

gambit 52

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TWELVE YEARS: This is GAMBIT's Twelvth Annish. I point this out in the interests of Accurate Fanhistory, and for Those Who Care. The first seven issues were published under the unlamented title of ZIP (subtitle: the fanzine that moves right along), 1953-55. The next fifteen issues were called STELLAR, and the first seven were respectable-sized zines which have begun to garner some respect in fandom these years, some seven years after they were published. The remainder were brief, two- or four-page zines like this one; there was little or no change in content when the title underwent its final metamorphosis with the 23rd issue to GAMBIT.

GAMBIT has not led a placid life. Two issues rode out with FANAC in late 1959 or early 1960, a goodly number of consecutively numbered issues served as editorials in VOID, one was a rider with AXE, another was published half-size in combination with MINAC, and the last three were circulated last year only through APA F. I do not envy the indexers when they come to GAMBIT.

But here it is, 1965, and indeed August, 1965, the twelvth anniversary of the publication of ZIP #1, my first fanzine. It's time to celebrate -- time to rush out another giant issue of this venerable title. And besides, I have something I want to say. You'll find it immediately below.

DAVE KYLE & THE SYRACUSE BID: I first met Dave Kyle in 1955, and the Clevention. It was my first convention of any sort, and I knew few fans by sight. I had come to the con with John Magnus, and John tended to forget that I didn't know everyone he knew. As a result, introductions were sometimes delayed when they occurred at all. And this tall fellow with a mustache and the affable manner remained a stranger to me even after we'd all eaten in a coffeeshop together. "Can I leave some stuff in your room?" he asked us, and John said "Sure," and when the stranger had left I asked, "John, who is he?"

"Oh," said John. "That's Dave Kyle."

"He seems like a nice guy," I said, and that was the end of it. That's how I met Dave Kyle.

My feelings about Dave Kyle gained a certain ambivalence the next year, for the next year was the NyCon II (officially the NewYorkcon or somesuch) and Dave Kyle was chairman of that con. I needn't tell you at this late date that the Con was in several essential ways a failure, and it left a bad taste in many fans' mouths for New York and Dave Kyle. Some of this was deserved, much of it not. The "Dave Kyle Says You Can't Sit Here" line passed into legend, and the fact that the convention was a financial disaster was as quickly and quietly buried as conveniently possible. The subsequent blowup of the WSFS Inc., did much to help obscure the actual shortcomings of the convention itself, and All Fandom Was Plunged Into War over the incorporation of the World SF Society and much etc.

Yet, throughout all of this, I found Dave Kyle in person to be a charming, witty, and very pleasant person, and despite my misgivings over some of his activities anent the con and WSFS stink, I continued to think of him as a Nice Guy.

Indeed, and I would like you to bear this in mind, I still think Dave

is a Nice Guy -- as a person, and removed from the machinations of fannish politics.

The problem arises directly out of these very fannish politics. And to understand this, we must understand that Dave Kyle, from everything I have seen of him, is a fannish politician. Dave enjoys running things -- his failure with the NyCon II was largely due to the fact that he assumed more responsibility than one man could carry -- and he likes to be in the thick of political intrigues of the sort which used to surround consite bidding. For Dave, I think, it is a game, sometimes played in earnest, but essentially a recreation, not unlike the politicking which must go on come election time at the local American Legion Post or down at the Odd Fellows Hall. Fandom is not the Real World; here one can dabble about and play at palace intrigues with relative freedom from unpleasant consequences.

Not too coincidentally, the rotation plan was put into effect at the Clevention, and the rotation plan has had a great stabilizing effect upon a major aspect of fannish politics: consite bidding. We've witnessed some hard fights -- like that in 1959 for the 1960 site -- but more often we've found the cities in each area settling among themselves beforehand, and only a single city bidding.

I cannot emphasize too strongly that this is beneficial for fandom at large and specifically so for the bidding cities. The fight of 1959 cost the contenders hundreds of dollars, and left a bitter taste in the losers' mouths. There is no good or worthwhile reason why a city should use up its resources of time, enthusiasm and money to capture a bid when all could be more profitably spent in actually producing a convention.

However, the smokey-room element is largely missing from consite bidding today. The intrigues and last-minute maneuvers are lacking. And this appears to distress not only Dave Kyle, who enjoys such things, but also others on the Syracuse Committee, like Jay K. Klein, who has made such statements in YANDRO and published an amazing article attacking the rotation plan on these grounds by Bob Madle in his Discon CONVENTION ANNUAL.

More recently, we have witnessed the publication of an open letter to fandom by Dave Kyle, followed up by a fourteen page set of letters also circulated by Dave Kyle.

