

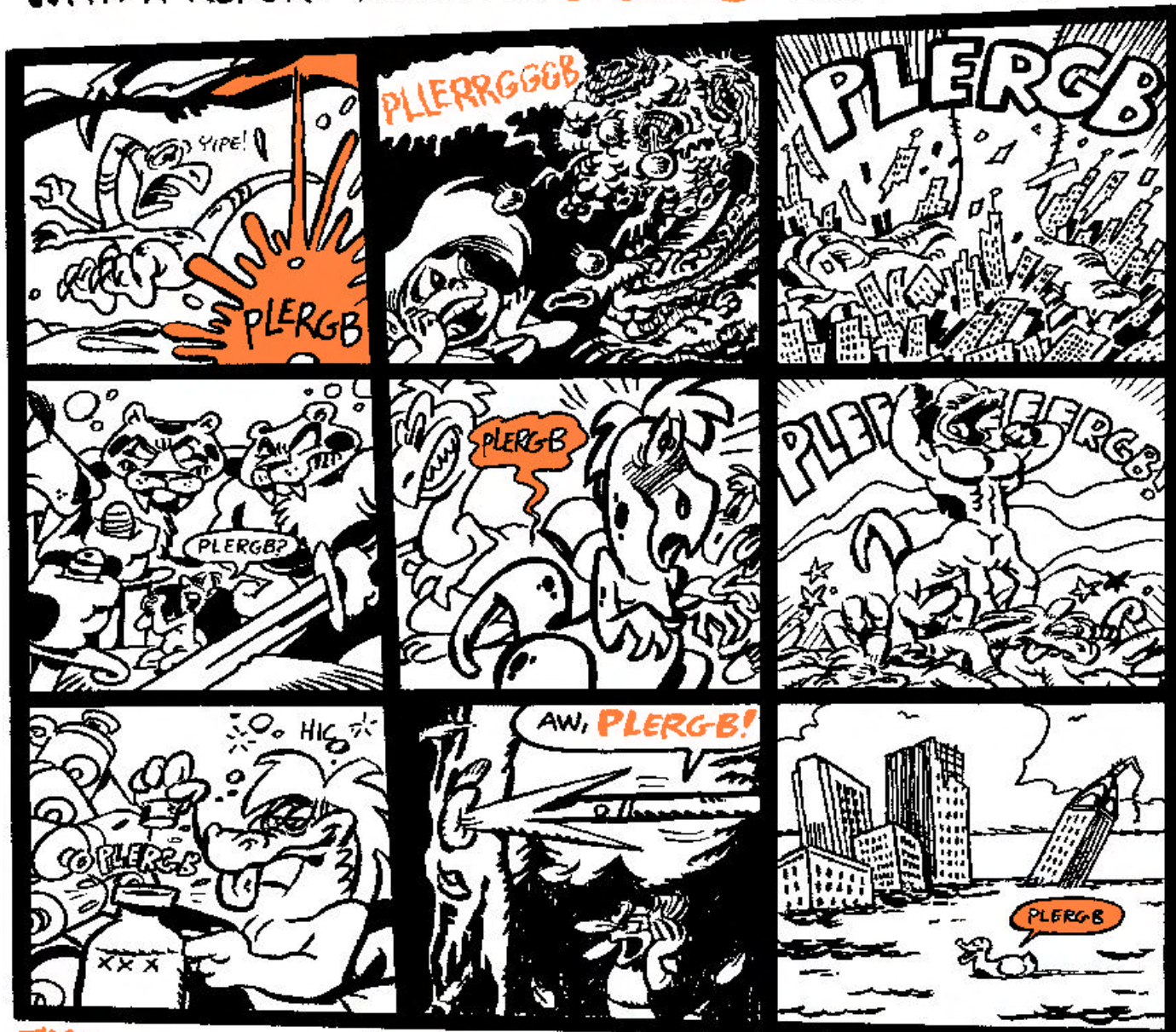
ITS MARTY CANTOR'S

# NO AWARD

Number

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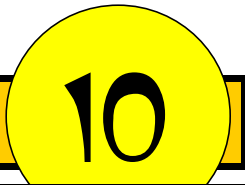
WITH A REPORT FROM THE **PLERGB** C.O.M.M.I.S.S.I.O.N.



4/12

SO, WUZIT MEAN?

2001



# NO AWARD

A Fanzine  
by  
**Marty Cantor**  
voted fandom's Resident Curmudgeon  
in a poll conducted in *Twink*

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**Hoo Hah**  
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*This fanzine is available for the fannish usual (which I tend to translate as my own whim, but I do honour trades, locs, artwork, written articles, and other contributions). If all else fails, send me US\$5.00 and I will send you a copy. NO AWARD is not pubbed on any regular schedule (even though I want to get it out at least twice a year). Mostly, issues will be put out when material and money decide to get together in a meaningful way.*

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This zine was almost complete on the day when The War Against Civilisation burst against our shores with crashing horror. It is now one week after that catastrophe - and I send this out with a heavy heart but with firm resolve that They Shall Not Win. - *Marty Cantor*

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## NOTICE

There are several recipients of the paper version of this zine who have not responded to it in any way. Some of you will continue to receive it because I think you should always get it. Others, well, should respond or they will be dropped from the mailing list. This statement is purposely ambiguous.

### LETTERS OF COMMENT

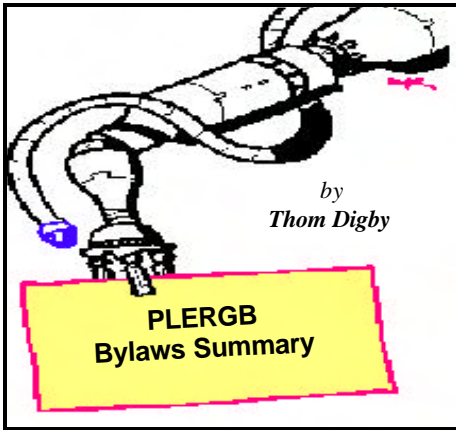
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- Marc Schirmeister - Cover
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### *History of the word "Plergb"*

*by Thom Digby*

Here's what I recall or can reconstruct about the early history of the word Plergb:

I've long had a thing of coming up with what some might call nonsense words: Words like "glogr" or "bloomthroage" or "pulubrian". Sometimes such a word will just pop into my head. If nobody else is nearby I may say the word softly, but whatever part of my mind comes up with these words seems to know not to speak them aloud in earshot of others who may not be in the mood to hear them.

Most of these words are eventually forgotten, although some end up as names of fictional characters and such.

Sometime in the early 1970's, when I was working at the tape recorder factory, I noticed that I would frequently say "Plergb" when plugging something in (the word "Plergb" is similar in sound to "plug", so that may be where my subconscious got it).

Since I worked in the engineering lab, I did a lot of plugging and unplugging of stuff, so I found myself saying "Plergb" fairly often. And since it was a lab where I tested electronic stuff, the things being plugged in might or might not work. So in a sense the first definition of "Plergb" may have been as a sort of prayer or mantra for good luck when plugging things in.

The first appearance in APA-L was probably a reference to the "Dread Drug Plergb" that did weird things like making people disappear if they got into a hot tub or swimming pool or other water after taking it. You wouldn't be dead or anything like that, but all of a sudden you and your friends would look and notice that you weren't there any more. You would, like the Clarinchi, be in a state where you didn't exist but were aware of your nonexistence.

Somebody commented back on this, referring to the Dread Drug Plergb as just Plergb. I replied that the name of the drug was "Dread Drug Plergb" and that the word "Plergb" by itself could have other

meanings. The rest of the mythos then developed, probably over the next few months.

I don't have my pre-computer zine files handy, but a search for the word Plergb in the files I do have on disk turned up this from 1985 (APA-L 1131): "...while the first references to the word Plergb showed up in spring and summer of 1974, after Comet Kohoutek and during debate on creating a LASFS flag. I think the first printing of the official rules and bylaws of the word Plergb appeared later that summer but I don't seem to have it in my zine file. Maybe I'll hunt it up later. "

At some point after this someone (Matthew Tepper?) started a campaign (probably somewhat tongue-in-cheek) to abolish things that had the same initials as other things. Since "Plergb Commission" and "Personal Computer" both had the initials "PC," they became obvious targets. That was when I decided that "P.L.E. R.G.B. C.O.M.M.I.S.S.I.O.N." was itself an acronym so there would be no conflict with the Personal Computer.

I'm not sure when the Plergb Certificates and such were first printed up, but I suspect it may have been in connection with some kind of special occasion, either a convention or some kind of special APA-L disty, perhaps a Hoax Disty.

There may be more, but I think this is it for now.

*SUMMARY of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Plergb Commission and of the word Plergb as of Feb. 21, 1995.*

### **Background**

The Plergb Language Entropy Regulatory Governing Bureaucratic Commission Overseeing Multiple Managerial Issues Surrounding Singular Instances Of Nomenclature ("P.L.E.R.G.B.C.O.M.M.I.S.S.I.O.N." or "Plergb Commission" for short) (Hereafter referred to as the Commission) is the body which oversees and administers the use of the word Plergb and its authorized variants.

### **Uses of the word Plergb**

The word Plergb may be used in many ways, some of which have not been discovered yet.

- The simplest use of the word Plergb is as a general-purpose noun, sort of like "doohickey" and "thingamabob." It may be dynamically redefined within a sentence if the context makes the meaning clear, as in the old saying "A rolling Plergb gathers no Plergb." It can also be used as a euphemism, as in "What the Plergb is this Plergb?!?!" The use of the word Plergb to maliciously hinder communication is strongly discouraged.
- Another simple use is to bring good luck by saying "Plergb" as you are plugging something in. The Commission makes no warranty covering such use.
- Whenever the word Plergb is used in a song, it may be defined as the entire remainder of the song. For example, singing "Oh,

say can you see by the Plergb?” lets you start the ball game that much sooner. When used in a song on radio or TV it may be defined as the rest of the broadcast day, allowing the staff to shut off the transmitter and go home without further ado or explanation. (CAUTION: Some advertisers consider this to be bad manners, especially if their commercials are affected.)

- The most sophisticated use of the word Plergb, however, is as an operator. Computer people may think of it as a sort of macro to be executed by one’s audience. For example, if you are composing something on a manual typewriter but wish to have a professional-appearing document, you may add at the bottom “Plergb, defined as justifying margins, correcting typos, and general cleanup.” It can also be defined as minus something you wish to cancel. For example, if you are running for office you might end all your speeches with “Plergb, defined as minus anything you didn’t want to hear.” The word Plergb can also be used to correct hyphenation at ends of lines, clean up politically incorrect language, cleanse erotica of anything the authorities might consider obscene, conditionally insert or delete paragraphs depending on the state of other variables, insert illustrations or other special effects that your Web software cannot handle, and so on.

### Users of the word Plergb

The word Plergb may be used by any English-speaking person (rules for other languages may be forthcoming) regardless of race, color, religion (unless said religion forbids the use of the word Plergb), national origin, sex, sexual preferences, age, economic status, etc., etc., etc. Plergb is an Equal Opportunity Word.

Users of the word Plergb fall into three general classes: Authorized users, Renegades, and Yak Fat.

- Authorized users are those who have been authorized by the Commission to use the word Plergb and who agree to be bound by the rules thereof.
- Renegades are those who have been granted Renegade Status by the Commission. They may break the rules and otherwise misuse the word Plergb with impunity, but their actions do not set precedent. People who have heard of the word Plergb and wish to use it, but who are unsure of the rules and find it inconvenient to contact the Commission, may grant themselves provisional Renegade Status.
- The standard penalty for misuse of the word Plergb (by those not on Renegade Status) is dunking in rancid yak fat. Since the budget of the Commission does not allow for real yak fat or a yak fat vat to dunk people in they have been doing virtual dunkings instead. This consists of a certificate attesting to such dunking and advising all to stay at least ten feet (three meters) away because of the (virtual) smell.

The Commission issues certificates for all three of the status categories described above.

### Orthography of the word Plergb

The word Plergb is always capitalized because it is the name of the word Plergb, which makes it a proper name. This is in contrast to words like “cat” and “shoehorn” and “episcotister” which have names like “Melvin” or “Herman” or “Murgatroyd” which nobody knows about because nobody has published a list of names of words. The word Plergb is named Plergb. The subject of names of names is beyond the scope of this article.

Authorized variants of the word Plergb include Pglergb, Plergdb, Pglorgdb, and Skeegl. There also exists the Medieval Spelling of Plyrrhghb for use by time travelers, people doing parodies of medieval writing, etc. All variants are pronounced exactly as they are spelled (no silent letters) except for the Medieval Spelling, which is pronounced “Pl” as in “platypus,” “yrh” as in “myrh,” “gh” as in “ghost,” and “b” as in “Bob.”

### Miscellaneous

#### Plergb Commission Anthem

The Commission has an Official Anthem. The words of the latest version are:

*We are the stalwart people of the Plergb Commission:  
We uphold the honor of the word Plergb all day long.  
And when we’re not busy on our glorious mission  
We just sit around and sing this stupid song.*

#### Official Question

The Official Question of the Plergb Commission and of the word Plergb is “Glorb g’dorpt-borpt?” The answer is “Plergb.”

#### Alcohol and other Drugs

Documented use of the word Plergb goes back to 1973, which makes it old enough to be used in places where alcohol is served, at least in California. Since laws vary from place to place and may change from time to time, check with local authorities before using the word Plergb in any potentially questionable situation.

Diminished capacity due to drunkenness or other forms of intoxication is generally not a defense in cases of misuse of the word Plergb. If you plan to use the word Plergb while under the influence, the safest course is to have Renegade Status.

#### Legal Disclaimer

Plergb, defined as whatever legal disclaimers about advice, warranties, etc., are needed to keep the Commission off the hook regardless of how local laws vary.

#### Document Cleanup

**Plergb**, defined as correcting any typos and misspellings in this document. **Plergb**, defined as minus any line noise or other technical problems with this document.

ℓ

# HEINLEIN

footnote indicator



# HAPPENS\*



by

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I have always known that I have a highly developed ego. It contains elements of arrogance and righteousness that can be evoked whenever appropriate or beneficial. I have tried diligently for years (ever since the Spectator Amateur Press Society and the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society labeled me “Killer Kemp” in the mid ‘50s and brought my unknown bad habits forcefully to my attention) to suppress both of them. I have always thought of this ego as being an essential part of personal self-awareness, of pride in who I am and what I do, of dignity in the manner by which most of that had been accomplished in the first place.

I came by all this naturally. I inherited it from my mother. She was a textbook classic Type A egomaniac. Mother caused the sun to rise and set, the tides to flow, and directed every living entity, breath by breath, through its day. Living with her prepared me for any type egomaniac I might ever expect to encounter.

The word ego defines this memory, and it comes in the form of Robert A. Heinlein. Arthur C. Clarke’s friends and British buds called him “Ego” in the early 1950s, but they did so out of affection, however appropriate. They were writing pseudo “scientific journal” humor articles for UK fanzines about capturing, containerizing, storing, and disposing of routine human wastes in a gravity-free environment. Those articles were complete with diagrams and advertising slogans. My favorite was “pin your piddle in a Shaw closet.” Heinlein’s acquaintances (it is difficult to use the word “friends” in this context) wouldn’t dare make the same mistake regarding him, and live...at least in Heinlein’s world, hence the “disremembered” category that seemed to be created only for his exclusive use.

Bill Hamling had been my friend for a decade, and he had an ego as well. Fortunately, I knew that all along and tried to allow for it. I had already been working for Hamling, editing his smut books and, moments away, I would move to California with him and

continue a rather close association for an additional ten years during which both our egos would expand considerably.

As far as egos go, Heinlein was a piker, a pissant, a tsetse fly, when compared with some of the biggest. In reality, he was much more of a pain in the ass.

#

For many years Robert Heinlein ranked right up there at the top of my personal list of favorite science fiction writers, bouncing back and forth from the first to the second position depending on what day of the week it was. I adored his books. I worshipped them. I garnered much personal enjoyment from them. He was my on-again-off-again Number One Hero Science Fiction Writer. I wrote him embarrassingly flattering letters, bought all his books, and literally loved the man-as-writer (it is critical that he not be confused with man-as-man).

Somewhere about mid-way through my science fiction career, we finally met and became “friends.” I have struggled long and hard to come up with the exact memory of where, when, or how we first met, but I can’t drag the information up. All I know is that we did get to meet at long last....

