faan fiction and columns and lay waste to forests for my fanzine publishing, but only being there at the beginning was the only way to become a member of First Fandom

What I didn't consider at the time, but realized subsequently, is that the iron gates of First Fandom weren't unalterably closed to me. Not if FF wanted to continue to exist.

Back in the mid 1960s, members of First Fandom had started their participation in fandom prior to the first World Science Fiction Convention in 1939. I wasn't born until seven years later, so even claims of prenatal participation would be hard for me to justify.

It wasn't too many years later, however, that I noticed the first cracks in First Fandom's Olympian façade. The organization started to fudge the entrance requirements. Soon, they had let in people who were mere science fiction readers in the



WHERE OLD PUNCTUATION GOES TO DIE

1930s.

Of course, First Fandom had to do something or eventually go the way of the Civil War and WWI veterans' groups. In the 1960s, the average "doddering" First Fandom member was between 40 and 50 years old. Now those folks are solidly in their mid-70s and up. Add another 20-30 years to the calendar and you'll read about the "last member of First Fandom"

So the Great Wise Men behind First Fandom did what sensible stewards of such a venerable organization must do to preserve its spirit through the passage of decades: They screwed with the rules.

As a result, Joyce and I now qualify for Associate Membership because we began our activity prior to 1970. Suddenly, I'm a member of the Old Order, the *Ancient Regime*, the *Bygone Days*.

That's quite a change for me, let me tell you. I wasn't a prodigy like Paul Williams, but I generally hung out with a group, the *Fanoclasts*, in which I was the youngest member or close to it. I'm not the oldest of the *Vegrants*, but I am certainly *one* of them.

There are aspects of this new status that are really quite appealing. I used to go to Ted White, rich brown and Terry Carr for advice about fandom and life; now *Vegrants* come to me. (I don't know much more than I did back then, though I have learned to look wise.)

If I'm already an Associate First Fandomite, mere stripling that I am, sure my friends who are just a little older are closing in on actual membership. Ted White, rich brown, Steve Stiles, Robert Lichtman started in fandom five to 10 years before I did, so presumably First Fandom will be ready to throw open its doors to them as full-fledged members any time now.

"Where is Arnie Katz?" someone is bound to say at some future *Corflu*.

And the reply will come: "Oh, I think

he went to the First Fandom party."

Of course, by *that* time all my friends will be Members and Associate Members of First Fandom, too, and the group will have become known for its unbridled hedonism, bohemian outlook and copious consumption of... well, of *everything*.

The younger, better-behaved fans will look at us old ravers and our quirky ways with a mixture of awe and horror.

Eventually, the *Slan Center* idea will come back into vogue, though not exactly as Laney and other proponents intended. We'll all move the same adult residence community and pass our declining years with long acrimonious discussions of the minutia of who did what to whom.

Super Duper

I got positively teary-eyed at the prospect of not having duplication equipment for fanzines since I first entered the hobby in 1963. I'd had a spirit duplicator, several mimeographs and, since my return in late 1989, at least three different copiers.

It turns out that I could've saved the sentimentality, because the current copier is apparently destined to stay with us a while yet.

I tried to get rid of it, I really did. When Joyce asked if I wanted to move the machine to the *Launchpad*, I acknowledged that we could save quite a bit of money if we ended the lease.

"End the lease" is one of those simple phrases that shrouded unbelievable complexities. Knowing we'd move around *Labor Day*, we started the wheels turned with a letter and call to the company that sold us the machine and with whom we have a service contract for it.

They told us that we had to deal with a finance company that actually owned the paper. Joyce pursued the matter with the finance company. We agreed to pay out the entire lease and return the machine. That

looked like the end of the matter.

Then we learned that we would have to see to the return of the machine *to the finance company*.

To the finance company in San Diego. We'd envisioned the fine folks at the copier company sending over a truck to snag this behemoth and carry it away forever from our lives.

