

V E G A S
F A N D O M
W E E K L Y

The Bob Tucker Memorial Issue



A Tribute to Our Fan-Father

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VFW is free by request — and you may get it anyway. It can be downloaded at the SNAFFU site and at efanazines.com. No humorless pseudo-fans were harmed during the production of this fanzine.

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The (Grand) Father of Us All

As the hour grew late on Saturday night, the Vegrants collected in the living room. Normally, Vegrants meetings spread to nearly every room of the Launch Pad, with a half-dozen hanging out in my office, a few clustered in the kitchen and so forth.

This one had, too. Yet when the call to the living room came, all 15 of us filtered into the large, dimly lit room. The mood became subdued as the room quieted.

Even before I spoke, everyone knew why we'd interrupted the usual revels. James Taylor and other passed out glasses and then filled them with small quantities of Jim Beam.

The news of Bob Tucker's death the previous night after a short hospital stay had rippled through the Vegrants during the evening, though we tried to keep the grief under control as he would have wanted us to do. The more experienced fans, like Ross Chamberlain and Joyce Katz, exchanged commiserations. The more knowledgeable members of Vegas' New Generation felt the loss right along with us, while the others sought greater understanding of this sad occurrence.

With all the glasses filled with Tucker's favorite elixir, everyone turned to me. I sensed they expected a toast more elaborate than, "Here's to Tucker!"

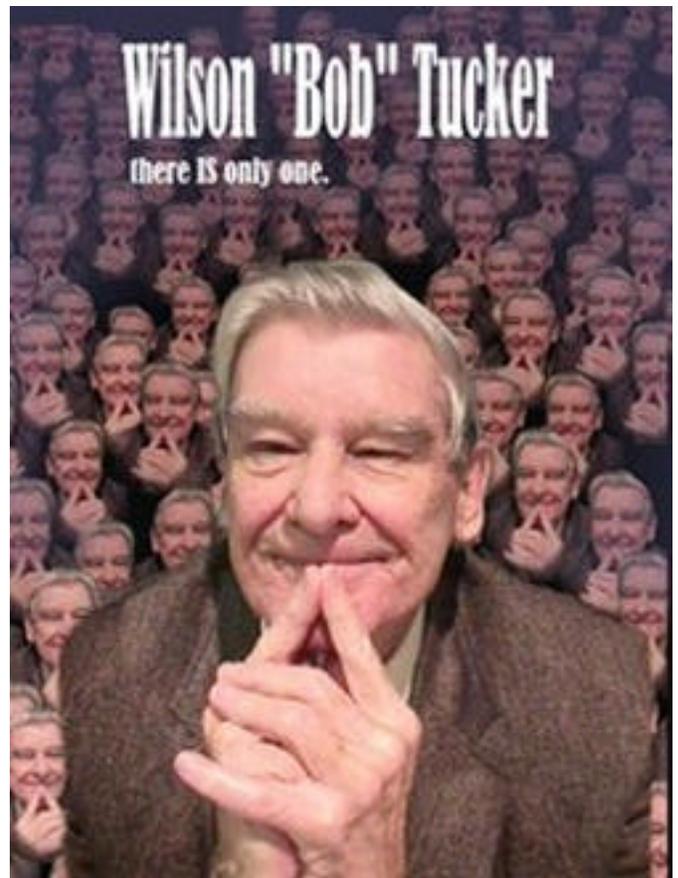
I thought I knew who Bob Tucker was before I met him for the first time at Midwestcon in Cincinnati in 1965. I could've told you that he was a well-known science fiction fan and professional writer who'd been around a long time. He and Bob Bloch were close buddies, both among Fandom's most celebrated humorists.

I didn't know shit. That bio hardly hinted at Bob Tucker's true stature in Fandom. In fact, the

state of my knowledge of Tucker correlated almost exactly with the state of my fannish knowledge and understanding.

Though a promising 19-year-old fan, almost all my achievements lay in the future. Lenny Bailes and I (and artist supreme Ross Chamberlain) would not unveil Quip until later that year. At the time I met Bob Tucker, we had just wrapped up the 1-issue run of Excalibur (originally called Cursed) – and I would hate for my value as a fan writer, editor and commentator to rest on that shaky platform.

I was still very much a student of Fandom, enrolled in the greatest "Fannish University" of that



Arnie Katz

era, New York's Fanoclasts. I'd read a few of the classics like *The Enchanted Duplicator*, *Ah, Sweet Idiocy!* And *The Eighth Stage of Fandom*, but my fanzine collection was pitiful and small. Tutors Ted White and Rich Brown had already taught me a lot, but graduation was still some distance away. I was maybe a sophomore.