...and I sat there looking at the out-of-shape, tending-to-fat, slicked-down greasy old bald man before me dressed like and affecting the mannerisms of Adolph Menjou in some old 1940’s black and white MGM flick wondering who was pulling my leg or what?

I knew Robert Heinlein very well, had known him for years, and had looked into his smiling face countless times over the decades. So, who was this old man and who was trying to fool me like this? *Come on, now, you guys, bring out the real Heinlein.*

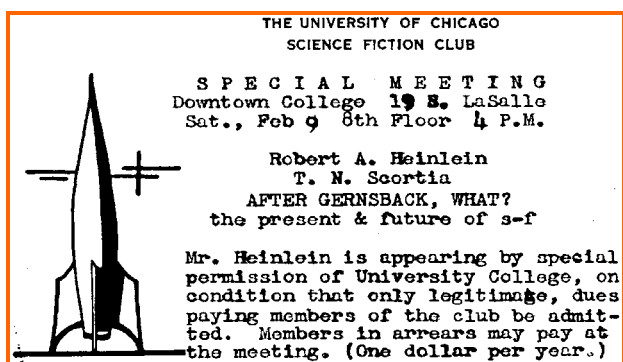
Only it *was* him, he was real, and he was a big fraud, daring everyone to recognize him as he hid behind the 20-year-old publicity photograph he wanted to think was really him...not old...not fat...not embarrassingly ordinary...but someone significant. I should have known at that very moment in time that anyone so tenuously fragile in his or her own inner personal security as Heinlein was should be a person to avoid like the plague.

I was standing at the crossroads of time and the world, in Chicago, where everyone of any significance within the science fiction cosmos frequently passed through. In time I became known to them all, and they to me. I stood in those crossroads for fifteen years; you can make a lot of friends in that length of time, or enemies. For ten of those years I pretty much called all the shots. I was very lucky to have lots of help; I have never accomplished

anything of any significance alone. There have always been numbers of loyal assistants backing me up and I have always tried to acknowledge them, their help, and to make sure that everyone shared in all rewards, real or intangible.

Somewhere around here, Heinlein entered the scene for me.

In 1953 I became president of the University of Chicago Science Fiction Club and was completely involved with science fiction power politics at the time. This made me ostensibly the leader of the Chicago faction and, as such, always required to be on my best behavior especially as far as any visiting firemen were concerned. Heinlein qualified as a visiting fireman. I never felt free to deal with him in any manner I felt would be the least bit appropriate. It was essential that Heinlein (and all other significant science fiction people) appear to be a friend of Chicago fandom at all costs, and his costs were exceedingly high.



University of Chicago Science Fiction Club meeting announcement postcard reflecting a special Heinlein requirement. Courtesy George Price Collection. Note dues \$1. per year and .02c stamp. Postmarked February 6, 1957.

I became aware then of the League of the Disremembered, the large, continuously growing number of people Heinlein had simply stopped remembering for causes more often than not totally unknown. Many of them told me privately and secretly to “be on my guard.” Forrie Ackerman was one of them, one of the disremembered and one of the people who tried to warn me about Heinlein’s habits.

Forrie was also a long-time friend who proved his mettle to me on more than one occasion when Forrie stood alone at my side against unreasonable adversity. He tried to tell me in a nice way that Heinlein was a snake in the grass just waiting to strike. I told him that Heinlein had always been gracious and friendly with me (I wasn’t able to face the truth myself at that time), and Forrie told me to take special note of when and why it would happen to me, and he said that it *would* happen to me, and he was right. Forrie had been disremembered for some obscure “moral” reason many years earlier, but numerous decades had already passed without Heinlein once remembering him.

I did not want to acknowledge any of these Heinlein quirks,

even to myself. He was my writer god; he could do no wrong. It must be some misunderstanding on my part. If I just waited long enough... I was heavy into self-denial and apologizing for Heinlein to myself. I was ashamed of myself and the way I catered to him, and embarrassed for fear that I wouldn’t be able to hide the truth from the Chicago faction for much longer.

I had to remind myself that I knew Heinlein *well*, not casually. After a certain point in time, we moved in the same circles both professionally and socially, knew all the same people for all the same reasons. We attended the same meetings, conferences, seminars, parties, and testimonials. In many cities, many states, many buildings, many offices, many corridors I was able to observe Heinlein at close range, for years, and to note how he reacts with and toward people. I did everything I could within myself to contain all of these things, to deny them, and to try to wish them away, only that didn’t work at all; it never does.

Heinlein had to be praised at all times. He would arrive in Chicago without prior notice, phone me with an order loosely translated as, “I have arrived; bring acolytes and worship me in my ordained manner.”

He had this really peculiar tangentialness about himself as if he deliberately tried to set himself apart from all others. This was evident in his unusual choice of clothing (sitting around in silk pajamas and dressing robes), and in his imperial manner (never allowing anyone to sit higher than himself). He also paid fawning attention to females (with a sneer and a wink; they terrified him), and absolutely never ever permitted himself to hear a negative word associated with himself.

I knew everyone in science fiction, or flattered myself that I did, and went way out of my way trying to make sure that they knew me. Especially, I felt, I knew Robert Heinlein, because I was becoming obsessive about his less attractive facets.

I routinely socialized with science fiction movers and shakers and many of them became close, personal friends, not science fiction gods. People like Doc and Jeannie Smith (Edward Elmer Smith “piled higher and deeper”—as he was fond of introducing himself—was the closest thing I ever knew to having a science fiction godfather; he treated me like a treasured and valuable son; Jeannie was warm, reassuring, and the ultimate earthmother...), Phil and Betty Farmer, Ed Hamilton and Leigh Brackett, Catherine Moore (Henry Kuttner was dead by that time), and others. It was commonplace and routine for us to just sit around and be family; to talk about kids and trips and food and fun and, rarely, publishers, editors, agents, or science fiction writers.

I feel sure Heinlein would deny that anyone at all resided in the same lofty category as himself, but these people were surely brilliant stars in the science fiction cosmos, and every one of them was first a person, and second a writer.

Heinlein never climbed high enough to reach the “person” level.

When I was trying to bring about *The Science Fiction Novel* for Advent, I had to deal with Heinlein and his ass-kissing demands that almost scuttled the project completely. Fortunately, Lurton Blassingame, Heinlein's agent at the time, came through and lessened some of the obligatory demands. There were several other prominent writers associated with that book; not one of them made a single demand regarding their participation, but entered into it willingly and productively.

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Heinlein made one of his infrequent convention appearances, arriving just in time to stride into the banquet hall at the proper moment to receive his award (*Starship Troopers*, best novel); such exquisite timing made many attendees wonder if it was really a coincidence.

—Richard Lynch, *Fan History Book of the 1960s, on the 1960 Pittcon*

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In 1960, 71 rather prominent science fiction people contributed work for the first *SaFari* annual, *Who Killed Science Fiction?* Of that number only one made any unusual demands or set conditions upon their participation; that one was Robert A. Heinlein. The least most offensive of his requirements was the one forbidding me to use his name or infer that he had written the piece for me. Consequently, Heinlein's article appeared under the byline of Anonymous No. 1. I suspect it might have been a piece that Alexei Panshin did not identify, evaluate, or include in his Heinlein chronology.

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...Science fiction is a branch of the entertainment business, the first axiom of which is: if the audience doesn't laugh, he clown is not funny. Tedious rehashing of elderly themes will not cause the readers to applaud. I suspect, from some of the crud that one sees in print, that there are science fiction writers who jumped in because they thought it was a gravy train, an easy way to get rich without working.

Any writer who comes along today with stories as fresh and novel as those of E.E. Smith and Stanley Weinbaum were when they were first published is certain to find a publisher and to receive ringing applause from the cash customers. But a writer who serves up the same tired old stew, simply polishing old stories, will cause the readers to sit on their hands—no matter how finished or slick their writing techniques.

—Robert A. Heinlein, *Who Killed Science Fiction?* Dated April 15, 1960.

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In Seattle in 1961, after I had been awarded the Hugo for *Who Killed Science Fiction?*, Robert Heinlein approached me. He had this deliberately calculated way of insulting through faint praise; his words would flow out of him effortlessly as if he had spent some time rehearsing them, perhaps saying the words aloud to himself.

"If I had of known what a good job you would do with *Who Killed Science Fiction?*" he said, "I'd have allowed you to use my name in it."

*Gee, thanks, Bob?* I believe that was the closest I ever came to receiving an apology from Robert Heinlein.

I was holding my personal copy of the book at the time; it had been considerably annotated and autographed by the many contributors who were as proud of the volume as I was. Without me asking, Heinlein took my copy of *Who Killed Science Fiction?* from me, opened it to page 13, and wrote a big "Robert A. Heinlein" over the Anonymous No. 1 byline. *Tardy largess for the peons...*

By 1962, I had reached the absolute limit of my personal capabilities as far as producing anything within the field of science fiction was concerned. I was stretched so far in so many different directions it was touch and go, from day to day, how much of it, if any at all, I might be able to bring to fruition. Heinlein figured rather prominently in all of this, and became increasingly more and more a painful thorn in my side.

Everyone and their brother remotely connected to science fiction was hitting on me for something...some very extra special little private service that would improve their condition immeasurably and only take up just so much more of my time. I was secretly and not so secretly producing books for a couple of anthologists under their names, and writing all their blurb copy as well.

*Playboy* was one of the biggies making demands on my time, and Spec (A.C. Spector) was my connection at the magazine. The first time he ever phoned me was a real stunner; it was all I could do to try to act normal and not scream in delight. Spec was clearly phoning for Hugh Hefner, which worked well enough for me. Whenever he wanted anything, Spec phoned me, and whenever I wanted anything, I phoned him. (This all worked out rather well. Because of Spec, and Hefner, I met such hero types as Shel Silverstein, who played his guitar and sang the damndest songs by the hour, Jules Feiffer—always a delight—my real, real hero, LeRoy Neiman, and many others.)

Secretly it was quite a thrill for me, thinking I had a friend right at the top of *Playboy*. Actually, and I certainly didn't share it with Spec, I knew grunt-level employees throughout the *Playboy* operation. The grapevine was fantastic; I felt like I knew everything going on around there for a while.

I had already been working as an editor for sexless pornography with A.J. Budrys, the boss at Regency Books, and the front for Bill Hamling's smut book operation for some time. Hamling was Hefner's arch-wannabe-rival and former friend (they had worked together at *Today's Man*), therefore it was politically expedient for Hefner and myself to remain separated as much as possible. Spec and I actually discussed this separateness and we both agreed it would be much better for me to maintain it.

Spec wanted a lot and it took up a lot of time satisfying him, or Hefner, for whom he spoke. Murray Fisher was Spec's gopher and, coincidentally, one hell of a walking pharmacy. "The Fish" could pull the most incredible drugs out of the pockets of his nicely tailored three-piece suit: "How do you feel? Wanna upper? A downer? How about a line? Oh, I know, do a Dexie." Only in those days, even though I was an apprentice Prince of Pornography at least, I was

strictly Johnny Straight Arrow, Mr. Moral the Wussy Man in every direction. No drugs for me at all, thank you! *Wussy!*

Spec wanted an interview set up with Heinlein and suggested questions and topics to query him on. Spec wanted a symposium on science fiction to be staffed, including Heinlein, and topics to be considered. Spec wanted a special party staffed at Hef's mansion that included Heinlein. . . .

And every time I would contact Heinlein for anything, his price to me would go up higher and higher as if he was gaining physical pleasure from deliberately taunting me. It got to the point where he seemed to be eagerly awaiting my next pass-on message as if there were something personal in it for me.

It was incredible the extent he would go to be adored, in his opinion. It was very easy for the adorer to goof up and not please him at all, and be "disremembered" in the blink of God Heinlein's eye.

All these special requests from special people really got in the way of putting on a good science fiction convention.

As a final symbol of my true devotion to him, Heinlein required me, as a condition for his appearance at ChiCon III, to absolutely guarantee him, ahead of time, the Hugo award for *Stranger in a Strange Land*. (Doing so was easy, only very unethical; the book won hands down; I didn't have to hassle with myself to see if I would interfere.) There were some footnotes as well to his demands, like he had to be singled out and spotlighted while walking around the convention floor. That certain alleged celebrities would be directed to and through his hotel suite where he dispensed largess and blessings to his supplicants wearing his uniform. I believe it was Howard DeVore who adequately described Heinlein on that occasion, "Up there (meaning in Heinlein's hotel suite), God in a dirty bathrobe."

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...once again, as he'd done two years earlier in Pittsburgh, Heinlein made a dramatic entry to the Hugo Award banquet just as his name was being read as the winner (*Stranger in a Strange Land*, best novel); but even though fans had seen that act before, they still gave him a standing ovation.

—Richard Lynch, *Fan History Book of the 1960s, on the 1962 ChiCon*

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Another undeniable person making demands on my time was the Food King. H.L. Hunt (billionaire, Hunt Foods, Wesson Oils, etc.) was attending ChiCon III from Texas. [Cory Panshin pointed out that I had completely misidentified Hunt. The H.L. Hunt I met was the Dallas, Texas oil billionaire, the Grease King, not the Food King.] He kept sending me messages requesting private meetings and I kept sending him back messages that I was too busy. Jim O'Meara, my right hand and convention vice-chair, clued me in on who Hunt was and advised me to make room for him right away. I accepted Hunt's next invitation; I would have breakfast with him the following morning.

The elevator while in route to Hunt's floor stopped first almost exactly opposite Heinlein's door. The door was wide open as a room service waiter was rolling a breakfast table into his suite. Heinlein's back was to me; he was wearing yet a different dressing robe this morning. Facing him, looking out through the door and into the elevator were Fred and Carol Pohl, Heinlein's breakfast guests. Carol spotted me, smiled and, just as the elevator door closed, winked conspiratorially.

I stepped out of that elevator into another world light years away from Heinlein. Here the truly significant hotel guests found privacy and seclusion; the carpet, even the light fixtures smelled like money. Hunt's suite, of course, was near Heinlein's, only there the similarity ended. It was huge and opulent and interior designed to the extreme. The suite alone would have made Heinlein turn an unattractive shade of pea-soup-green in envy, to say nothing of Hunt's personal staff, all decked out in tailored finery.

Hunt's own butler ushered me into the incredible suite, one I imagined similar to what Las Vegas casinos might comp to potentates, sheiks, high rollers like King of Pornography Larry Flint, or rock stars.

He told me that I was on time. I sure hoped so, I had never had breakfast with a billionaire before, and I didn't want to miss a single morsel of it.

H.L. Hunt walked up to me and introduced himself, offering me his hand for a weak, feeble shake. He was in his mid-80s at the time, unsteady on his feet and in his thoughts. He was confused, noticeably senile, and very, very out of his element at a science fiction convention. He made me think of him as having outlived everyone he ever knew or loved, and alone and adrift on a becalmed, shoreless sea at nightfall. The last broad sweeps of brilliant reds were still barely visible and, for Hunt, unaccountably, the stars were slowly, one by one, blinking out, instead of blinking on. He died a few short months after our meeting.

"Are you ready for breakfast?" he asked me.

"I sure am," I said.

"Well," H.L. Hunt said, "walk this way. . . ."

We left the suite and took an elevator to the first floor. I actually had to help him walk at times, and negotiate corners. He led me into the hotel coffee shop and to the quick service counter. We sat there side by side on two stools while he ordered our breakfast: "Two coffees, black. . . ." *Yeah?*

As we slowly sipped away at breakfast, I did my best to pull out of him whatever it was he was trying to get out of himself. My efforts were hopeless. It seemed he didn't even know what the questions were, much less how to formulate them.

I did discover that he had just written a "science fiction novel" named *Alpaca*, and paid to have it printed himself. He was somehow seeking help in exploiting his book. He gave me a copy of it and, later, I looked inside. I could hardly force myself to read any of it,



and the printing production job was the worst I had ever seen; Hunt had been well taken by someone. I told him I would try to help him, but I knew I wouldn't. I did want to be nice to him though.

He also had one other favor, he said, as he slipped me a copy of his personal A List, the people he wanted me to round up and direct to his suite. Just like Heinlein...almost word for word in his request, only there was one huge difference. Heinlein didn't head off Hunt's list; Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. claimed first position. In fact, Heinlein wasn't on Hunt's list at all.