When we priced packaging and shipping the bulky device, we discovered that the price of sending it to San Diego and the pay-out fee that made us copier owners were pretty damn close.

Faced with the choice of mailing the copier or owning it, we opted for materialism. The machine now sits in the overcrowded garage, protective sheet over its precious superstructure, waiting to burst into feverish activity once again.

It says here.

The Year of the Corflu

After missing the last three Corflu conventions, I'm really getting excited about the impending Corflu Blackjack (March 19-21). I've missed seeing so many of my friends and relish the opportunity to see them all again.

I was elated when Ken Forman and Ben Wilson told me they intended to bid for Corflu Blackjack in 2004. It's one thing to lead by example, as Joyce and I have tried to do in Las Vegas Fandom, but the pay-off for all that foundation-building is seeing two of "Our Guys" step forward to do something important like this.

One way you know that I am not on the committee of Corflu Blackjack is that, so far as I know, there is no plan to read David Whitman's infamous (but still largely unknown outside Las Vegas) mammoth Corflu freak-out fanzine he published on the eve of Corflu Vegas.

I believe Corflu Blackjack will be a three-day revel even without Whitman's inspiringly crazy tirade to whip us into a

fannish frenzy. Hard as it is to abandon that mental image of 100-plus fans all chanting, "This is the year of the Corflu!" in unison, Ken and Ben (and Cathi and Aileen) are likely to host a memorably enjoyable convention for us fanzine addicts.

So if you haven't done so, go to Corflu.org or efanazines.com and get a copy of the Corflu Blackjack Progress Report #2.

And if you *are* planning to be here for the festivities, Joyce and I hope you'll consider coming in Thursday to join Joyce and I at our Official Kick Off Party at the Plaza at 7:00 PM Thursday evening.

The Outsiders and Others

And isn't it a sad comment on science fiction fandom when Arnie Katz can make a fantasy reference that sails past all a handful of fantasy literature vultures?

In my never-ended search for ways to



make *Flicker* indispensable, or at least tolerable, I have decided to feature a few outside contributions (as well as letters.)

In that other world where I am known as The Kingfish, I've made friends with a few folks who write some pretty damn interesting stuff. Sometimes it's nominally about pro wrestling, but mostly it's about their wild and crazy lives. I thought you might enjoy these writers and that they'd get a charge out of fanzine feedback.

Debuting this time is April Hunter. The former *Playboy* Playmate, recent spent a couple of weeks in Japan filming an action movie and shares some entries from her trip diary.

That's it for me. Flip the page for April—and send me a LOC!

— Arnie Katz
(1/24/04)

Hunting with April

APRIL HUNTER... ACTION HERO?



I went to Japan to make a movie and tour with A to Z, and appear in *Home Sweet Battlefield*, starring Hashimoto, Sonim, Kasai, Nicholas Petis from DDT, Predator, myself, Katsuya, Taskamuto, Nakamura and others from all over. It will be released -- they're hoping worldwide (which probably means everywhere *except* America...) -- in Spring or Summer.

Day 1: Ooooh, this is 'way too early to get up. I only just got in bed at 4 and am back up at 6, courtesy of my cat walking on my head. Hafta get up anyway, so I'm off to the airport.

Last chance for an American breakfast,

so I indulge in a yummy \$9.00 bacon, egg and cheese sandwich. Good thing, too, because on the plane, the only choices were fish or lasagna. Yuck. Nothing completes an 18-hour flight quite like a screaming baby. I've come to the conclusion that Japanese children are as bratty as American kids.

Day 2: It's gorgeous and green here. Until night-time. The hotel has no heat. Actually, nothing in Japan is centrally heated, so I stayed up all night watching my own breath freeze.

It's training day. I'm to learn Brazilian Capoeira fighting, including a lot of unusual kicks. It originated as slave fighting. With their hands chained, the slaves learned to kick and work around small, tight areas.