It had become clear that Fandom had a very high opinion of Bob Tucker. The more respected the fan, the more they looked up to him. The Fanoclast BNFs were still a little daunting to me, so I felt shy about approaching this fannish Elder Ghod at Midwestcon. Had I known how truly awesome Bob Tucker was, I'm not sure even a brash college boy like I was then would've had the guts to inflict myself upon him. On the other hand, Tucker was so disarmingly salt-of-the-earth, that his warmth might've conquered my fear.

In actual fact, I first introduced myself to Big Hearted Howard Devore, who had a dealer table at Midwestcon. Although I didn't understand why, he had the only dealer's table at Midwestcon. I needed something to read on the rest of the Fanoclast Great Trek of '65 to Midwestcon and Westercon, so it was natural to buy a couple of paperbacks from BHH and, in the process, make his acquaintance.

When I asked Howard about the possibility of buying old fanzines, he pleaded lack of supply and directed me to Bob Tucker, who had just pulled into the motel's parking lot.

And so it was that I met the man responsible for creating the Fandom we all love. He was a vigorous 51 then, still a very handsome man, his friendliness and graciousness quickly disarming me.

Then he opened the back of his station wagon and stepped to the side to give me the full view. There, completely filling the cargo area, were boxes of catalogued fanzines. Several fans, including Vic Ryan, had asked Tucker to dispose of their collections, so he'd brought everything to Midwestcon for possibly the decade's biggest fan-



Fans say: "Smooth!"

zine sale.

Under his watchful eye, I began to look through the boxes with a thoroughness developed during years of pawing through shelves in back-date magazine stores. As I pulled jewel after jewel out of the cartons with mounting excitement, he began to suggest titles and offer background tidbits about the fans who created them.

Though enthralled by this trove of fannish treasures, I noticed that the already low prices got lower and lower as my haul piled up in a carton Bob provided for the purpose. When I asked about the bargain prices, he explained that the people who'd given him the fanzines were less concerned about money than passing the fanzines into appreciative hands.

Not only did I appreciate like crazy, but I re-

In these hectic days of phrase-coining, we offer one. Westerns are called "horse operas," the morning housewife tear-jerkers are called "soap operas," For the hacky, grinding, stinking, outworn space-ship yarn, or world-saving for that matter, we offer "space opera." — Bob Tucker (*LeZombie*, 1941).

solved to follow that principle. I've never sold fanzines for money in preference to giving them to people I thought might care about them.

As I combed through the fanzines, Tucker and I got into a desultory conversation that ranged widely among fannish topics. It didn't hurt that I appeared to come with the Ted White Seal of Approval, because he was very familiar with the Fanoclasts and generally inclined to their view of things.

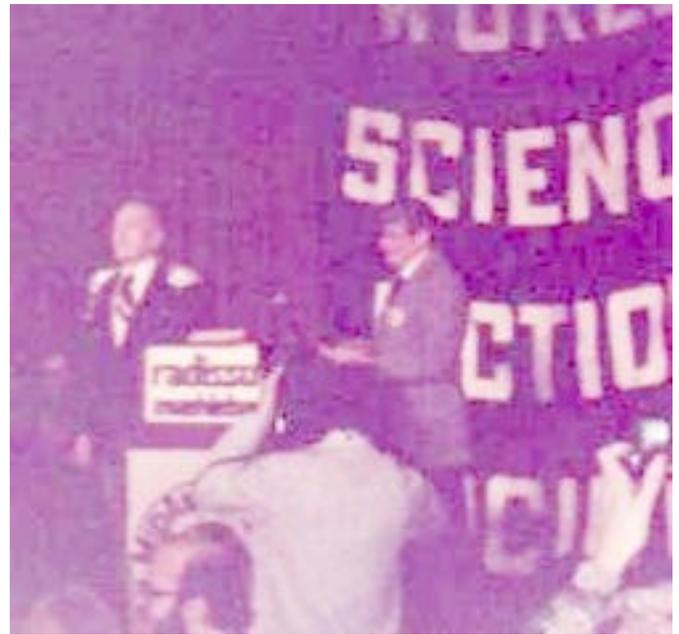
Bob Tucker had no shortage of friends. Quite a few of them were closer to him than I was. Yet from that first afternoon, we became friends for the next 40-plus years. He wrote for my fanzine, we hung out at cons, and correspondence occasionally passed between us.

Tucker believed that Fandom was a family. He called many of his friends his Grandsons and Granddaughters. He called a few, including me, his son. I don't know why he singled me out for that status, but he did. It's no coincidence that I have come to think of our subculture in familiar terms. (The downside: I now mourn the loss of two Fan-Fathers, Tucker and Burbee.)

The passing years brought the understanding that Tucker had done the same thing for me on a one-to-one basis that he had already done for Fandom as a whole. He helped me progress from my neofannish focus on science fiction to a broader understanding of Fandom as a worthy activity in its own right.