Our coffee had been consumed and our confusing business dispatched; it was over, whatever it was.

H.L. Hunt reached into his inside suit-coat pocket and pulled out a very old, much scuffed and used, snap-top change purse. He opened the purse, reached into it, and pulled out some coins. Slowly...patiently...one by one...he counted out pennies and nickels, stacking them up in neat piles of a dime each. He counted out the exact number of coins needed to pay the check and, to the penny, a ten-percent tip. *Billionaire accounting sure is tedious....*

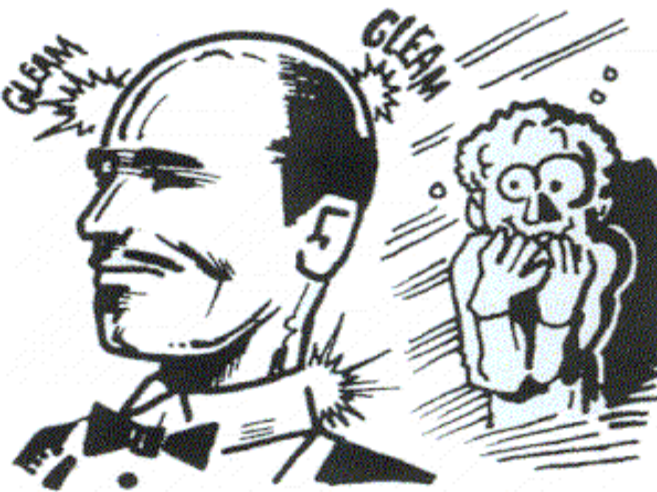
I thanked him for breakfast and for the copy of his book. Then I helped him to the elevator and went back to the convention floor, feeling oddly empty, as if breakfast with a billionaire wasn't much to brag about after all.

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My ego and arrogance was coming to the fore frequently in those short-tempered, time-pressed days and, as usual, I let some of it get out of hand. Spec had me compiling a Class A guest list for

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...I ended up at a table in the extreme rear of the large hall, so far to the rear, in fact, that my back was to the double doors which was the hall's entrance. Just as Betsy Curtis stepped up to accept the Hugo Award for Robert A. Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*, I felt a draft as the doors behind me silently opened and in walked Heinlein himself, dressed in a black and white



Robert A. Heinlein, Chicago 1962, by (and with the permission of) Charlie Williams, from *Mimosa 26*, December 2000.

tuxedo to accept his Hugo in person. He had apparently only just arrived at the convention. Was it perfect timing, or just a dramatic ploy?...

—Bill Mallardi, "Of Seabees, Mothgirls, & Heinlein,"

*Mimosa 26*, December 2000

Hefner to invite over to his bunny hutch for a party during ChiCon III. I told Spec that considering how much I had already done for Hefner and *Playboy*, I felt it was time he included an invitation for me as well. I also told Spec it would be necessary for Hefner to put in a walk-through appearance at ChiCon III.

Eventually I received an engraved invitation to Hefner's 4-a.m. science fiction breakfast party. It came with the counter move that yes, Hefner will appear at the convention on one condition alone... that I guarantee the minute he walks into the door (I would be alerted ahead of time, of course) the spotlight would hit him and that he would get introduced right away. The exact same demand Heinlein had made for his appearance in a white Palm Beach dinner jacket and black silk tie. Boy, was I ever burning out on primadonnas.

As it turned out, when Hugh Hefner arrived at the Chicago convention, Ted Sturgeon, the guest of honor, was nearing the end of his speech, perhaps the single most significant event of the entire convention. Ted had been clued in ahead of time so, as Hefner entered, he turned to me and gave me the prearranged "what now" signal. Instantly I felt it was disrespectful to Ted Sturgeon, the convention guest of honor, to interrupt his solemn moment. I gave Ted the signal that said; "finish as you go, *then* introduce Hefner."

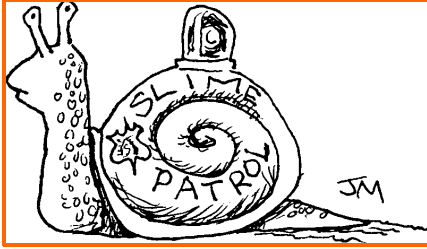
And Sturgeon did, and Hefner never forgave me for having defaulted on my part of our bargain.

Somehow, I survived presiding over that convention, though there were moments when I doubted if that could ever be possible. And things and life continued apace. I was now thoroughly involved in the editing of alleged pornography for Bill Hamling, but that was partially a known secret, certainly within the world of science fiction that also somehow furnished most of the agents, editors, and writers who produced that alleged pornography.

Somewhere along the line I asked Alexei Panshin to write a critical book about Heinlein's fiction for Advent. This was a very viable, very needed book, and one that properly belonged within the genre, and Alex was *exactly* the right person to do it from more than one direction of approach. I had, of course, already been overwhelmed by Heinlein the insufferable man for years, yet I still wanted to honor Heinlein the excellent writer for his accomplishments, despite his personal actions.

And I still do, today, as I write these very words. Occasionally I find myself rereading one of his books for my personal enjoyment. I have to fight with myself to ignore the writer, but doing so is often worth the battle. I can not say often enough or well enough just how very superior most of his fiction was...the highest possible quality level of genre writing.

When it became apparent to Heinlein that I had instigated such a move and that it was indeed ongoing, he called me immediately.



Heinlein “my friend” tried his best to sweet-talk me into quashing the deal with Panshin. He wheedled and cajoled all to no avail. I kept insisting

that the time was right for a definitive book about a science fiction writer and that, being the best, that writer was Heinlein, and that the book would be a great boost to his career.

Heinlein was adamant that no criticism could be made about his writing, that only praise need apply. He even went so far as to say that a book about his writings should never appear in his lifetime, but only long after his death. I told him that was a preposterous position because he had already achieved the No. 1 spot; he could only go downhill from there.

We were both quite clear in our positions: I was talking only about a book evaluating the public record of Heinlein’s creative output. He insisted only in talking about a book being written detailing dreaded secrets of Heinlein the man. Apples. Oranges. He knew exactly what it was he wanted to hear and could allow his ears, his mind, access to nothing else, and certainly no relevant data.

Time passed and there were more phone calls from Heinlein, each new one apparently being encouraged by some new misconception on Heinlein’s part that denigrated his supreme position in some fashion. In each phone call he would up the ante considerably with his demands, and I would decline them as gently as possible.

Needless to say, I was full of Heinlein and needed a quick enema. I was rapidly getting to the point where I wanted to throw my hands up into the air and scream for “Sanctuary...!”

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**In 1968 Advent changed from a partnership to a corporation, with the former partners as the sole stockholders. We did this because Robert Heinlein had intimated that he might sue us if we published *Heinlein in Dimension* by Alexei Panshin.... Advent:Publishers, Inc. published the book, and Heinlein did not sue.**

—George Price, “Advent:uring Through the Years,” April 2001

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And while all this was ongoing, I was being seduced and lulled into a new lifetime and a new location. I was going on week’s-long junkets to southern California, to Palm Springs and San Diego, to contiguous Baja California in Mexico. I was being persuaded to give up everything I had accomplished in Chicago where I was Little Mister Science Fiction to my heart’s content, and move on upward into time and reality. I was being stretched in so many directions at the same time I could hardly think straight, much less make the right decisions about something as remote as egomania.

I knew in late 1964 that I would ultimately grab at that prize

ring on the merry-go-round and ride that painted pony like a true King of Pornography. It was only a matter of time.

Heinlein phoned me again, perhaps making his final good-faith effort to make things right...the way he alone saw them. He literally ordered me to not publish Panshin’s book about his writings, and I literally told him that whatever we published was none of his business and that he was in no way involved. He hung up on me in a huff.

In fact, he went as far as immediately having his phone number changed just in case I wanted to phone him for some reason. That Heinlein had been making the phone calls to me, for years, and not the other way around, seemed to escape him completely. There was no need to change his number; whatever it was I had no intention of ever calling it.

On February 17, 1965 Robert Heinlein wrote me a long letter condemning me, every thought I ever had, and the horse I rode in on as well. It was an incredible letter of inconsistencies and false assumptions deemed by Robert Heinlein himself to be the absolute truth. It was terminally embarrassing to Heinlein in its tone and content. In retrospect that letter reads exactly like a screaming bitch-fight being prolonged by a woman at peak PMS, and has about as much relevance to reality. Heinlein rants and raves about all the incredibly horrible legal things he is going to personally do to me and mine if I don’t give in to his every wish, expressed or otherwise. His letter winds up with the thoughtful, adult comment: “Kemp...it was a sorry day for me when I met you. Robert A. Heinlein.”

Sometimes it is incredible how very little it takes to make my day.

These are not the things that adult, allegedly rational men who claim to have been friends for nearly a decade do or say to each other. In fact, men rarely get nearly so enraged as to be irrational over such a minor thing as abject praise being forced upon an unwilling recipient.

I did something I’ve always regretted then; I backed off. I gave in. I canceled the project out completely, even though doing so was a direct insult to Alexei Panshin, whom I had already adopted and claimed as one of my own. That made it doubly difficult to do. What I should have done was take Heinlein on; told him to get fucked, and brought on the lawyers. (Down the timeline just a bit...the group of attorneys we had in California would have sliced Heinlein up six ways from Sunday in a heartbeat just for having written such a letter in the first place, then scattered the leavings out around the court house for the benefit of the legal buzzards....)

Then, in March, I resigned from all science fiction related obligations and started packing. I moved to El Cajon, California, a suburb of San Diego, in April, 1965. My attention and my new obligations had no focus on science fiction at all and, slowly, except for personal enjoyment, began slipping further and further away. I did not know how ugly Heinlein had become, after I left, especially toward George Price who was in charge of Advent, and Alexei, or

how long that situation persisted.

What I did know, or thought I knew, was that Heinlein and I had somehow come to a complete resolution of our unresolvable misunderstandings when he told me I couldn't do a book about his writings and I told him to get stuffed. I actually thought I had somehow bested the ego beast because, down the line just a bit, Alexei Panshin's *Heinlein in Dimension* did indeed appear from Advent. I felt awfully good about it, about beating Heinlein at his game, about doing right by Alexei, and I really liked the book. It was just a matter of compressing time and letting it flow backward over itself a bit until it all came out right in the end; a bit like recreating your own autobiography to suit yourself.

All that is except Heinlein; nothing could have made him come out right in the end, or anywhere else for that matter.

I never saw Heinlein again after that. I never heard from him either, and he definitely never heard from me. The really odd part about it all is that, until this very moment, during all those long hard years of separation, I never realized I never missed Heinlein at all.

ml

\*For <http://www.panshin.com> my dear friend Alexei Panshin, with tardy apologies and heart-felt affection. Dated February 2001. Copyright © 2001 by Earl Kemp. All rights reserved.

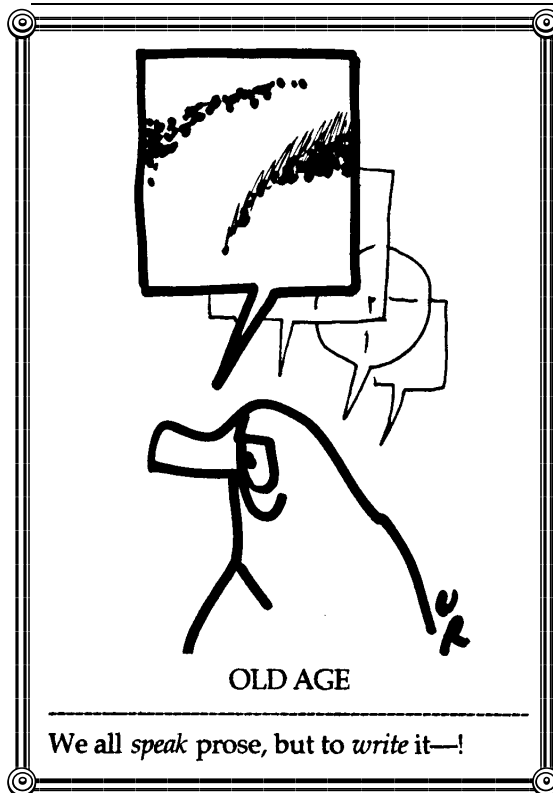
**Plergb** defined as this article approved as accurate by Robert Heinlein



## CALIFANIA TALES

### PART THREE:

#### The Outlanders Tale (continuation)



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I don't know who Harry Warner was quoting in his *A Wealth of Fable* when he wrote that someone had analyzed the Outlander Society by saying that it "was formed by a group of dissatisfied people who gyrated to and fro, back and forth, upon the coattails of the mighty LASFS and who wanted some identity of their own."

I hope that anonymous someone had his or her tongue firmly in cheek when making that erroneous statement. At the time the Outlander Society was formed, shortly after the 1946 Worldcon, the so-called "mighty LASFS" was losing its might as a focal point in fandom. True, Outlanders were also LASFS members and a good thing, too, as some of us helped keep the old club going when the going got tough.

Besides writing and publishing our own zine, THE OUTLANDER--which ran at least thirteen issues from early 1949 to May 1957-- we also helped keep SHANGRI LA alive and some of us



served as LASFS officers.

I served as LASFS Secretary when Rick was Director and remember how he kept order at meetings by tapping his gavel and saying "No more than two speakers at the same time!" It worked as it got a laugh and the membership would quiet down so that whoever had the floor at the time could be heard.

The fourth issue of THE OUTLANDER (early 1950) had a full-page ad announcing LASFS's new Associate Member policy. It cost a dollar a year and entitled

the A.M. to SHANGRI LA and any other publication the club might produce during said year, and notifications of Special Meetings. I don't remember if this helped to increase SHANGRI LA'S circulation but this policy could have been the forerunner of today's DE PROFUNDIS policy.

After Laney published AH! SWEET IDIOCY! Stan Woolston and I suggested to Forry Ackerman that he write *his* memoirs for us to publish. Stan was a professional printer and had a Chandler & Price letterpress in a shed in his back yard and I had some experience as a pressman. I thought we would make a pretty good editing and publishing team. I guess we planned to finance the project ourselves.

Forry seemed amused by the whole idea but he did provide some copy to get us started. Actually it was an article he had published in SHANGRI LA (or some fanzine), the one about how he discovered AMAZING STORIES on a newsstand and how it told him to "take me home, little boy. You will love me!"--the story he has retold so many times over the years. I don't think that Stan ever set it in type. He probably wanted the assurance that there would be more forthcoming but it never happened. Forry was busy with his agency and other projects and it would be a few years before he got around to putting some of his memoirs on tape..

But the publishing team of Moffatt and Woolston (always encouraged by their closest friend, Sneary) would find a project that they could complete. Late in 1949 or early 1950 I thought it might be

interesting to try and publish a fan directory. I knew that Walt Daugherty had published a neatly mimeographed one early in the 1940's. I don't recall how comprehensive it was but a new one seemed in order.

What I wanted to see was a letterpress-printed booklet listing names, addresses, phone numbers, sex, birth dates, and fan club affiliations. Stan and I decided it would be a good idea to get some financial backing. Our work would be donated as a labor of love but paper and ink cost money, probably more than we could afford.

So we asked the National Fantasy Fan Foundation and the Fantasy Foundation to act as co-sponsors of the project. I don't remember how we went about getting the NFFF's okay (and the money) but Forry came up with matching dollars from the Fantasy Foundation. I don't know how many copies of the questionnaires we printed up but probably close to a thousand. We distributed them through fan clubs and fanzines to fans and pros around the world.

We wound up with more than four hundred names, fifty-one of which were female. We might have had more names but I refused to list anyone who did not turn in a questionnaire. My feeling was that if they weren't interested enough to fill out and send it in they weren't really interested in being listed.

There were probably those who somehow missed getting a questionnaire despite all the help we got from all over fandom in distributing them. There were probably a few fans and pros who did not want their addresses or phone numbers publicized. We did not assume that all and sundry would want to be listed which is why Andy All and Sam Sundry's names did not appear in the directory.

We even cross-indexed the directory. The first section was subdivided into Countries and States, in alphabetical order, with the names under each heading in alphabetical order. The second section listed all of the names in alphabetical order with Country or State, and page number, following each name.

I don't recall how many we printed but it took a while to sell most of them at twenty-five cents a copy. I was especially unhappy with the NFFF (and may have dropped out of it at that time) because most of its members did not buy copies. Nevertheless I eventually made sure that both the NFFF and the FF got back the money the two outfits had put into the project, and that Stan was reimbursed for his out-of-pocket expenses.