My translator, Yuki, told me this. She is great and I'm enjoying her company a lot. Especially the Japanese dirty word lessons. Apparently, Boston is famous for... get this...no, not the food, the nightlife and definitely not the sports. We're internationally famous for the New Kids On The Block.

Makes me glad I'm from Philly, where we're famous for things with a bit more

substance -- like cheese steaks, the statue of "Rocky," our made-up white boxing champion, Tastykakes and Aretha Franklin. Incidentally! , NKOTB was how teeny, pretty Yuki learned English. Or in her case, English. She has this sweet way of turning L into W so things sounded really cute. Especially when she asked if I'd like an omwette for lunch.

Day 3: Oh, my God, am I sore! What is with the corn fixation over here? Corn in soup, salads -- it's everywhere. Corn should never, and I mean *never* be on pizza.

Interesting stuff: With too many cars on the roads, you can lose your license here for minor things, including a parking ticket. Japanese police can legally hold you for 23 days before charging you.

I'm to be working with Sonim, a Korean/Japanese singing pop star who is their equivalent to our Shakira.

Day 4: Off. Holy shiznit. I'm sore. I expected hard, but this has exceeded all expectations. I don't think I'm in as good shape as I thought I was in. Note to self: consider Tae Bo when home. If kicking makes me hurt like this, it *has* to be good.

I tried to walk it off and look for food. Japan was absolutely gorgeous at this time of year. Very sunny, dry and ever-so-slightly nippely. While attempting to find a steak (nothing but noodles and fried food in Shinjuko!) I seemed to find many bold Japanese businessmen. They were just walking right up to me to say, "Harrow!" Not expected, since I don't tend to be the typical Asian man's

fantasy girl (who is petite, slender and very blonde with large breasts. Well, I have that part down).

It has only been a week and I've already read three books. Not good, since I only brought four.

What is torture? Japanese TV. Yuki rescued me by taking me to the bookstore for foreigners. I fork over a good chunk of my paycheck for more books. (If you're interested in Japan, I would recommend reading "Bang Devils" by Patrick Foss. I found all the references to be accurate and it's a cool book about two Americans trying to rob the girl's Japanese boyfriend.)

This is the first time I haven't seen ridiculously swollen, bloated kids all year. There are no fat people here. Yuki thinks it's because their national drink is unsweetened tea and ours is soda and juice. I think it's because everyone walks, the portions are smaller, no corn syrup and the food is just too damn expensive. A trip to the convenience store (one on every corner) will run you \$11-\$15 just for a small thing of coffee, milk, bread, a teeny salad and a small single-service cheese.

I found a little market not in the touristy area where water and bananas were half as expensive as the convenience store and I had to speak Japanese to shop there, but I was still going broke trying to eat. Two small bananas and a liter of water was about \$5 in Japan. I ended up settling for bread (forbidden on my diet) because I could a.) Identify it b.) it filled me up



and c.) it was one of the cheapest things to eat at about \$1.00/1.50 a roll. Screw it-I needed nourishment. I can work it off when I get home.

Day 5: More training. Different trainer this time who was also a stunt guy working in China, originally from USA. He beat up the other girl and me and I think I ended up with a broken foot on a stiff kick when the top of my foot connected with her elbow point instead.

Gat-DAMN! That hurt.

This was to be the first of many annoying little hurts I'd gather and work through while shooting. However, the medical supplies there are loads better. They have something called Cold Spray, which immediately reduces swelling and medicated icing sheets that stick to your skin.

We are AMERICA, why don't we have this? We're supposed to be the so-called world leaders, so big and strong and all that bullsh!t. Ow. My foot.

Oh, and I'm writing to Kit Kat because we're totally getting the shaft. In the UK, they have chocolate-orange Kit Kat. In Japan, they have White Chocolate. Both are much better than our version. Why is it we get the same boring lame flavor when we flipping created the bar? I say we petition. Icing sheets, Kit Kats, fat kids -- we are really slacking as a nation.