These revolve about the fact that Dave attended the British Eastercon this year, and heard from various fans there news about the forthcoming Loncon which distressed him. Upon his return, Dave attended the US Eastercon-Lunacon and told a number of the attendees of what he heard. He also discussed his plans for remedies, which included a rump banquet. While I believe Dave was sincerely motivated by concern over the con, I believe he was also indulging in his favorite sport: back-room politicking and intriguing. He spoke with the air of a conspirator to small groups of fans, and I was reminded of a rebel leader planning a coup.

He also caused some harm by his rumor-mongering. Several fans decided not to go to the Loncon after all, and cancelled out of the group flight then being planned. This contributed to the failure of the flight.

Several people, among them Don Wollheim, wrote to Ella Parker and Ethel Lindsay to inform them of the rumors Dave was spreading. This resulted in the publications he put forth.

You have undoubtedly seen these publications; they speak for themselves. I for one was not impressed by Dave's over-fulsome protestations that a) he wasn't spreading any rumors (it was those New York fen who had it in for him); and b) he did it all for the good of the Con anyway.

More important, I do not care for the way Dave has shuffled the rumors off on New York, which he characterizes as "the snakepit of fandom".

While New York Fandom is entirely too large and sprawling an entity to ever be entirely at peace with itself, it has achieved a remarkable stability in the last several years, largely by virtue of the departure from the scene of those dissidents like Kyle who so contributed to the turbulent image of earlier days with factionalism and inter-club feuding.

Today there are no major feuds outstanding in New York Fandom, and we enjoy a record at least as enviable as that of any other large city's fandom. There will always be different factions, human nature being what it is, but today these factions are enjoying a peaceful coexistence, and have even to some extent merged.

I am co-chairman of the bidding committee for New York in 1967. As such, I am concerned about possible obstacles to our bid. But I must also add that I am not assuming a Polyannaish attitude: it is not my belief that all New York Fandom must or will Pull Together to Put On A Really Big Shew. I believe that cooperative efforts of this sort can bring to light dormant personality conflicts. The bidding committee represents a single element in NYFandom, and one totally at peace with itself. We are confident that no internal feuds will split us or marr our efforts, as happened in 1956. Our approach to other NY fans is simply: we'd enjoy your support, and we want you to enjoy our convention.

So much for the "snake pit."

We were initially alarmed when we heard of the Syracuse bid because we felt that even at a year's remove it would compete with our own -- we could hardly expect fandom to vote two conventions in a row to the state of New York.

Since then, our alarm has increased. It appears that if the rotation plan is followed, subsequent to a Syracuse convention, our bid (and Baltimore's) would be uneligible.

However, and worse yet, we have been made aware of the fact that the Syracuse committee (Kyle, Klein) are actively opposed to the rotation plan, and wish not merely to set it aside for one year, but to scuttle it entirely. As expressed in their CONVENTION ANNUAL (a singularly inappropriate place, to my way of thinking), they feel that the plan itself is stifling the conventions, and that we should return to the previous freewheeling form of consite selection, with its attendant smokey-rooms and machinations.

Kyle and Klein have expressed conflicting views on this on different occasions, sometimes stating that they are operating entirely within the plan, sometimes stating that they are opposed to the plan. It appears obvious at any rate that they dislike the plan, and that their pious protestations should be considered within this light.

I find it ironic that opposition to our 1967 bid has come largely from those who've repeated over and over again "1956 was enough; don't let New York get it again" -- when these same people are supporting Syracuse in 1966. Dave Kyle has said that we in New York are unfairly attacking him in raking up the 1956 fiasco, but surely he and his supporters cannot have it both ways. Either the 1956 convention is reason enough not to let those who put it on get another convention -- or it is not. In either case, there should be no objection to our 1967 bid.

It seems to me that the activities of the past year have provided quite enough upheaval in fandom for the time being, and that we can do without further trouble-makers. And much as I like Dave Kyle as a person, I can only regard his recent attempts to destroy or set aside the rotation plan, and his attempts to kibitz the Loncon as trouble-making. More mischievous than malicious, perhaps, but trouble-making, nonetheless. It would be nice if Dave could find outlets for his politicking urges outside fandom, and remain just a Nice Guy here among us.

THE MIDWESTCON & WESTERCON: This year a deligation of five of us from NYTFandom made the Convention Circuit. You will find my biased and distorted account of our adventures in FOCAL POINT, but I would like to take a little space here in GAMBIT to publicly thank the Cincinatti Fantasy Group for a fine Midwestcon, and the LASFS-Long Deach fans for a highly enjoyable Westercon. The two complemented each other nicely, and we so enjoyed the trip that we may actually repeat it next year as well. Although hopefully we'll have a little more time for the travelling, and be able to visit more friends along the way. We drove through Omaha without stopping to even phone Tom Perry, for instance, and we really regretted having only a few hours to spend in Berkeley, when we'd hoped on over a day. Next time we'll try to coordinate things a little better.

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