The goal had been that if the project made profit it would be divided between the NFFF and the FF. Eventually I divided up the unsold copies between the NFFF and the FF and have no idea how many, if any, of those were ever sold.

In my Introduction to the 1950 Fan Directory I wrote "I hope

that this Directory will serve you many times, many ways, and that you will have as much fun using it as I did compiling it!" Well, I did have fun compiling--it was the lack of interest of so many fans afterwards that angered me. They wanted to be listed but they didn't want to spend a lousy two-bits for a copy. They were expecting maybe "contributor's copies"?

But for Stan and me there was a happy ending. Some twenty years later, I received a note from Terry Carr telling me that he still used that 1950 Directory. Most of the addresses and phone numbers were obsolete but he often found the other information useful.

Countries represented in the 1950 Directory were Australia, Canada, Canal Zone, England, France, Hawaii, Ireland, Scotland and U. S. A. Thirty-nine States and the District of Columbia were represented in the U. S. A. section. (*Um – in 1950, Hawaii was not a separate country. – ed.*)

Although it was obviously a sercon project there was a bit of silly humor provided by Ackerman. He gave us a properly filled in questionnaire (as did Wendayne) and then another one that filled in the blanks as follows:

*Name: WRIGHT, Weaver. Address: P.O. Box 260, London, France*

*Phone: Out of Order. Sex: Fresh! Birthdate: Early in Life. Fan Organizations: Pseudonyms Fanonymous, FAPA (Finance Ackerman's Personal Affairs), LASFS (Laney and Searles Friction Society), ETC., USW, KTP.*

We dutifully listed it in the France section, right under the only other French entry, George H. Gallett, France's Number One Fan of the day.

I remember hearing or reading about Walt Daugherty making phonograph recordings of fans, meetings, even Perdue playing what he, Elmer, called "stink finger piano"--but by the 1950's, making wire recordings became the fannish thing to do.

We used wire to correspond as well as to record conversations at meetings or parties and music off the radio, for that matter. We made more than one wire recording at Outlander meetings, and the Insurgent Element added to their fame (or infamy, take your pick) by recording such classics as "Sneary At Bay." I think that one had the voices of Burbee, Laney, Rotsler and Sneary and I remember Redd Boggs telling me years ago that he had that wire (or a copy). I wonder if it is still in some fannish archives somewhere. (I do have Rick's voice on a tape made some years later on which he acts as announcer for some music he recorded for me.)

The problem with wire recordings (other than being more lo-fi than hi-fi) was that the wires broke so easily. You could retie then

together (losing part of whatever was on it) and record over the mended wire. I remember one time at our home on Lanto Street in Bell Gardens when a wire broke and somehow got all over the living room and even into the kitchen. I'm not sure how this happened but it took us a long time to get it straightened out and rewound (by hand) back on its spool. Once that chore was accomplished, it worked as good as new.

I don't think that when the Outlanders started to attend LASFS on a regular basis that it was considered a "barbarian invasion" a term that was used later when new and younger fans joined the old club and didn't always do things that met with the older members' approval. The Outlander Society did have its younger members but we also had enough older and adult members to sort of balance things out. And most of the OS members were willing to do the work to keep the LASFS going as a science fiction fan club, as well a social group.

Ackerman was usually the first person a visiting fan phoned when arriving in LA and soon the time would come when Sneary was just as likely to be called, or called on, by fannish visitors. As for parties, all of the parties I have been to at Forry's various abodes tend to blend into each other. Besides the fun of partying with one's fellow fans, there were always interesting people to meet. Not just s-f pros but actors and directors from the movies and TV.

The Hershey and Moffatt households also hosted parties that were not limited to Outlanders. We almost always had special guests at our monthly meetings but the non-meeting parties might include friends who weren't Outlanders but were probably LASFS members, as well as visitors from out-of-town.

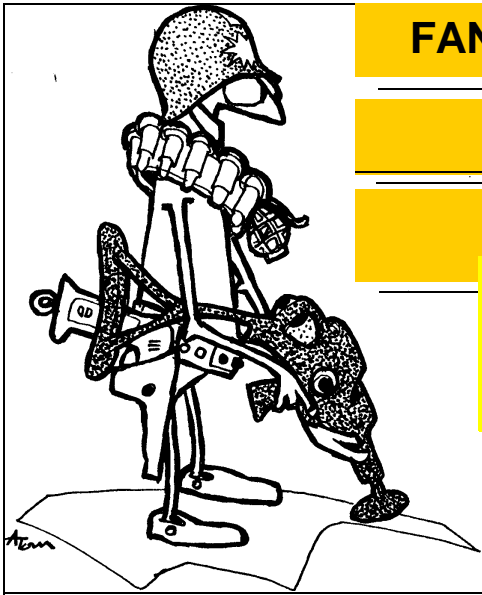
I may have dropped out of the NFFF in the Fifties, after serving on its Board of Directors with the likes of such great fans as Rick Sneary, Art Rapp and Ed Cox. I think Edco dropped out eventually but Rick and Stan Woolston stayed with it and Stan became one of the NFFF's hardest and most productive workers.

I was still a member of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association and at one point was able to make myself its temporary benevolent dictator. A couple of members took my satirical commentary too seriously, others thought it was funny and to the point, including Fran Laney and Charles Burbee who sent me a postcard inviting me to join the Insurgent Element. (I should have mentioned above that Burb threw very good parties too...)

Ⓜ

*(To Be Continued)*

**Plergh** defined as LASFS again being as interesting as it was then.



## FANAC BY THE FIRELIGHT

part five

by Ed Green

Wherein Ed relates his National Guard stint during the Los Angeles Riots. We pick up his story as he finally gets out onto the streets in the riot area.

boyo!

No, I gotta be here tonight. Not just because I'm the guy people are gonna want to talk to if there are family or personal issues. Not even because I'm a Fan and have this twisted interest in seeing the end of the world, as we know it, close up. Nope, it's the soldier thing. Stupid, and a throwback to times when we hunted in jungles and woodlands with rocks and sticks. Have to show the troops, the leaders, and myself, that I have what it takes to be out in it. The easy part is to hide in the office. At the end of all the cheap justifications, that's what it really becomes. Can I make it?

Two quick turns and we're at the infamous intersection of Florence and Normandy. This is where a nation watched on live TV as LA became unglued. There isn't a single building on any of the four corners that doesn't show fire damage or scorch marks. There's actually civilian traffic here, which surprises me. When I ask him, Hood tells me that these are people who have to travel due to work. He doesn't see me raise an eyebrow but he then says, "I don't believe it either, but we're not supposed to keep this thing going. We're supposed to calm it down."

I count at least 25 cops and Guardsmen at the intersection. "Yup, looks pretty fuckin' calm to me. Unless someone starts a fire-fight."

Indicating the corner with several police units in it, I pull up and stop next to one of them. Hood recognizes one of the Inglewood PD Sergeants and starts to talk with him. Grabbing the stock of my M16, I drag myself out of the Humvee. I stretch and look around, cradling my weapon in such a way that I hope looks as casual as everyone else seems to be, yet is close enough to use when the firefight I expect breaks out. Glancing across the street, I see one of the troops walking on the sidewalk. One of my own. I turn around and tell Hood that I'm going to go talk with him and I'll be right back. As I step off, the cop nearest me says

"Be careful of the snipers. We haven't cleaned them all out."

I nod my head and in an even voice say thanks to the officer. But in my mind the thought comes, *Thanks, you bastard. You could have mentioned that when I first got out of the car!* I can't just change my mind and stay there. Oh, I could, but it just isn't a good leadership trait. Cursing him mentally, I move quickly across the street. It seems to be about two miles wide now. The whole time, the cross hairs of some gangbanger's AK47 is zeroed in on my back. The vest should stop the round. Or at least slow it down. Jesus, what was I thinking . . .

I trot up next to the troop, who starts asking me questions about when they're getting pulled back to the armory.

"It's got to be a cheap movie set," I think. The roads are deserted, and it's three hours since sunset. The streetlights are on, with a yellow sickly glow that lights up the roads. In the half-hour since we've been off the freeway, my nose still hasn't gotten used to the odors the burnt out storefronts are giving off.

"Maybe *The Omega Man*, that '71 film that was set in LA. I can almost recognize the skyline. Or how about Price's *The Last Man on Earth*? Okay, Manchester Boulevard looks nothing like Italy, but the debris on the sidewalk, the smoke stains on white walls, the windows broken and only partly covered by plywood. Then I realize with a shiver that shakes through my kevlar flak vest, I'm in Inglewood. Matheson in *I Am Legend* has the hero, Robert Neville, living in Inglewood. Son of a bitch.

Then we passed a checkpoint. One lone police car, with a cop and a small handful of soldiers standing around. Someone waves a greeting. No stopping for us there. It's not part of our unit, and the only people driving around are friendly forces. At least, no one has reported a HUMVEE or police car stolen yet.

"Ed, can you pick up the pace?" Hood tells me, over the loud engine noise that is part of a Hummer's charm. I nod and press down a little harder on the gas. He points out a street ahead and tells me that's where our Battalion's sector begins. Then he says, "Just stay cool. It's not nearly as bad as the first night. You'll want to drive slower than usual, 'cause of what's out here. Try not to focus on it. But you're gonna see some things you haven't seen - ever." Then he chuckles. "Unless you saw that Heston movie years ago."

The laugh that comes from me is almost a bark. I wasn't about to tell Chris what I'd been thinking. He's swear I'd gone loopy and send me home. And I wasn't about to step away from this night. Although the thought did cross my mind as I started out tonight, *You aren't going someplace with 30 rounds of ammo 'cause it's safe,*

Those turn out to be the first questions everyone throws at me when I show up. Sleeping on sidewalks is getting tough on these guys and I don't blame them. I also don't have the answers, not uncommon these days. He then hands me a couple of letters and wants to know if I can mail them out. He was 30 feet from a mailbox, but the USPS had stopped sending their people in a couple of days ago. We talk for 10 minutes, then Hood yells at me to hustle up, we're moving on.

A quick slap on the kid's shoulder, telling him to stay safe and I'm back across the street. As I go, I make up my mind that if some sniper does wing me, I'm gonna shoot that damn cop in the foot. It's an ugly thought, but not as ugly as the feeling that I'm on the wrong end of a shooting gallery.

As we load up, Hood asks if I'm doing okay. I say sure and demand to know why he's asking. Laughing, he said, "I've never seen you move that fast." Then he looks directly at me and says, "You know, that cop was fucking with you. There haven't been any snipers here at all!"

The next checkpoint we cross is nothing but cops, who have the rare treat of watching a Humvee roll by with a voice shouting curses over the noise of the diesel engine. That, and a long, loud laugh.

The list of positions we need to check is long and all over the riot zone. As we drive deeper into the main riot zone, the level of destruction is beyond anything you'd see in a Hollywood film. Building after building is nothing but a burnt out skeleton. The few shops that remain standing are boarded up and all have the words "Black Owned Business" spray painted across the boards. In a couple of cases, the magic words didn't seem to help. The streets look like some mad god's idea of Christmas time. TVs, furniture, large boxes are all laying around, in some cases, swept to the gutters like a snowplow went through earlier. Here and there, people are wandering around the backs of the buildings. All races, all manner of dress. No one waves, or even looks. I'm driving and terrified. If the Hummer breaks down now, we'll never get back home. Hell, we'll never get out alive. This isn't LA. There aren't any real war zones in LA.

Well, there weren't any.

Hood checks his list and directs me into the next large parking lot coming up. It's a local supermarket, and there are four of our guys there, along with a cop. All the large markets are being guarded. They were all targets of mobs, intent on looting and violence the first day. As I pull in, the sight I see snaps still like a photo.

The Inglewood cop is a big, heavysset black woman. She's yelling; her right hand is extended. The nickel plate of

her large revolver (looking small even in her hands) gleams off of the remaining pale white lights of the parking lot. Two of the soldiers have their M-16s up at their shoulders, muzzles pointed in the same direction as the cop's weapon. One has his left hand up, shielding his eyes, looking directly at us as we drive in. The fourth is bringing his rifle up in our direction.

The five remain frozen in my mind for hours, or so it seems. But of course in the world outside my mind, it's over in less than a second. All the attention is being directed at a small crowd of 20 or more males. They're hooting, taunting, and moving towards the market.

This time there is no thought process; I just gun the accelerator and pull the wheel over to the right. I whip the boxy Humvee around and place it between the gang and our folks. Out of the vehicle, and across the hood, I've leveled my rifle at them, wondering what the hell I'm going to do now. The cop is behind me, yelling at them to get the hell out of there. Now Hood, his /45 pistol out and cocked, slams against the body of the Humvee, next to me. I've lined up my sights on the lead gangster. I won't shoot unless someone in that tiny mob fires first, but I know who's the target if I have to pull the trigger. Our soldiers have taken a couple of positions to our left and right, and I yell for one of them to "watch the rear." Hood's yelling at everyone to stay calm and not shoot unless he orders them. The rioters are screaming at us, daring us to "pop a cap."

The female officer steps around the side of the Humvee, raises her pistol and in a deep voice yells at them to ". . . ge the fuck outta here! Or I'll drop you!" There is no fear in her voice and none in her body language. I have no doubt that this fine officer of the law is about to start some bizarre modern version of The shootout at the OK Corral.

Now things stop. No one is moving, no one is making a sound. All I'm worried about is what's behind the man I'm aiming at. I really don't want my shot to continue through him and end up hitting some poor working family's home. In the distance, a police siren starts its Doppler-twisted sound, wailing as it comes closer.

The leader of the group, not the man I'm ready to kill, says very clearly, "Shit . . ." and moves his hands up and away from his body. Not a surrender gesture, but one showing that he has no weapon and is no danger. Then he says, "You ain't got noth-



ing' we want anyway." He turns and walks away. Others follow, while a few walk backwards, looking at us. Hood mumbles a curse and says he thinks one of them has an AK47. I can't see it, but I'm not about to raise my head any higher to see. The cop is still standing until the 'bangers leave the parking lot.

The soldier to our left slowly rises up and brings his weapon up to a port arms position across his chest. We all relax a little, and Hood and I stand up ourselves. The soldier who first stood is the senior man on the site, and he reports to Major Hood in that formal style we all learned in basic. The siren that we heard in the distance never gets any louder, and fades.

Hood talks to him about what happened while I walk over and see how the others are doing. All three are steady, and while not full calm, certainly not worried about what happened. The female cop comes over and asks if everyone is okay.

I laugh and say that I'm fully awake now. She just looks at me.

"This happen before?" I ask.

"Not here, but all over town it is."

"Jesus. You always draw down on them like that?"

She smiles for the first time. "Only when I'm about ready to wet my pants." Now we all laugh and the tension is gone. Got through it safely, with on one, friend or foe, hurt. Hood spends a fair amount of time talking with the Sergeant, and I see him take out a small notepad and take notes. Seeing where things are heading, I do the same and copy down the name, ranks, and other information of not only the soldiers, but also the cop.

As I do this, I finally have a chance to look around a little. The market is like everything else in this part of town. Fortified and barricaded. They've even taken about 100 shopping carts and chained them together and then across all but one of the driveways into the parking lot. It certainly will slow down someone driving any normal car. One side of the building is speckled with soot and ash. It looks like the dumpsters on the side of the store had been set on fire. None of the people there know what happened in the first few hours. There was an armed security guard there. Standard for this part of town. He might have prevented the store from burning, but they aren't sure.

Hood yells my name and I shake everyone's hand. I tell them good job and thank them for a pleasant time. Getting the laugh I hoped for, I walk over to the Major and he tells me to mount up.

In the Humvee, we talk briefly about putting all of them in for an award. I think it's a good idea, since they all showed some rather serious guts in the light of what could have been a very bad situation. As we talk, Hood pauses and asks, "When you put the vehicle between the gang members and our troops, did it ever occur to you that I was in the passenger seat?"

"Why no, Sir. Was there a problem with that?"

"Well, I kinda felt so. After all, there's only canvas on the side of these things. Probably wouldn't do much to stop a bullet."

"Oh, no doubt about that."

"Weren't *you* worried about it?"

"No reason to be. You were between me and them."

Hood was silent for a moment. The night air felt cool. I hadn't realized how much I'd sweated back there in the parking lot. "Payback for the sniper joke, right?"