Day 6: Cable wire training. You know,



Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon stuff. I fight Zero One's Kasai (otherwise known as Monkey Boy), then Hashimoto. I challenge Sonim to a death match that culminates *X men* style in an electric bathtub. Sexy. And very cold, lemme tell you.

Sonim was very popular on the set. Barely 20, she is gorgeous and sweet. And well-trained. I was surprised how good her fighting was; she was better than a lot of wrestlers I've seen. Men and reporters kept coming by the set to gawk at her, all of which she handled really well.

Day 7: My outfit rocks. Half athletic, half Dominatrix-tight, short red leather get up, which fits my character Eva. (Pronounced 'A-va'). I also have tattoos added to my arms, stomach and face to look more Yakuza (mafia)-like. Almost no one is tatoo'd in Japan except the mafia.

Oh, and wrestlers. Kasai and I did a rather elaborate scene resulting in my almost landing on my head once or twice and accidentally getting punched in the eye, but all turned out well in the end. I felt sorry for Kasai, because many times he was stuck for long shots with all my weight across his neck.

Day 8: Eva vs. Hashimoto, who was really easy to work with. We did many of our own stunts, but also have doubles. I'm absolutely massive for a female in Japan and was very relieved to meet up with Sara Del Ray, who is even bigger. The two of us got some priceless stares.

My double, Junior, is a Japanese guy who's a trained luchadore and is exactly

my height and shoulder width. They couldn't find a female big enough over there. But he's great and makes me look good.

Sonim has two; one male for the gymnastics stunts and one female for the fight scenes. Junior had to pad his butt and I swear he has nicer boobs! It's funny to see him turn girly once the copper wig is on... all brushing at his hair, adjusting cleavage and pulling the shorts out of his butt. I'm starting to hate my outfit, which is teeny and tight and rubbing some of my body raw. Like my underarms.

Day 9: Day off. Boy do I feel tired and sore! With bug bites all over. There are big, huge, f*ck off bugs here. They refuse to die in this cold!

16 hours of shooting yesterday, which is normal. We start at 7 am and end at midnight, going to the hotel only to sleep a few hours before heading back to the studio. I'm finding on my days off I just want to be alone without the stress of having to keep up with conversing and explain myself many times. I'm trying my best to learn as much Japanese as I can, but it's not an easy language. Obviously, the quicker I can learn, the better off I'll be.

Day 10-12: Fight scene with Sonim. This includes getting wet -- really wet, bloody, soapy and lots of slippery athletics. I *really* hate this outfit now. I have red marks all over, in addition to a mass quantity of bug bites.

Despite being tired (and itchy), everyone is very patient with each other. Towards the end, the overworked director, who speaks both languages, started yelling English directions to Japanese actors.

Mid shoot the final day, an earthquake hit. Freaked me out. Everything shook and creaked. I thought the set was going to collapse, but it ended as quickly as it started.

The actors, jaded about quakes, kept going.

My tits still have their own fan club over here, with women just walking up to me and grabbing them. Sonim was no exception to this. I don't know, it's just pretty funny to have a cluster of Japanese girls grabbing your boobs, then saying "oh, sugoi!" ("wow".)

Day 13: Voice-overs -- and then headed out to the A to Z dojo to train.

I'm a big fan of action movies and have an even bigger appreciation of what goes into making one now that I've done this. It would be just too mean for me to tell you the outcome of the fights, so you're just gonna have to look for the movie.

The DVD should be great, since they did a big 'Making Of...' section. And I'll have my own Making Of segment posted in my member's area very, very soon. Many stories left, so this is 'to be continued!'

I would like to thank Yuki for making my life easier, Deeps production company and Zero One for having me as part of this project and for being patient with the baka gaijin and also Junior for doing all the stuff I was too freaked out to do! (The uncensored version of this with photos will be posted in my Behind-The-Scenes section-

Japan-part 2. Touring with A to Z.
The Japan style of match is a lot different than others. It's much faster, harder hitting and many more big moves crammed in. I know I've mentioned this before, but for those who are new subscribers and not familiar with wrestling overseas, the Japanese women wrestle like or better than most men. Girls are recruited for tryouts as young as age 14-15. If they make it (out of hundreds that show up, they only pick a few), they quit school and move into the dojo to live and breathe wrestling.