No individual is more responsible for the Fandom that we love today than Bob Tucker. He wasn't the first fan -- that distinction belongs to Forrest J Ackerman -- but he helped steer the primitive Fandom he joined in 1932 toward the fannish Fandom we love.

Maybe, even probably, things would have developed without him, but he was the fan of the hour, the one who led us out of slavish fixation on contents lists for next month's prozines. Without his amiable brilliance and acute perception, Fandom might well have stayed the realm of capsule reviews of "scientifilms" and breathless accounts of what F Olin Tremaine planned for the next Astounding.



Two masters of science fiction take the stage at MidAmeri-con, the 1976 worldcon in Kansas City

His first fanzine, one of the first ever published for our Fandom, was a bibliography. After that, Tucker turned his back on sercon Fandom and began to explore the fascinating world of fans and Fandom.

Bob Tucker introduced humor to a Fandom that was short on fun and long on teenaged pretentiousness. Under the nom de fanac of Hoy Ping Pong, he punctured the pompous, satirized the smug and flayed the fatheaded. It grew progressively harder to tell the style and approach of Hoy



Tucker's 90th birthday cake.

The First Staple War

The "First" is probably flavoring borrowed from the phrase "First World War", which was current even in 1935. The war broke out when the Grand High Cocolorum, in a letter to Brass Tacks later republished in *The Reader Speaks*, denounced the policies advocated by the spwsstfm, and announced the formation of the IAOPUMUMSTFPUSA, Unltd.

Not satisfied with mere conservatism, Wollheim at length announced the Platinum Plan. In accordance with this wire staples were to be made of platinum; then after the stfist had finished reading the magazine, he could take out the staples and sell them for more than he paid for the magazine. This would boom the circulation of the stf mags and carry science-fiction to the world.

As in such other mock wars as the FooFoo-ghughu strife, the fronts on which direct battle could be joined were very limited, but such engagements as occurred practically all went in favor of the metallic forces. IAOPETC spies in Tucker's forces wormed their way into such a position of trust that they published the second number of the official organ, and it came out stuck full of wire staples! Tucker quibbled about the difference between science fiction magazines, which were all he mentioned, and fan magazines. The "entire" New York Episode of the spwsstfm went over to the W's side.

The end of the war was a non sequitur. Someone's letter was published all solemnly in Brass Tacks, telling that Tucker had died. By publication time Tremaine had discovered that he'd been hoaxed, and declared there'd be no more staple stuff in Brass Tacks.



— Jack Speer (in *Fancylopedia I*)

from Tucker. Tucker trotted out this mask with growing infrequency and always as a totally transparent pseudonym..

He didn't just write about fans; he wrote about them realistically, flaws and all. Other tried to confect glittering fantasies about fans and Fandom, but Tucker preferred to present them as ordinary, if colorful, folks.

And he did it with such a deft touch that he developed into perhaps the single most beloved figure in the entire history of Fandom. Even many of the fans who felt the sting of his wit continued to admire and respect him.

The first time Bob jabbed the needle into me — I think it was something to do with the Numbered Fandoms Theory of Fanhistory — I felt honored that he'd taken the time to dance me across the burning coals. I knew he was simply calling them like he saw them, so it didn't even cause a

ripple in our friendship or cause any discussion between us.

Bob did nothing less than invent fannishness. He also birthed the two philosophies that have issued from it: Trufannishness and Insurgentism.

As a Trufan, he worked on numerous fannish causes, lending his hand to many worldcon committees and generally donating his time to Fandom. This was brought home to me at a Corflu at which I was on a team with Ted White, rich brown and Moshe Feder in a trivia contest against a squad composed of Joyce, Rob Hanson, Richard Brandt and Tucker.

Pre-gamer handicappers installed our quartet as solid early-line favorites. The first half of the game, however, proved to be an ignominious rout with the White-Brown-Feder-Katz team on the weak end of a lopsided score. What no one had considered was that Andy Hooper, who crafted the

questions, had not been advised of the composition of the two teams.

When the questions were posed, it turned out that the answer to damn near every one of them was “Tucker!” So while we racked our stores of fanhistorical knowledge, Bob had only to tap his memory. It brought home the fact that there’s very little fanhistory that has not involved Bob Tucker.

Clouds of Trufannish myth hung on his shoulders. Some he created, others he propagated and still others spring up around him spontaneously. A few examples:

The First Staple War. This mock battle pitted the proponents of metal staples to bind professional science fiction magazines against those opposed to this practice. It raged through Astounding’s letter column in the early 1930, though each side had its fanzines. (See the First Staple War sidebar for more information.)