"I'm shocked that you would consider me that unprofessional. Back when I was a cop in the Air Force, they always told us to put the vehicle between the suspect and unprotected cops." I glanced over at Hood and smiled.

"The payback was just a bonus."

Sighing, Hood looked at his list of areas to check. "Consider this a lawful order. You will not put Major Hood in jeopardy again tonight, no matter how much that sniper joke pissed you off."

"Check, Sir!" I replied, trying not to laugh. I failed and we both ended up laughing for the next few minutes. When we finished, I looked at him and said, "Chris, I was ready to shoot that bastard. And it didn't bother me."

He nodded. "It never does before you actually do it." After a moment's silence, he says, "Let's go to the left . . ." and guides me to our third stop of the evening. As we drive, he tells me that this part of town isn't under any curfew, but since it's on the border of the riot zone, we've got troops watching places and being visible. This next place is a library.

*Great. I think. This thing is so messed up that we have to protect a library from burning. This is one seriously screwed up town I'm living in.*

We end up on one of the major streets of Inglewood. Here the traffic is close to normal. I drive with the same awareness that you need for normal driving in LA, along with an extra sense of concern about the car next to me being driven by someone interested in a drive-by shooting.



The whole night has been white knuckle driving for me. This doesn't end it.

We finally pull up in front of the library and park. As we dismount, I start looking around. According to Hood, there should be two of ours here. Looking, I can't see either one. My first thought is they're in cover, but then I remember they are supposed to be visible. This is a "show the flag" position. Oh hell, did something happen to them? while I'm starting to dither, Hood is leaning against the Humvee. He finally whistles and points just down the street.

About 500 feet away the night is lit up with neon lights and signs. There's a small and constant crowd of people moving in and out of the business that's still open. It takes a second to get it, but the sign "Topless Bar" finally tells me what's going on.

I look at Hood, open-mouthed. He nods and points. Now I see both of our fine young soldiers standing in front of the bar, talking with two ladies whom I have to assume are working there.

Okay, I was 19 once, too. But I never walked *off* my post like that. That was just a bit much. So I shouldered my M-16, shoved my helmet back a bit and stalked down the street, hoping to look like an angry Staff Sergeant. One of the girls saw me first, made a face, and pointed. The two troopers turned and, from what I could see in their eyes, they did indeed see one angry Staff Sergeant.

"So, I suppose you both have a reasonable story why you're off your post!"

they both started to stammer and talk and I chpped it off with a wave of my hand. "The Battalion Executive Officer is standing by that Humvee you two soldiers managed to miss driving by you. He's hoping that someone will actually report to him, in a proper military style, what the status of the post is. He'd like to make sure you're both doing well, and that neither one of you has any problems that he needs to know about."

I could see the terror in their eyes. In their military, the XO isn't God, he's Saint Peter. They also know that in any myth that has a god, there has to be a devil.

"Of course, you also have a Staff NCO, who came out here with the XO, making sure that if the soldiers on this post aren't acting in a proper manner, he TELLS THEM TO PULL THEIR HEADS OUT OF THEIR ASSES AND MOVE IT BACK TO THEIR GOD DAMN POST RIGHT NOW BEFORE I START KICKING SOME SERIOUS ASS AND PULLING SOME STRIPES!"

They stare at me for a moment, wondering just what hell they fell into. I give it a beat then point and bellow,

"NOW!" They run. Quickly. As I start to go, one of the girls says, "They weren't doing nothin' wrong."

"Well, according to your rules, they were. But I think they'll be okay."

I walk back and stand just behind them as they salute and report to the Major. He's all business, asking them questions and making sure they know what they are supposed to be doing. It becomes apparent that they do. They were just doing what young me do when they're bored and lonely. Hood once again takes some notes on his pad, including who their Sergeant was. He looks at me and I nod my head.

"That will be all, men." They both come to attention and salute him. Hood gets back into the car. As they start to relax, I say, "Sir, I'll be right there." I can see their shoulders finch.

I spend only a couple of minutes reminding them of why they're on the streets and what is expected of them. I'm sure that tomorrow morning they'll get another 4 or 5 chewing outs. Then I stress the really important thing. Don't take chances and get home safe. They mumble, "Yes, Sergeant" in chorus and I jump into the Humvee.

When the car is around the corner and out of sight, we both start laughing. I have to pull over, I'm laughing so hard. We both slow down and I make a comment about how dumb soldiers can be. And who was the idiot who put them on the library?

"Well, I don't know who put them on the library, but they weren't an idiot."

"Why is that?"

"They weren't supposed to watch the library. The local cops are worried about that bar. Even on a slow night, there's usually a dozen fights in there. They were hoping we could keep an eye on it . . ."

Following this twisted logic, I finished his sentence, ". . . but knew we couldn't even think of posting troops outside a topless joint. But with that cultural icon just down the street . . ." I laughed again. "Hell of a way to fight a war, boss."

"Hell of a way, indeed."

ℓ

*(To be continued)*

**Plergb** defined as the rioters winning.

## A STORM OF MAYHEM

by Milt Stevens

### A review of *A Storm of Swords*

by George R.R. Martin

*Having gone from deconstructionist book reviewing (in Dhalgren) to demolitionist book reviewing (in The World of Null-A), Milt continues to explore the humorous possibilities of parody as he takes aim at a book nominated for the Best Novel Hugo in 2001. Milt sent along the following note:*

*"Despite possible appearances, I actually liked A Storm of Swords. In fact, I voted for it in first place for best novel this year. Once you get past the philosophical objection that it begins in the middle and ends in the middle, it's a pretty good read. The series is scheduled to conclude after only three more thousand-page volumes. (No kidding.) I also wasn't kidding about the fifty page list of characters."*

The current volume is the third entry in George R. R. Martin's Song of Blood and Intestines series. The previous two volumes, The Game of Massacre and A Clash of Violence, introduced a cast of characters only slightly larger than the population of Rhode Island. However, many of them have already been dealt with. A quick review of the fifty pages of character listings at the back of this book shows quite a few characters listed as dead, dying, missing in action, or married with children.

The book begins with a prologue, because it couldn't very well begin with an epilogue. In the prologue, the scene is with the Night's Watch at Fort Lowcrotch north of the Wall. The Wall marks the northern end of the Seven Kingdoms (AKA Westeros) and stretches the entire breadth of the country. The Wall is seven hundred feet high and was built thousands of years ago to keep out lowlife scum who might otherwise lower property values. It is the duty of the Night's Watch to defend the Wall. Centuries ago a line of twenty Night's Watch castles lined the southern side of the wall. Due to Defense Department cutbacks, most of these are now ruins. Only three remain to proclaim the proud tradition of the Night's Watch: Castle Bumfuck, Castle Badgrub, and Castle Dumbduty. In recent decades, the Night's Watch has been a dumping ground for bastards, cutpurses, and telemarketers.



Beyond the Wall, there are the barbarian Wildlings. You may think of them as horse-drawn trailer trash. In addition to the Wildlings, there are also giants, cannibals, skin changers, zombies, libertarians, and OTHERS. The OTHERS are particularly unsavory. Legend says they can only be killed by obsidian weapons or the hard to find cinnamon lollipops. The Night's Watch has been drawn north of the Wall by rumors that a Wildling named Mance Rayder has proclaimed a Popular Front Against Feudalism. It has a bad sound to it.

At Fort Lowcrotch, a horn blast proclaims an alert. A second horn blast indicates attack by Wildlings. Then comes a third horn blast, which is the most feared of all. Attack by OTHERS!!! The entire garrison screams and pisses on themselves in unison.

Meanwhile south of the Wall, Catelyn Stark, recent widow of Eddard Stark, mother of Rob Stark, King of the North and the Low Rent District, frees Jamie Lannister (sometimes called Kingslayer, since he offed the king before last) from the dungeon at Castle Costoverrun and sends him south in custody of a swordswoman named Brienne, who is strong as a horse but not nearly as pretty. Catelyn hopes to trade Jamie back to the Lannisters for her two daughters, Sansa and Arya, who she believes are still being held hostage by King Joffrey Barroomstool at his capital at Kings Humping. At the same time, ten-year-old Arya Stark has made good her escape from Castle Hiredhall gutting one guard and slitting a stable boy's throat in the process. In Kings Humping, twelve-year-old Sansa Stark has been stripped, flogged, and shown the severed head of her father, Eddard Stark, which King Joffrey has fashioned into a bowling ball. Sansa suspects this means her engagement to Joffrey is off.

On an uninhabited island off Blackwater Bay, marooned sea captain and sometimes smuggler Davos Seaworth is throwing rocks at gooney birds. Also, in Kings Humping, Tyrion Lannister, son of Tywin Lannister, brother of Jamie

and Cersei Lannister, and uncle of Joffrey Barroomstool, is recovering from wounds suffered at the Battle of Blackwater Bay. Aside from other wounds, a low blow with a sword cut off his nose. Tyrion reflects that things like this wouldn't keep happening to him if he wasn't a dwarf. Somewhere in the woods in the Low Rent District, Bran Stark, a younger brother of King Rob Stark and relative of all those other Starks, is hiding out after escaping the fall of the Stark stronghold at Castle Ravingmad to Theon Painjoy, son of Balon Painjoy, King of the North and the Flotsam Isles. Bran has had a vision that he must go north of the Wall to meet a crow with three eyes. One may suspect that Bran was smoking his socks shortly before having this vision. To finish off this summary of goings-on in the Seven Kingdoms, Jon Snow, bastard son of Eddard Stark and member of the Night's Watch, is north of the Wall trying to infiltrate the Popular Front Against Feudalism. I hope you all have this straight, because there will be a test at the end of this article.

On another continent entirely, Daenerys Tarpaulin, daughter and last heir of King Aerys II Tarpaulin, is plotting to return of the Tarpaulin Dynasty to power in the Seven Kingdoms. For this purpose, she has acquired three galleons and a number of associates. Among her associates is Ser Jorah Mormont, a knight exiled from the Seven Kingdoms for selling fake Viagra. Another associate, Strong Bodyodor, is a eunuch pit fighter and former NFL lineman. Daenerys is also accompanied by her three blood riders, Abdul Mohammed, Mohammed Abdul, and Mohammed Mohammed. Aside from human associates, Daenerys has three young dragons. House breaking dragons was a bit of a problem, but they do make great status symbols. Of course, what Daenerys really needs is an army. She had thought of hiring the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, but they turned out not to be available. This leaves her with only one alternative. She will have to deal with the three dread cities of the Slaver Bay: Anaheim, Azusa, and Cucamonga.

Back at Costoverrun, King Rob has returned from his battles in the West. His campaign had one unforeseen complication. After taking Castle Slum, the stronghold of the Hornswoggles, Rob had met Jayne Hornswoggle. The couple had fallen madly in bed and been married the next day. Rob's mother Catelyn could see a problem in this situation. Rob had been engaged to Hermione Hemorrhoid of Castle Twocommodes. This breach of faith was bound to inflame the ever-irritable Lord Walder Hemorrhoid.

On a river somewhere to the south, Jamie Lannister and Brienne come upon a burned inn. The inn has not only been burned, but the inn keeper, three serving wenches, five dogs, and fifteen chickens have been hung from nearby trees and left to rot. This looks like the work of Gregor

Clegane, eight-foot tall sociopath, General Nogoodnick, an employee of the Lannisters. Brienne continues to take it badly that Jamie Lannister had killed King Aerys II while Jamie was commander of the king's guard and sworn to protect the king's life. Jamie explains that he killed Aerys after he learned of the king's mad plan to fluoridate the drinking water.

Somewhere else in the country, Arya Stark has been captured by bandits and taken to their leader Lord Doric Deadwand. Many believe that Doric Deadwand cannot be killed. That isn't exactly the case. He has been killed numerous times, but it doesn't slow him down the way it would most people. One can easily notice that one of his eyes and half of his head have been obliterated by a blow from a mace. His neck is two inches longer than normal from having been hung. Rumor has it that you could see dirty pictures if you look through the hole where his pancreas used to be.

Back in Kings Humping, King Joffrey plans to marry Margaery Toady of Castle Highswamp. The toady banner is a brown nose on a field of gold and reflects their close association with the monarchy. Among the Toady retinue visiting Kings Humping for the wedding is Olenna Toady, grandmother of Margaery and champion sarcastic comment maker of the entire Seven Kingdoms. Olenna invites Sansa Stark to dinner and proposes a union between Sansa and Peg-leg Pete Toady, the heir to Highswamp. It's the best offer Sansa has had all week.

After being rescued from the uninhabited island, Davos Seaworth returned to Castle Dragonstench where he was thrown into a dungeon for plotting the assassination of Melisandre, the flame priestess of R'hllor. Dragonstench is the stronghold of King Stannis Barroomstool, *de-jure* uncle of Joffrey Barroomstool and brother of King Robert Barroomstool. Robert had died under suspicious circumstances when the brakes on his horse failed, and he went over a cliff. Stannis knows that Joffrey is really the product of an incestuous union between Jamie and Cersei Lannister and not Robert's son at all. Some people are picky about such details. Davos believes that King Stannis has been bewitched by Melisandre, and he holds her responsible for the king's defeat at the battle of Blackwater Bay. As you might expect, Melisandre is a hot number who always likes having lots of people for a barbecue.

In Kings Humping, Tyrion Lannister consults Various, the court eunuch. Various is the master of intrigue, espionage, and general snooping. He supplements his income by selling material to the National Enquirer. Various updates Tyrion with a list of the latest assassinations, assignments, cuckoldings, and a really disgusting story about Ser Oswald

Muckshovel and the royal basset hound.

In the north, Jon Snow accompanies a detachment of Wildlings across the Wall. They plan on attacking Castle Bumbfuck from the rear and opening the tunnel under the Wall for the entire invading army. Jon escapes from the Wildlings and warns the defenders in time to repulse the attack. However, the Wildling army attacks the Wall anyway. The Night's Watch has sent appeals to every king in the phone book but to no avail.

Back on another continent, Daenerys Targaryen had bought eight thousand eunuch soldiers known as the Unmasted from the city of Azusa. Once the purchase was completed, she used her new army to loot the city and wipe out the entire freeborn population. She also was able to take Anaheim by a combination of treachery, deceit, and vile calumny. Her army is now drawn up outside the walls of Cucamonga. The city sends out a single champion who shouts insults at her army and pisses in their general direction. Daenerys sends Strong Bodyodor to deal with the champion. Being a man of few words, Strong Bodyodor splits the Cucamongan champion's head like a melon then drops his drawers and shits in the direction of the city. He may not be good at sarcasm, but he definitely knows how to deliver an insult.

At Costoverrun, Lord Hoster Tally, father of Catelyn Stark, has died of natural causes. This has caused quite a commotion, because nobody in the Seven Kingdoms has died of natural causes in the past 132 years. This leaves Catelyn's brother, Eddure Tally, as the lord of Costoverrun. In order to repair his relations with Lord Walder Hemorrhoid, King Rob has proposed the marriage of Eddure Tally with the female relative of Lord Walder's choice. Lord Walder accepts the deal and invites the entire Stark clan to the wedding at Two Commodores. In the north, Sleaze Bolton, the lord of Castle Dreadlock, has driven Theon Painjoy out of Ravingmad but not before Painjoy torched the place. Bolton did manage to take Theon Painjoy prisoner.

Somewhere on the road from here to there, Jamie Lannister and Brienne are captured by the self-styled Brave Companions. The Brave Companions are a collection of mercenary scum and villainy under the command of Vargo Hoat. Having nothing better to do that afternoon, Hoat has Jamie Lannister's right hand cut off and hung around his neck.

At Kings Humping, Tywin Lannister, father of Jamie, Cersei, and Tyrion Lannister, brother of Ser Kevan Lannister, and uncle of Huey, Dewey, and Louie, has had to revise one of his schemes. He had been planning to marry

Sansa Stark to the royal basset hound. Unfortunately, the basset hound proved to be gay and was unlikely to produce offspring. Tywin imagined that marrying Sansa to his son Tyrion would be almost as bad. It sounded like a plan.