Day 14: My roommate at the dojo is Sara Del Ray, who is from California and super cool. She's also a bit bigger than I am, so it's nice to have company in that department.

We clicked pretty well. That was good, considering the amount of working and living together we were about to do. I'd heard some not-so-nice stories from the dojo about the girl who was there before me.

My first match back is with Baby A, who speaks not a shred of English and is known for her cuteness and lucha wrestling style.

The match started off with a lot of comedy spots...she is maybe 4'10" to my 5'10". Part way through, there were communication problems with everyone involved and the finish was crap. Additionally, Baby ended up with a fractured ankle. Of course, it was an accident, but it sucks nonetheless.

Not a great way to start off a tour. I'll admit it, I was in the back, crying. I've never been part of a match where someone ended up hurt.

Bumped, bruised, maybe bleeding. Yes. But not hurt. I've always taken pride that I'm someone who is safe to work with. The only comforting thing was that the girls are under contract, so they get paid whether they wrestle or not.

After the show, yakuza (mafia) took us all out to dinner and we *had* to go. It was an amazing spread of shabba shabba (I think that's how it's spelled), sushi (which is ridiculously expensive over there) and sukiyaki. So much food! We had to eat everything, because it would have been considered rude to leave anything.

This definitely became a problem. After trying to eat it all, we gave up and began to get creative; we hid it under sprigs of parsley, in soup broth and under napkins — and then finally asked to take it back with us.

We had a seven-hour drive back to To-

kyo and it was already after midnight.

Day 15: We arrived around 7 this morning. I'm back up at 11:30 to get on the bus. A very teeny bus, I might add, but what isn't teeny in Japan?

As a rule, everything here is too small and takes too long. (I'm willing to believe that people really are like fish in tanks, growing to fit whatever size is allotted to them. Big tanks (USA) equals big people)

This is the A To Z Tournament. Eight of us selected to fight for the title. Me vs. Momoe Nakinishi.

After last night's match, I'd vowed to do better...and did. The match was one of the craziest I'd ever worked...German suplexes, catching dives to the floor, strong style kicks and punches and top rope flying moves.

Momoe is an amazing competitor, maybe one of the best ever, and I instantly became a fan of hers. I was also given the very stunning Mima Shimoda as a manager for the duration of my stay. Mima, me, Fugita and Nishio were all part of Team Visual.

Shimoda was a great manager, often tripping girls, grabbing them viciously by their hair, beating them with her shoe so I could get the advantage, but alas, I lost this tournament match. I heard this week that Momoe went on to become the AtoZ Champion this week at Korakuen Hall.

Later that night, Sara tried to explain that she needed some, uh, feminine products immediately and that we *had* to stop at a store. We had a hard time explaining. Finally, after I made a shoving (ie: tampon) motion, Gami said, "push pin?" Well, sort of. I looked through my bag, found one and held it up. "How about Bush pin?" Needless to say, 'bush pin' stuck.

The girls all have their own t-shirts to sell and most have saying in 'Engrish'. English print on tee's is very popular in Japan. The problem is, whoever did them,

didn't really know English. So the girls end up with retarded sayings like "Can You Brake My Future?" At first glance, I read 'Can You Break My Futon' and thought it was brilliant...until I saw what it really said. Another was "Kickstart My Heart." 1982 called and wants its phrase back.

Day 16: Speaking of bush, holy crap, Batgirl. I know bush is making a comeback, but there's some wild stuff growing here. Even in the porno mags -- which are available in abundance and out in the open at every convenience store -- massive, untamed, black hairy bush is everywhere. Yuck. Porn in general is available in abundance here...and no one cares.