In another strange year in politics, Davos Seaworth has been freed from the dungeon and made prime minister to King Stannis Barroomstool. In this capacity, he witnesses one of the vile rites performed by Melisandre. She has three leaches filled with blood from a royal bastard who they keep on the payroll for just such occasions. She tosses the leaches into the fire while pronouncing eldritch curses on Kings Balon, Rob, and Joffrey. Within the week, Balon Painjoy drowns in a bowl of squid chowder. Since Theon is still a prisoner at Castle Dreadlock, Balon's younger brother Euron appears at Castle Puke to claim the throne of the North and the Flotsam Isles. Dark rumors suggest that Euron has been pursuing a career in tax accountancy.

At Castle Hiredhall, the Brave Companions bring Brienne and the pieces of Jamie Lannister to Sleaze Bolton, who currently holds the castle. Bolton feels the Brave Companions may have acted excessively even for the gang of armed vermin they are. He decides to send Jamie back to his father at Kings Humping. Bolton plans to withdraw to the north leaving Hiredhall and Brienne to the Brave Companions.

The Stark wedding party arrives at Two Commodores. The party is met by Lord Walder Hemorrhoid and his three sons; Itching, Scratching, and Diredistress. As is traditional, the wedding is preceded by several days of drunkenness. By the time everybody's liver is about finished, the couple are finally wed and packed off to bed. After the bedding has been initiated, Catelyn Stark notices something a little bit strange. The musicians have struck up a funeral dirge. She also notices the guests in the upper gallery all seem to be armed with cross bows. On a signal from Lord Walder, the Stark guests are slaughtered with other troops massacring the three thousand Stark retainers who have been getting drunk outside. Lord Walder chortles happily while observing that Hemorrhoids can indeed kill.

On the road south, Jamie Lannister has second thoughts. Leaving Brienne to the Brave Companions represented a fate worse than and including death. While he has no great affection for Brienne, he hates the thought of the Brave Companions getting any fun out of the situation. With the fifty soldiers Sleaze Bolton has sent as an escort, Jamie returns to Hiredhall just in time to find Brienne has been thrown into a bear pit. It seems Vargo Hoat had tried dallying with Brienne, and she had bitten his right ear off. He should have been thankful he hadn't tried for a blow job.

At the Wall, the Wildlings are attacking in full force. Rumor has it that they have found the Horn of Winter and are planning on using it as a weapon. Legend says that if the Horn of Winter is blown the Wall will collapse, and all the elastic underwear in the Seven Kingdoms will disintegrate. Just when things don't look so swell, who should arrive but King Stannis Barroomstool and his entire army. Davos Seaworth had suggested that saving the Seven Kingdoms from barbarian scum might be a good PR gesture for someone who was trying to be accepted as king of the entire country. Under organized attack, the Wildlings decide to continue their attack in the next volume.

In Kings Humping, the wedding of King Joffrey and Margaery Toady is in progress. Part of the festivities is a seventy-seven-course dinner. Items on the menu included barbecued squid tentacles, cuttlefish crepes, and ox testicles with marmalade sauce. Given the menu, most of the guests decide to get drunk instead. Tyrion Lannister fills Joffrey's wine goblet just before Joffrey has the bad taste to drop dead with his face in a hideous leer. Tyrion reflects that maybe he shouldn't have publicly referred to Joffrey as "caca face" earlier in the evening.

In the north, peace has been restored, and the Night's Watch must elect a new lord commander, since the last one was offed north of the Wall. Some feel that Jon Snow is worth hanging for his apparent treachery with the Wildlings. After due consideration, many realize that most members of the Night's Watch aren't even worth hanging. With qualifications like that, Jon Snow is elected lord commander of the Night's Watch.

In Kings Humping, Tyrion is being tried for the murder of King Joffrey under the old detective story principle that the least attractive suspect must have done it. Since all the evidence seems to suggest Tyrion did it, he requests trial by combat. Gregor Clegane has already been named as the royal champion. This does not look good. At the last minute, Oberon Muckshovel volunteers to be Tyrion's champion. Oberon had a score to settle with Clegane, since Clegane had murdered Oberon's sister and her children and processed the bodies as tournament dogs. In the battle, Oberon is doing fine for awhile until Clegane crushes his head, snaps his spine, and stomps him into an unpleasant looking red goo. Tyrion considers that maybe he should have made the challenge for a game of scrabble.

A few more murders, a couple of escapes, and one character being raised from the dead finishes off this volume. However, you can be sure there will be lots more barbaric fun in the next volume when the slaughter is TO BE CONTINUED.

ml

**Plergb** defined as George R.R. Martin reading this and turning into a gibbering idiot

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# Fanzine Review

by Joseph T. Major

## *Niekas*

*Niekas*; Niekas Publications,

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USA

edmeskys@worldpath.net

\$4.95, \$19 for four issues, \$37 for eight, \$50 for twelve;

Foreign orders add \$2/issue for surface mail or \$4/issue for airmail  
(presumably also trade, contribution, or loc)

The sixties, we are told by those who were there, was a golden era of fanzines. (Were those filled with articles of how the thirties had been a golden era of fanzines?) But golden lassies and golden lads must like all such things go to dust, and the fanzines of that era are treasures passed around at conventions.

Finding a fanzine that began in that era, that indeed won a Hugo in that era, is a different matter. So, when the occasional *Niekas* comes forth it is a wonder. Ed Meskys has not given up.

Of course, this is not that mainstream sort of fanzine. The personal material is limited to the editorial columns, the rest being articles about written things. Previous issues have featured the Arthurian legends, Adark fantasy@ (what they used to call Ahorror@, before Ahorror@ became sensuous vampire tales), André Norton, and so on. A column by Sam Moskowitz could spark long letters on the illustration in the original publication of H. G. Wells=s AThe Land Ironclads@ (As you know, SaM was great for getting into literary feuds, when he wasn=t getting into fannish feuds.)

With old age comes a stiffening of the joints. *Niekas* has survived strife that would have killed weaker fanzines. The former publisher abstracted himself with the materials for an issue at one point; something that the respected fanzine list-keeper Garth Spencer thought more appropriate for a raw punkzine (the sort, say, published by six kids the total of whose ages is not in three digits), not an established Hugo-winning fanzine. This issue has been a long time in the generating; I myself saw Ed at a Worldcon, carrying page proofs, saying that the issue would be published before the end of the year. This was at LoneStarCon (1997, for those not readily up on con names).

So you can see that thish, Number 46, has had a long and grueling birth-struggle.

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What, then of thish?

As long as I have been seeing it (the eighties and nineties, as well as the ohs, or whatever we are going to call the period between 2000 and 2010), the face *Niekas* has initially presented to the reader has been a sparse, clean-cut one. The cover, of coated stock, is a two-color cover, black and something else. The current issue is, er, black and blue, featuring a dragon in a catcher=s outfit augmented by spiked kneepads. This is no independent joke, as the topic of the issue is AStrange Sports Stories@ and indeed twelve pages (out of sixty-four) deal with sports.

Within, we find the table of contents. *Niekas* has been very much a group product, and it is therefore not surprising that we find no fewer than eight columns, from the editorial by Ed on down. (In earlier issues, the former publisher had had the last word; his final column had been something of a complaint about people bothering him about the delay.) Said columnists include pros (Diana L Paxson and Ray Nelson) and fans.

Part of the differentness of *Niekas* had been the individual names for the features of the magazine. Including the title itself, which is Lithuanian for Anothing@. So, ages and ages (in TV time at least) before *Seinfeld* there was a fanzine about nothing! Not that there=s anything wrong with that, yadda yadda yadda. (Is there something frightening about the fact that I can quote tag lines from a television show that I have never seen and from all reports would have abominated?)

Sad to say, Meskys finds this originality to be Acuteness@ and is dropping it. The editorial however remains ABumbejimas@.

ABumbejimas@ is a report on what Meskys has been doing since the last issue, which understandably leads to a long column. He discusses the various topics of past and future issues; *Niekas* certainly can=t be accused of lacking variety or breadth, as past issues have included a special discussion of Arthurian legends and fiction, an interview with Sam Moskowitz, and a book on dark fantasy, while future issues will include a discussion of Arthurian legends and fiction (the last one didn=t take?).

Other issues touched on by the editor include the preservation of fanzines, both individually and en masse

(more on the story of the librarian who tossed the fanzine collection into the basement could have been useful), the Srebenica massacre, and two of the many losses of the past few years, John Brunner and Sam Moskowitz.

In effect this is a long discourse on the waning of powers as age approaches; Meskys also touches on the problem of what is happening to his collection and what will happen to it. The unrealized subtext (see, I have to introduce litcrit; in a few reviews I will graduate to being transgressive and deconstructive, as in a review of say *Jackpot* which discusses going to a family reunion and says nothing about the Katzes) here is particularly poignant. As has been previously discussed and will be touched on in this issue, Meskys has gone blind; when he says AI never read Archie Mercer=s mimeographed novel, *The Meadows of Fantasy*, and now want to do so.@ [p. 6] this knowledge puts an extra level of meaning on the effort required.

This is followed by one of those pros, Diana L. Paxson, on the joys of ghosting. Not that she sees it that way, discoursing on the joys of ASharing a World With Marion Zimmer Bradley@. This is unwittingly revealing, showing how the close atmosphere of shared interests, beliefs, and works can so easily set one down the road to cultism.

Then of course there are the old feuds. In this case, Ben Indick continues his quarrel with Moskowitz over M. P. Shiel=s *The Lord of the Sea*, which Moskowitz thought anti-Semitic in intent, and Indick thinks contains anti-Semitic scenes as reflection of the society. SaM is so loud that he still shouts from the grave, and Indick is shouting back. The discussion is interesting, though the point is not as significant as the participants think, thus making the argument perfectly fannish.

Continuing this discussion of the great heritage of fandom, Joe R. Christopher writes of how AI Hear Amerika Singing . . . (No. 1)@. [Is he aware of what he is saying by using that spelling?] The singing anyway is that of Manly Wade Wellman=s AJohn the Balladeer@ stories, the series about the man with the silver-stringed guitar who wandered the Appalachian hills encountering all sorts of fantastic and wondrous things. (I remember one where John came across as something of a Gomer Pyle encounters the Commie Menace type. Oh well.)

Since we are hearing the hills alive with the sound of music (did you know, by the way, that Baron von Trapp had no trouble leaving Austria, since he was an Italian citizen?) Christopher is reviewing a filk tape; Joe Bethancourt has taken the songs from the stories and set them to music, what he hopes is the music that Wellman had in mind (e.g., Donald Swann=s settings for *The Road Goes Ever On*). Since Bethancourt didn=t actually provide the names of the

tunes, and Christopher seems to know something about music and could look for them, he is understandably frustrated. This is a track by track discussion of the tape, in depth B almost too much depth, but surely those who like either folk music or Wellman will love it, and Christopher displays a charming level of erudition.

After various brief items, including poems, one of their A*Extremely Short SF Story*@ (there was going to be a special issue of these, but that was one of the things that suffered from the feud), a review of the animated fantasy movie *Arabian Knight* (available on VHS as *The Thief and the Cobbler*), and a poetic review of the movie *Wolf*, we get to another one of those columns, Ray Nelson=s AOn Liking Clark Ashton Smith@ which has a lot about Ray but little about Clarkashton.

In a most unfannish way, since this is an issue about strange sports stories, they actually have something about strange sports stories. *Niekas* regular Nan C. Scott weighs in with a discussion of five different (in some cases, very different) baseball fantasies; W. P. Kinsella=s *Shoeless Joe* (the inspiration for *Field of Dreams*) and *The Iowa Baseball Confederacy*, Darryl Brock=s *If I Never Get Back*, Nancy Willard=s *Things Invisible to See*, and Robert Coover=s *The Universal Baseball Association, Inc., J. Henry Waugh, Prop.* Her analyses of the books are worthwhile, from Coover=s outright hatred and prejudice to Clare=s moving parallel between the little game and the Big One; Kinsella=s two views, of redemption, and of fulfillment; and Brock=s evocation of the past. Of all these I=ve only read the Coover and I find it of a par with Coover=s other work, betraying the malice of the excluded elite. The Brock sounds quite interesting, and *The Iowa Baseball Confederacy* may be a good example of a gonzo novel. Scott could perhaps have put more work into discussing the diverse perspectives here, but this essay does do its work. She also reviews in separate columns two other sports fantasies; Michael Bishop=s *Brittle Innings* and George Alec Effinger=s collection *Idle Pleasures*.

Other items in this section include a somewhat unfocused essay by Fred Lerner, another *Niekas* regular, a column on horror sports fantasy by yet another regular, Don d=Amassa, and a column on the British attitude toward sports by still a third regular, Anne Braude. Lerner makes the odd claim that writers who don=t want to have their



work considered SF should be given their wish C an oddness in the usual custom of Fans= exuberant annexation of anything with a speculative content. D=Ammassa provides a broad but shallow coverage of the topic, including oddly enough a reference to *Brittle Innings*, which may be why his column was placed next to Scott=s more thorough review of the book. Braude makes some good points about the value of sportsmanship and the lack of it these days, but her attitude seems to be that of an outsider fixated on an enthusiasm wrenched from its context. Aside from the recurring comic strip, *Varlak the Wizard*, by Jane Sibley, that is an end to the sports for this issue. (The wizard=s unfortunate familiar (poor kitty) worries about the Olympics.)

More familiar ground may be found in the next item, which is a matter crucial to the editor=s interests, namely *ABrave New World: Technology for the Blind in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*@ by Raymond Kurzweil. This discussion was originally delivered to a National Federation for the Blind meeting, and the reprinting of it in this forum adds to the interest of the zine. If you are the sort who harks back to the Goode Olde Dayes of Uncle Hugo, when every story had Aas you know@ leading in a three-page technical lecture, or (to be serious) at least are interested in the actual technology behind the fiction, this is the sort of article you will find enthralling.

Following this is a different area of background material, an essay on *AThe Origin of Dragon Beliefs*@ by Mark Sunlin, a discussion of the trans-cultural considerations of dragons. It had to be snakes. (Some discussion of the American Indian cultures views of snakes and the like would have been relevant.)

The next section is styled *ATopix*@ and is a selection of comments on previous issues topics; Kipling, Moskowitz, and the *huge* Dark Fantasy issue, providing a diverse patchwork of additions to the previous material. This is the sort of thing that always made me feel that the previous issue had been so very interesting. In the zine it comes over as the equivalent of a discussion room, where an interesting panel had to move out because the next one was moving in, but the con thoughtfully provided space for the panel to go on informally, as it were.

In a dramatic fall, this section is followed by a mediocre book review section. The reviews are of mostly unavailable books and the reviewers are generally haphazard. Reading a review of a book where the reviewer does not remember (and does not bother to look up) the name of the author does not impress one with either the reviewer=s skill or the editor=s judgment.

*Niekas* has a reputation for multiple loc sections. Aside

from *ATopix*@, there is a section labeled simply *ALetters of Comment*@ which is more of the typical loc fodder. That is to say, the loccers discuss their own lives, reply to other letters (instead of the discussion of the material of the zine per se), and so on. The number of editorial intrusions are limited and **most strictly delineated by boldface print**.

The last item in the editorial is headed *AWRITE FOR NIEKAS AND DIE*@. The two lettercolumns are full of locs from people who will never get this issue: Walt Willis and John Brunner, for example.

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If I had to pick a sensation for this zine, it would be *Amustiness*@. Some of this is unavoidable; the locs from people who will never get the issue are inevitable consequences of time. That indeed adds to the poignancy; they are not yet entirely silenced.

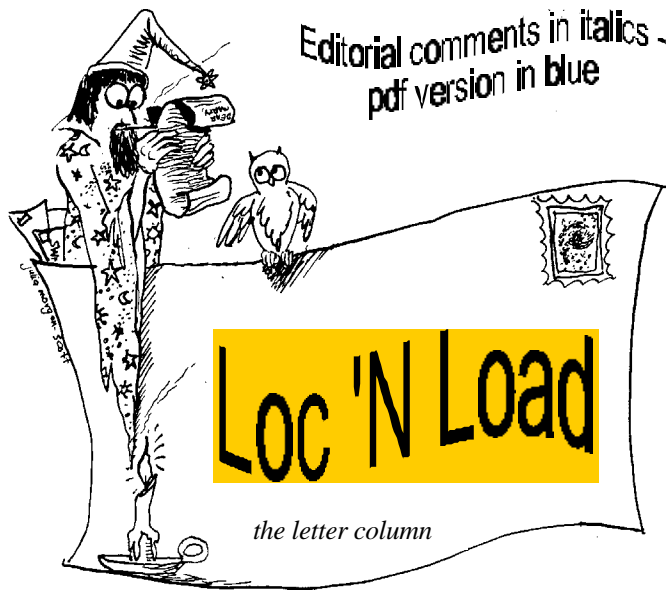
But other factors are less so. There are too many contributors who seem entrenched in their own part of fandom, not reaching out or even seeming to want to reach out. That is a different and more confining mustiness. All too much of *Niekas* is entrenched between its own covers, creating a staleness of the mind. For a fanzine with a long and glorious reputation, a determined production, this is a depressing constraint.

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**Plergb** defined as Joseph *never* being wrong in his reviews







**E.B. FROHNET**

Curious to find myself in the position of agreeing with Rodney Leighton, but I said much the same thing -- that *NO AWARD* has a certain amount in common with *PLOKTA* -- and you didn't bash me for it. By that I meant that both have a focus on personality, humor, and style than on more serious content.

*Of course I bash Rodney - he would feel left out if I did not do that. You, though, merely get appropriately twinkled. But, with the limits you state, I think that a case can be made for a comparison 'twixt the two zines. To further irritate Alison, let me state that PLOKTA is one of my favourite zines.*

I think there are flaws in both your and John Hertz's arguments over "Fan Lounge" vs. "Fanzine Lounge:" both of you appear to be in denial over the obvious fact that fanzine fandom is a very small special interest group within fandom. since the average number of other fans attracted into fanzine fandom by the lounge at Worldcon appears to be on the order of two per year, you may as well label it "Fanzine Lounge" so those of us actually interested know where to find each other. "Fan Lounge" is too easily confused with "Con Suite."

*I suppose that your conclusion is based on rigorous scientific research. When I ran the Fan Lounge at the LA. Worldcon in '84 it was my deliberate intention to lead the lambs to slaughter (reference) and to try to inveigle (or, at least, expose) them to fanzine fandom. There was no dearth of zine fans in the room as lots of them found the place.*

**ROBERT LICHTMAN**

I enjoyed all your outside contributors to one degree or another, but

**ERIC LINDSAY**  
 I loved Milt's rewrite of Van Vogt. Now, maybe someone at some convention can do a reading of one of Van Vogt's books using Victor Borge's phonetic punctuation.  
*I thought that was normal fanzine.*

found only one checkmark on their pages. Len Moffatt's reference to that wonderful 1948 issue of *MOONSHINE* with the black construction paper cover featuring "a die cut silver colored corrugated paper moon" and "hand-stenciled lettering" in (yes, Len) white ink. It was one of several issues of *MOONSHINE* that Charles Burbee saved over the decades and passed on to me in 1993, and certainly the most striking one. Besides the spectacular cover, the inside pages are mimeographed using sepia brown ink.

Stan Woolston was the art editor of the above-mentioned *MOONSHINE*, and it's sad to read that he's afflicted with Alzheimer's. I remember him as a gentle soul back in the '60s when I used to encounter him at LASFS and parties.

**R LAURRAINE TUTIHASI**

On the first article about Fan Lounge vs. Fanzine Lounge, I started out on your side and ended up on John's. I think John made a lot of good points.

*That should teach you to not believe everything that you read.*

Milt's review of *THE WORLD OF NULL A* was great. And Ted White should know that Milt's review of *DHALGREN* was equally good. I read the book because a good friend of mine really loved it. I kept reading after the first few pages, thinking the good part must still be ahead. Then I finished the book and decided that I had just wasted several hours.

**LLOYD PENNEY**

I've heard and read in lots of places that the average human being uses about half of his brain; but, of course, we all know lots of people who are suspect about that 50% figure. (They're suspect when it comes to any brain use at all.)

*No, I refuse to turn my zine into a forum for discussing Ralph Nader voters and George W. Bush.*

Ed Green's current episode about the LA riots does two things for me . . . shows me that I couldn't possibly function in the military,

with generals too arrogant and stupid to issue orders before knowing much about the situation at hand, or even how things are done, and shows me how much I don't like the current state of the press, even though that's where my training is. Given my own opinions on the press and how they abuse the open access usually gets, I would think that Ed did the right thing by smacking the cameraman. The spoiled brat response from the cameraman is typical.

The mention of Joel Nydahl in the lettercol and on-line no doubt launched the search for him, and the search has been successful. Nydahl seemed mildly gratified that people remembered him, but not that happy to be found after all those years. It was as if he'd been

dealt a blow by his fapiation, and never really got over it.

### ARTHUR HLAVATY

Joseph Major points out that computer technology makes it as cheap and easy to do a decent-looking zine as an obvious crudzine. What he fails to mention is the artistic equivalent of the old line that a computer can easily and quickly make the sort of mistakes that once would have taken a roomful of scientists months of effort. For instance, one can use Publisher to jam the letters more unreadably close together than Word would allow. I wonder what made me think of that. (The covers, on the other hand, are excellent.)

*Aside from the fact that one can use tight tracking in both Publisher and Word, you should feel thankful that I am not using Publisher's capability of putting this reply upside down, sideways, or at an angle.*

Like Alexis Gilliland's comment on Joseph Nicholas suggests an sf scenario: Joseph gets so tired of Blair he decides to run against him, with his usual truculent ideological purity. His votes (and some electoral irregularities) are just enough to throw the election to the daughter of Margaret Thatcher, who has her mother's politics, but scores way lower in language skills.

### BRIN-MARIE McLAUGHLIN

I am reading here where E.B. Frohvet has officially declared you the Resident Curmudgeon of Fandom. Personally, I don't agree. In August of 1987, Robbie invited me along with two of my friends to come crash in North Hollywood on our way down to the San Diego Comic Con. We scattered our belongings hither and yon, usurped your bathroom, and helped her consume an entire lemon meringue pie in the space of one afternoon. You had no idea who we were, and you bore our presence in your home with admirable fortitude. You *could* have curmudged - in fact, rightfully so - but you did not.

*Shhhhh! Not so loudly - we do not want anybody else to know that I am a nice person as it would spoil my "image." However, had I known about that lemon meringue pie at that time, I doubt that you would be writing the exact same words in your loc.*

### ALEXIS GILLILAND

Particularly enjoyable was "The World of Null Nuthin'" by Milt Stevens. One of my lingering memories from that novel, which I first read as an *Astounding* serial, was the encounter with the little roboplane. In which said roboplane offered to answer any question Gosseyen (which I once heard A.E. Van Vogt pronounce as - shades of Dianetics - Go Sane) might have, and our curiously incurious hero

not asking it a damn thing. In retrospect, I imagine that Van Vogt must have looked at what he had written to that point and realized that NO explanation of ANYTHING would make any sense. Not all of the editing in the book version was an improvement, either. Van Vogt changed the slogan carved over the door of the General Semantics Institute from " 'Words, Ah Words,' a sigh across the centuries," to " 'The Negative Judgment Is The Peak Of Mentality' a sigh . . ." Some pretentious and tone deaf sigh, that revision.

### Henry Welch

As a minor quibble you mistyped my e-mail address in the contributor section. It is "msoe" not "nsoe." I work for the Milwaukee School of Engineering not the Nilwaukee School of Engineering.

*The Nilwaukee School of Engineering built that tower thing over in Pisa. Are you certain that you do not work for that school?*

Mike Glyer also provides some comment hooks in his "Half Empty Brains the Size of the Ritz Hotel." Part of the problem with the cold-adapted mammoths was that at the end of the last ice age, their habitat degraded and shrank dramatically, even as the first humans turned their half-empty brains to hunting the toothsome and succulent mammoth. As a sketchy idea of human evolution fleshes itself out, it appears that walking upright was the first step, the invention of feet freeing the forelimbs to become arms with hands.

*It is too bad that there was no Patent Office back then, as my aching feet would certainly like to sue the inventor of feet.*

Hands then made it possible to gather food and ~~bring home the bacon~~ transport a distant kill to base for sharing around. The big brain of which we are so proud was the last thing to develop, perhaps because cooperation was so strongly pro-survival, that cheating (cheaper than cooperation) and the detection of cheating (cooperate, damn you!) were strongly selected for. Or maybe the women learned to talk to help raise the children, and those men who could make themselves understood by women were selected for. Or maybe both. The jury is still out on this one, but all present day humans appear to have descended from one small group - about six males - that developed the knack for making weapons and thereby prospered dramatically.

*Now, why am I not convinced that this group from which we are all descended was composed of only 6 males. Could be, though, as Burbee did not invent sex until 1927.*

### JOSEPH NICHOLAS

*No Award 9* arrived this morning, but as we're off to Italy on Friday, I haven't done more than skim it. However, I did notice Ted White's comment that he was "slightly stunned" to see my bracketing Poul Anderson with Larry Niven, "as though they both wrote the same kind of SF in the same period" - which he suggests that he couldn't have been paying attention, since I didn't claim anything of the kind - and also that he was "even more stunned" by my remark that I doubt they have no other agenda than the telling of a story. Really? Is White seriously suggesting that Poul Anderson's later work has not been dedicated to the proposition that the natural goal for the human species is the conquest of a new frontier in space? He must have

been reading a different Poul Anderson from the rest of us.

*Um, it appears to be you, Joseph, who have been reading some sort of alternate-universe Poul Anderson. Much of Poul's later work has been fantasy, not SF, and fantasy is not known for pushing a pro-space agenda. The only agenda, here, is a figment of your imagination. The only agenda which Poul has ever "pushed" in his SF was (when he sometimes became didactic) was his belief that libertarianism might actually (at least partially) work. Now THAT is a nutty agenda.*

While Alexis Gilliland claims that I'm now "intellectually underemployed" because "after all the passion that went into *FTT* [I've] been rewarded with the centrist Labour government of Tony Blair" - a comment which says less about me than it does about Gilliland's continuing inability to understand that opposition to one political faction does not entail automatic support for its alleged opposite. But given that he's spent sixty or more years in a political culture which has inculcated in him the belief that the slightest degree of opposition to God, motherhood, apple pie, the flag, and all that folderol is *ipso facto* evidence of Kremlin brainwashing and communist deviancy, it's unrealistic to expect him to change now.

*Now, now, Joseph - that is just a position which is false to just about everybody in the world except you. Only FOSEFAX editors, the extreme right-wing seem to hold the positions you impute to Alexis, and his locs to FOSFAX (which I believe that you have read) should show you that he does not hold those views.*

A number of other writers in your letter column say that they can't tell the difference between *No Award* and *Plokta*. They must be style-deaf.

*I think that you are subtlety-deaf. Sure, both zines are different; however, as E.B. Frohvet points out in his loc, both zines share an emphasis on humor, personality, and style (as opposed to an emphasis on serious content). Most of the time, NO AWARD will carry "serious" material, but I do have incurable smartassery which I hope balances out things.*

### **DWAIN KAISER**

*NO AWARD* arrived a few days ago. A treat as usual. One of these days I'll get one or another of my computers working good enough to download the PDF version. I'm almost tempted to go PDF on *NONSTOP* just because of the excellent control you seem to have over color usage. Real nice and clean work.

That was a fine, fine cover by Brad Foster. I've loved his work since I bought a number of small mini-comics from him at a WorldCon. Sitting back in my hotel room later that day my Wife thought I had finally blown a gasket, I was laughing like a mad man, like the world was ending and I had finally gotten the joke. Laughing, laughing. I was reading Brad's *Gigags*.

I have always liked Brad's artwork, and he has produced covers for both *HOLIER THAN THOU* (where his cover for #20 is a classic) and *NO AWARD*.

Some good solid "points" being made in Point/Counterpoint. With fanzine fandom as "ingrown" as it is, and so very, very hidden in APAs, growth is what we need. Go for Fan Lounge, draw those unsuspecting fans in, then suck them into the publishing world of the

fanzine fan. Recreate the glory that was (okay, let's not get carried away here): little kid, the first one is always free. Try it, it won't hurt you! (Hell, it worked on me, and I've never had reason to complain.)

*Yeah, but, look at what Boring Old Pharts we have turned into!*

A very funny piece by Milt. Almost Van Vogt. sometimes it's hard to write a satire of Van Vogt, it's like picking on ERB, it's almost impossible to get so outrageous it's funny because the authors themselves had taken on that task very seriously years before. Of course I'd argue that the "kitch sink" method of wordsmithing works with Van Vogt.

Thom's work is always witty and clever. These classic Probably Something But Not are as clever now and when they were first run in 'L years ago. I've crashed on Thom's floor many a time in the '60s and early '70s and I can safely say that there are not many minds like Thom's. This is a wonderful column, hopefully to be collected into a "Very Incomplete Probably Something" booklet.

*I find Probably Something to be catching and have written several of my own which I have put into my APA-L zines.*

### **DARRELL SCHWEITZER**

Thanks for *NO AWARD* #9 and for your patience, since some of the previous issues have arrived here and rapidly vanished into piles of papers to file and magazines to read, whence they will be extracted by some future fannish equivalent of Heinrich Schliemann, who will doubtless excitedly broadcast the news to fellow fans via propellor-

### **BOB TUCKER**

Thank you kind sir for *NO AWARD* 9. I am following with close interest Len Moffatt's *California Tales*. About 25 years ago on a date no longer remembered I attended an *Outlander* gathering at what I now believe was Len's and Anna's house. A goodly mob was there, including Dean Grennell who took several gag photos of the mob members. I'm looking forward to further chapters while Len works up to ca. 1975 and refreshes memory of that date, or that event.

I don't think I was using his place as a hideout from the posse following me.

*Did the posse ever catch you?*

beanie-driven radio-mimeo-visigraph, "I have looked on the face of Degler!!!" What a frightening thought. But there is a method to my madness, which is that I know very few fans who would get the joke in this paragraph. Witness the pathetic attempt in a recent Millennium Philcon progress report to fill us in on some of the fannish lore of Philadelphia (Degler's connection to the 1947 Philcon). It's actually a very funny story. Alas, the version in the progress report was clearly written by someone who didn't know the story, or who Degler was, or who Richard Shaver was, or even how to spell Degler's name. (I refer to Degler's celebrated prank of showing up with a button or badge that read, "I am Richard Shaver, who are you?") This at the very Philcon where an item at the business meeting was the proposal to petition the Post Office to ban *AMAZING* from the mails on the grounds that the Shaver Mystery material was harmful to the mental health of the readers.)

I've belonged to the Philadelphia SF Society for 33 years now. This makes me a Grey Eminence indeed, as I am either or am very close to being the senior member of the oldest (or second oldest) SF club in existence, one of the two surviving chapters of the original Science Fiction League. Thirty years ago there were two or three fanzines published in the club. But that sort of thing has passed away beyond memory. I am among the two or three older members who still know what a fanzine is. One of our most prominent members, Oz Fontecchio, who has chaired numerous conventions, who still conducts our book discussion group, who organizes author readings, and who almost got to be Eastern Regional Director of SFWA, and is, in short, someone very much interested in every aspect of printed SF and most of fandom, once remarked to me, "Fanzines are the one area of fan activity I've never had any contact with."

What I am building up to here is that in your editorial debate, I agree with John Hertz. When I dip into this issue of *NO AWARD*, I conclude that fanzine fandom is like Faerie. Time moves differently there. True, the mimeo has passed away (with no regrets on my part), but otherwise it's the same people talking about things that flash us back decades.

*The mimeo is not dead. Except for those PDF copies of NO AWARD printed from the web site, the paper version of the zine is printed on a Gestetner mimeo machine. Granted, it is the new, Gestetner reinvention of mimeography; but, nevertheless, it is still mimeo.*

I remember writing my own demolition of *DHALGREN* about 1976. It was a parody of a Douglas Barbour Article (pro-*DHALGREN*), which I called "Dully Grinning Delany Sinks Into Disaster." It was published in *OUTWORLDS*, and is not one of my more celebrated pieces of critical writing, but at least I knew how to spell the author's name correctly. (No "e" before the "y.") My conclusion is that the book is essentially hollow, just a long typing exercise, but at least I can report back having been there. I found the book quite readable, as Delany's style had not deteriorated yet. The French Disease (Deconstructionist critical jargon) had infected all his writing within a few years of *DHALGREN*, which is why fans refer

to Delany's "Readable Period" as a distinct, early phase of his career.