Hardcore" porn is censored. No pink and no penis shown in any of it. But whatever you want is there for the taking in every store, mall, station and vending machine.

Coffee, Pepsi or a schoolgirl's worn panties?

They love young girls here. Famous saying: "Girl like Christmas cake. After 25, no good." Which is maybe why it's incredibly hard to tell how old Asian women are. Most look so young and healthy. Apparently this saying doesn't apply to geijin (foreigners), who they love at any age. Thankfully.

Advil. Breakfast of champions. It's nice not having to tan here. Pale is very "in." If you go to the store, you can get "whitening" crèmes, lotions, powders -- you name it. White is worshipped. That's why Geishas wear white makeup. However, because of not tanning, you can see that my chest and boobs have bruises all over from being dropkicked to hell and back.

Luckily I have a lot of hair, because of how much of it has been ripped out. I also have a bit of a black eye. It's a long way from my heart, though.

In addition to being pale, the Japanese

also have things they can get at a drug-store to hold open their eyes — and surgery to make them rounder.

Go figure. We like exotic, they like white bread.

Finally called Mom last night to assure her I wasn't swallowed up by an earthquake.

Tonight I face Tamada. She'd had her tooth knocked out the other night and had gotten it fixed that morning. Shout out to Hajime, who came to all the Tokyo matches and I thank him for that!

I'm always asked what the fans are like in Japan. They're different: quiet, respectful and they love powerful, high impact moves and strong style wrestling. They cheer when you kick out of something, rather than cheer just for executing the move alone. Instead of "You f*cked up!" chants, they just laugh if you screw up.

There are also no "She's a crack whore!" chants or anything like that. It's more like a boxing crowd.

I'm also asked if the ring is really as hard as it looks. Uh, yeah, it pretty much is. It's covered in plastic rather than canvas. Dirt, mud and blood can be wiped up in no time.

The wrestling ring is kept more immaculate than most kitchens. I never feel scummy or scared of getting Staph Infection in Japan like I am in the States.

Day 17: Off. Yay. I'd exercised my right as an American to steal by grabbing one of the better pillows from a previous hotel to keep with me. Good thinking, because the dojo was sparse on both pillows and towels. Most of their pillows had hard buckwheat or rice inside. How do you *sleep* on that? When I asked Mr. Ogawa about a towel, he said, "You no have?" No. I don't. I have clothes, makeup, wrestling gear, a dvd player, mini disc, video camera, bottle of Aleve, loads of hair stuff and protein bars crammed in my overstuffed bag, but

no freaking towels. Nobody told me to bring one. If they had, I surely would have stolen one of those, too.

The dojo was big, dusty and cold, but had a kitchen, nice bathroom and I had a quality, English speaking roommate who liked to do laundry. What more could you ask? Oh, I also got top bunk bed. We went out shopping, got bleach and turned Sara into a ravishing blonde.

She and Sora took me to their sports doctor that evening. My knee and feet hurt much more than normal. I'd finally gotten health insurance (big yay!) and found out I'd gotten a torn quad right before I left for Japan. Not off the bone, so it's not "Triple H injured."

This Doc (who catered to wrestlers) also said the same knee was sprained and I'd acquired turf toe. Lovely. Can I just tell you how much turf toe sucks? Knowing sitting out wasn't an option, he hooked me up with some back cracking, massage thingies on my knee and showed me how to tape up properly. I looked like a mummy when he was done, but felt much better. (I just started physical therapy now that I'm home, too.) Ow. Pro wrestling in Japan is real. They know our version of wrestling is more about entertainment and love it anyway. Many of the girls claim to be fans of the North American female wrestlers like Lita and Trish.

Thanks for reading! - Kisses! April
<http://www.aprilhunter.com/ccbill/index.htm>

You Can Sleep With A Blond, You Can Sleep With A Brunette. But You'll Never Get Any Sleep With A Redhead

(To Be Continued in the next Flicker.)

--April Hunter
<http://www.AprilHunter.com> (11/8/01)