*I consider Delany's "Readable Period" to have ended earlier than DHALGREN. Hm. Remember when, back in HOLIER THAN THOU, you and I more-or-less agreed on what was SF? Ancient history.*

But again I am flashing back to the past. That's what happens when I read a zine like *NO AWARD*. I am (trust me) sneaking up on the point of why I agree with John Hertz. Fanzine fandom is indeed a tiny, almost vestigial minority within fandom, not merely because of the Barbarian Invasion of the Trekkies and subsequent hordes, but because most people who are interested in print SF and who go to conventions out of that interest, be they readers or professionals, have never had any contact with fanzine fandom and, in fact, do not suspect its existence. At a very literary convention like Readercon, fanzine fandom is not in evidence, save that those few who actually are trufans/slans recognize a handful of our number also present.

What we're talking about here is Old Fandom, a now almost ethereal remnant of a lost world, which still exists within the larger context of SF Fandom, but hidden, and unsuspected by most fans, indeed, like Faerie as it fades away from mortal ken. In Old Fandom the Exclusion Act, *THE IMMORTAL STORM*, and the Cosmic Circle are still vital matters. This is part of the common, shared lore. I think Old Fandom also preserves memories of different SF books too. Few of my pro colleagues, except, indeed, those who are secretly Old Fans (or else are literary historians) would be likely to appreciate Milt Stevens' witty demolitions/analysis of *THE WORLD OF NULL-A*. That's not a book people read much anymore. Van Vogt is sometimes mentioned as a predecessor to Philip K. Dick, but not an essential writer anymore. But Old Fandom still exists in a time and place where *THE WORLD OF NULL-A* is an essential book that everyone has read. It is a paradigm of science-fictional consciousness - but only in Old Fandom. This isn't time-binding. It's timelessness, as one expects in the realm of Faerie.

So the reason I agree with John Hertz (you were waiting for this) is that if you just call the Fan Lounge the Fan Lounge, most people will just think it's another con suite. There's no need for that Regular conventioners can meet in many places. But the Fanzine Lounge is special.

You wouldn't call it the Zine Lounge; because, at a contemporary convention, a "zine" is an amateur publication of media fiction, Slash or otherwise. It is another subculture which has grown up within SF fandom, the members of which do not suspect the existence of Old Fandom a.k.a. Fanzine Fandom.

So the phrase "Fanzine Lounge" is a code-phrase, a secret signpost comprehensible only to the special few, who share a continuity of experience and culture that goes all the way back to *THE TIME TRAVELER* and the Science Fiction League. As this realm is timeless, that does not mean that everybody in it is now a tottering graybeard, though certainly fanzine fans tend (in my observation) to be older than the general fan population. The youngest ones are

Baby Boomers. I fear the magic gateway into Faerie has become harder to find, or else younger fans just aren't trying anymore. Indeed, looking at the address lists in the back of this issue of *NO AWARD*, I find that I know most of these names. They have e-mail addresses now, but nothing else has changed. Most of these names I have been seeing in fanzines for at least twenty-five years.

And so, even as the fairies are alleged to leave secret signs for one another - an arrangement of sticks, a mark scratched on a boulder - we have the Fanzine Lounge. That is what it is for.

*Actually, I believe that your arguments prove my point. By bringing general fans (with no knowledge of fanzines) into a Fan Lounge which has in attendance knowledgeable fanzine fans and lots of fanzines, I believe that is a way to expose potential "recruits" to our area of fandom. By calling the room "Fanzine Lounge" we may discourage potential "recruits" who may decide that, not knowing just what is the "fanzine stuff," decide that there are many more interesting things going on and never visit us.*

*By far the most response to NA #9 has been on this topic - which is why I have devoted so much space to it in the loccol. Please do not take this as a sign that NO AWARD is going to suddenly go all sercon and turgid and like that. I believe that this is a sign of concern that our part of fandom is getting even more irrelevant and we are looking for solutions as to how to reverse this trend.*

### JAN STINSON

Ted White's descriptions of the manuscripts turned in by Gordon Dickson and Judy Merrill are eye-openers to writers like myself, who have been told by many pro writers and editors that no editor will even consider a story unless it's submitted in proper, readable format. But I suppose that in the time Ted is discussing, such niceties were bypassed in favor of acquiring the stories of such writers before some other editor did. Today's editors apparently can afford to be pickier, what with the glut of manuscripts apparently circulating.

### ERIC MAYER

So here I am assaying a bit of a loc on *NO AWARD* once again. I managed to direct a few to various Katzines but then the rust settled in again, or whatever rust does (see what I mean?). For instance, I enjoyed Mike Glycer's essay, but can't even think of anything funny in return.

*You think that is difficult? I have to edit Mike's very funny minutes of LASFS meetings into very space-constrained issues of the LASFS newsletter (DE PROFUNDIS) every month. Now, that is difficult.*

### LAWRENCE PERSON

While I thought that, over all, the review of *Nova* was fairly perceptive, I do have a few minor factual nits to pick. The first nit comes in the very first paragraph, where Major states "Nova Express is a fanzine. Why is it a fanzine? Because the editor says so." I'm sorry, but this is simply not true. We're a fanzine under the Hugo Award rules, because that's precisely what those rules state we are, because we do not meet any of the five criteria of being a Semiprozine. In fact, let's take a look at the exact wording, straight from the Constitution of the World Science Fiction Society (WSFS) on their official webpage (<http://www.worldcon.org/bm/const-2000.html>):

3.3.9: Best Semiprozine. Any generally available non-professional publication devoted to science fiction or fantasy which by the close of the previous calendar year has published four (4) or more issues, at least one (1) of which appeared in the previous calendar year, and which in the previous calendar year met at least two (2) of the following criteria:

- (1) had an average press run of at least one thousand (1000) copies per issue,
- (2) paid its contributors and/or staff in other than copies of the publication,
- (3) provided at least half the income of any one person,
- (4) had at least fifteen percent (15%) of its total space occupied by advertising,
- (5) announced itself to be a semiprozine.

3.3.10: Best Fanzine. Any generally available non-professional publication devoted to science fiction, fantasy, or related subjects which by the close of the previous calendar year has published four (4) or more issues, at least one (1) of which appeared in the previous calendar year, and which does not qualify as a

semiprozine.

*Well, I certainly know these rules as I was one of those who wrote the current rules (passed in 1982 and ratified in 1983).*

Please note that *Nova Express* meets none of the criteria listed in Section 3.3.9. Now, the only question that might not be answered by the above is just what constitutes a "non-professional publication." However, this question is answered in Section 3.3.7, where it states, "A professional publication is one which had an average press run of at least ten thousand (10,000) copies per issue." So, since *Nova Express* is A.) Not a professional publication, as per Section

### GEORGE FLYNN

John Hertz says, "I believe every room at a con is a fan room." Well, actually I've noticed that a number of hotels have rooms specifically labeled "Fan Room." However, as they appear to be full of air-conditioning equipment, I'm not sure if this bears on the point at issue.

*I have always thought that those rooms were where, in winter, certain fanzine "owners" were used to hang out.*

3.3.7, and B.) Not a semiprozine, as per section 3.3.9, then we must be C.) A fanzine under the official Hugo Award rules. While I have seen many people argue that *Nova Express* is not a fanzine because it's "too professional" or "doesn't look like a fanzine" etc., not once have I seen a single argument address the rules cited above.

Now, moving on to less irksome nits. While Major praises the Neil Gaiman interview, he does omit to mention that what was printed in Volume 5, Number 4 (the issue reviewed) is the second half of a large two-part interview and is stated as such. In fact, the first part did indeed include the usual "interview in a restaurant" motif that's become a hallmark of so many *Nova* reviews, with Neil and I blearily consuming a Sunday breakfast because it was the only time he had free time in his schedule to do the interview.

I also have an extremely minor quibble with Major's use of the word "academic" in describing our contributor's "tone and context." Unfortunately, higher education fads like deconstructionism have given the word "academic" a (not entirely undeserved) bad name. As such, I like to think that we are indeed a serious and literate critical fanzine, but not, per se, an academic one, as *Nova* is aimed at the intelligent, well-read lay SF reader. One of our mottos is "Serious, but not stuffy." To that end, I promise that *Nova Express* will never publish articles like "Deconstructing the Semiotics of Neuromancer: A Post-Jamesian Approach To Transgressive Power Relationships" on my watch. Personally, I hate that crap (what a friend of mine calls "Academic Grab Fanny") and try to keep *Nova Express* free of such meaning-free, PC gobbledygook.

Finally, on an informational rather than corrective note, it's very interesting that Major mentions the parallels between Paul T. Riddell's overview of the Comic Distribution Implosion of the 1990s and the collapse of the American News Company in the 1950s. In fact, I had a piece by David Davison talking about the American News Company collapse as a sidebar to the Riddell article, but had to cut it at the last moment due to space constraints. Perhaps I'll put it up on the website when I get my ass in gear and update it...

Other than those nits, however, I think Mr. Major's assessment is generally fair and perceptive. "Nova Express is the reviewzine of its own context" indeed...

### **JERRY KAUFMAN**

I suppose this letter is John Hertz' fault. In some way, he energized me at Westercon, and I've started to write LoCs again. This implies that I've begun reading fanzines again, and it's a true implication.

*It is good to hear from you again, Jerry. Do not take so*

*long, next time.*

I see a major similarity between No Award and PLOKTA. You and the Cabal are both smartasses. The major difference between you and them on this score is that you signpost your smartassery rather heavily, while they keep an almost perfectly straight face. For my taste, their method is more effective.

*Smartassery is as smartassery does. Na'theless, I think that your comment is going to give Allison a heart attack.*

I don't see more than a smidgen of effective difference between the use of "Fan Lounge" and "Fanzine Lounge." both seem to confuse and puzzle the average convention goer. I have heard people who wander into them question both terms. After all, they ask, isn't everything at this con for fans? It's still a matter of setting up a space where we "trufans" can hang out or reliably find each other. I only consider this aspect a bad thing when there are too few "fanziners" (to use John Hertz' term) to reach a critical mass and make the room fun to be in. As a recruitment center, I don't see that it works well anymore. The last person I can remember being hooked by a Fan/zine Lounge (at least one I spent any time in) was Craig Smith, and that was at least fifteen years ago. (I welcome more recent examples of active fans who came in the same way.)

I read World of Null A when I was seventeen and was utterly swept away by the enormous implications of its twisted plot. When I was nineteen I read it again, and felt the awesome implications creep closer to a grand revelation of meaning. I read it for the last time at twenty-one, and in the full bloom of maturity felt it to be a thick veil hiding an empty pedestal. Yes, fun and silly but meaningless. So I enjoyed Milt Stevens' summary/satire. I could remember most of the details, thanks to him, but I often had trouble deciding where his summary shaded into interpretation and outright smartassery. Pretty funny, actually.

Joseph Major's review of *Nova Express* is interesting, and makes me want to see it. I suspect that the slant is more to my taste than Joseph's or yours. I note that Joseph is surprised by the inclusion of Tucker's Long Loud Silence in a list of "Ten Under-appreciated SF Novels." Judging from Bruce Gillespie's long championship of Tucker's writing, I'd say that among literary-leaning sf fans, Tucker has long been the king of under-appreciated writers.

I enjoyed the rest of the issue, and look forward, honestly, to more.

### **DEREK PICKLES**

*Derek wrote a loc in which he detailed his many current medical problems (and, as one who is also suffering from decrepitude, I sympathize). Derek continues:*

Otherwise I'm in first-class condition. The medical may bore you, or not; but it's an explanation of my tardiness.

I think that a popular con would be where attendees of senior citizen status could meet and discuss the fanzine they would have published if they were not too involved in discussing their own and others' ailments.

*Now, now, Derek, it is the utmost in faanishness to take a disagreeable problem and turn it into a fanarticle. It was the discovery of my health problems that lead to my editorial in NO AWARD #8. Hey - applying humour to these disasters helps make them livable.*

### RAY NELSON

As A.E. Van Vogt might have said, "There are always more than two options." Yes, I am commenting on the discussion about naming our convention hangout "The Fan Room" or "The Fanzine Lunge." Before I scrawl in my X on the multiple choice questionnaire, I would like to expand the range of choices. Both of the two names thus far put forward have too old-fashioned a ring to them for my taste. They both have a curiously N3F flavor.

When seeking a title for a story, I always make a list of at least twelve possibilities, and after generating a dozen possibilities for our fan/fanzine lounge, I have come up with a choice both descriptive and novel.

Zineland!

Zineland has a flavor of fantasy about it, a pinch of pixidust, yet enough of a suggestion of Disneyland to make it comprehensible to the great unwashed of Mundania. Where do Hugo winners go to celebrate? Not to Disneyland like some Neanderthal football team, but to Zineland!

Have I settled the argument once and for all, or only expanded it?

Do I hear the distant rumble of fannish hoards advancing to shout out their own inspirations, or do I hear a vast, awesome silence descending over the abandoned battlefield?

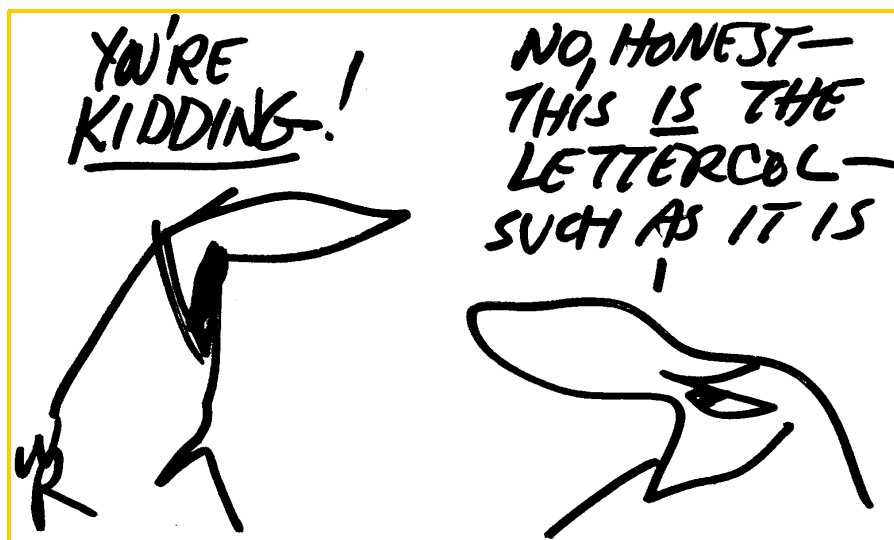
*No, what you hear is the insidious blithering of impending smartassery. Zineland, indeed. Bit even Los Angeles Worldcons held at the Anaheim Convention Centre (and nearby hotels), only blocks from Disneyland, have not stooped to calling The Fan Room Zineland. They did not even do that standing*

*up. Of course, as they could have done so in 1984 (when I ran that room) only over my dead body, I guess that I was not all that out-of-favour with the rest of the concom so that they would want me dead. Well, I did hear a rumour that I survived that con.*

## WAHF

**Erika Maria Lacey**, commenting on Ray Capella's illos, "The 'doodle' theme of the illos didn't sink in until \*way\* into the zine - but amusing." **Joseph T. Major** writes, "Obviously Eric Mayer did not take a sufficiently adequate cortical-thalamic pause before reading Dhalgren." Wouldn't help, sez I. **Lisa Major** comments, "Both fandom's resident curmudgeon and John Hertz made interesting points about the proper name for a fan lounge with fanzines. Maybe what we need is a room with two doors, one labeled Fanzine Lounge and the other labeled Fan Lounge." So where do we put the sign which says, "This Way To The Egress?" (Stir stir stir) **Mark Proskey** sends congratulations on my Curmudgeon Award (which was, after all, much overdue). And I will also pass on this serious comment from him: "I liked Ted White's letter. I always like the way he edited *AMAZING* and *FANTASTIC* in the Early Seventies." **Roy Tackett** writes, "Len Moffatt's autobiography continues to be of interest." **Sheryl Birkhead** also sent a loc as a "trial run to see if I can actually print up a letter" on her new computer. Obviously, she could. It was also an interesting letter even though I have not used much of it here. **Carolyn Dougherty** reports that she did not get past page 200 of Dhalgren but a friend of hers read the whole book. I think that anybody who went past page one are as nutty as the book.

**Plergb** defined as me having properly rebutted all arguments and converted everybody to my point of view.



# PLERGB

Defined as  
NO AWARD  
winning the  
Best Fanzine  
Hugo

*(and every other Hugo category  
in which it is nominated)*

**support your local smartass**