The 10 of Clubs. This card figured in an early 1950’s poker game in which Tucker was one of the participants. According to Bloch, it had earmuffs.

Rosebud. Yes, “Rosebud” is the key to the movie Citizen Kane, but Tucker is reputed to have uttered it in circumstances that gave it a whole new meaning. It is an anatomical reference to something revealed as a female fan was favorably disposing herself for anal intercourse.

Smooth. Tucker’s “smoothing ceremony” may be the best-known ritual in All Known Fandom. The orthodox version mandates Jim Beam, but the practice now extended to other liquors, beer and even Diet Coke.

The Tucker Hotel. In 1952, fans decided it would be a good idea to have a hotel all our own that could host worldcons at advantageous rates and offer the special

facilities and services the hobby desires. Fans decided the best course of action was to send bricks to Tucker for its construction. He got over 50 of them, plus two boxes of straw (for DIY brick-making). Bob build a dog house with it. Plans for the hotel, with ideas from several leading fans, were presented to Tucker at the Chicon II in 1952.

Some Insurgents write blistering polemics against Fandom’s flaws, delusions and sacred cows. Francis Towner Laney, Ted White and rich brown are primarily known for well-reasoned argumentation that makes no compromises with empirical truth (though all three have some extremely funny pieces to their credit, too).

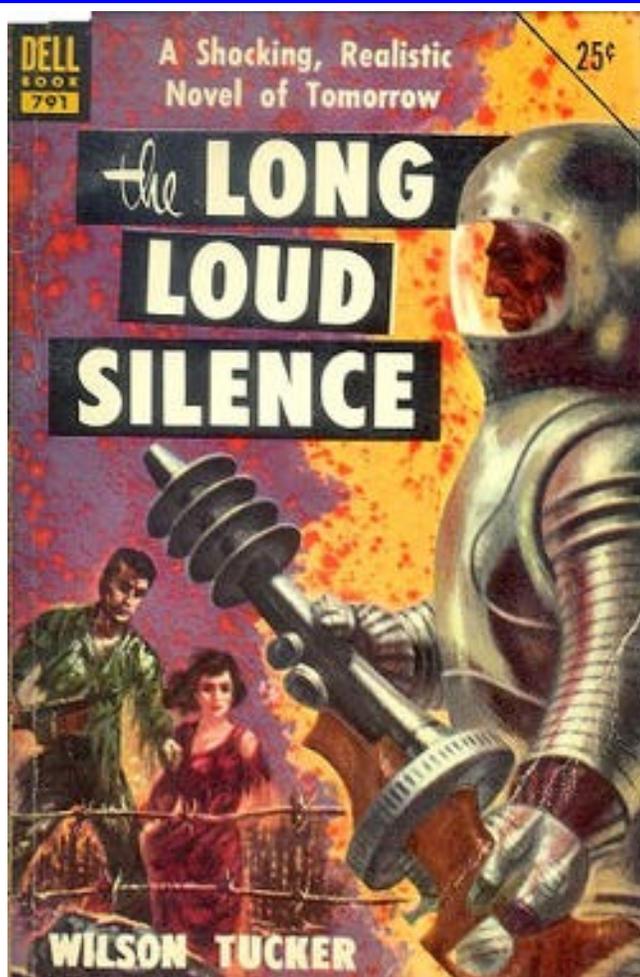
Tucker, like Charles Burbee, always preferred to make his points with humor. His brilliant fanzine *Le Zombie* — published “every time a Zombie awakens” — was packed with short, amusing items.

Tucker intended his humor to illuminate, not obliterate. His disarmingly gentle tone came from his belief that most things in life aren’t nearly as serious as we pretend. Although he was often hip-deep in fanac, he generally came across as the Bemused Observer. He was more likely to shake his head in wonderment than his fist in anger.

He was Fandom’s Will Rogers, a font of observations and anecdotes. He always kept a sense



Among those sharing Tucker’s admiration for Jim Beam: Iron Man, though Tucker held his liquor a lot better than Marvel’s armored hero.



of humor about everything, even himself, which no doubt made it easier for others to take his comments in the same spirit.

I held my glass high and looked at the other Vegrants. Some had known Bob Tucker personally, some as a fan and still others only as a name on some science fiction books. Yet even those who didn't know him too well could sense that something major had happened in Fandom and to some of us very, very personally.,

I spoke briefly about Bob Tucker, without whom there probably wouldn't be clubs like the Vegrants or fanzines like Vegas Fandom Weekly. I reminded them that Tucker had been there almost from the beginning and that he gave us and our subculture so much – and that he was a pretty terrific guy.

I raised my glass and the other Vegrants followed suit. “To Tucker!” I said and downed a mouthful of Jim Beam.

“Smooth,” we said in unison, making the tribal gesture learned from the master himself.

Many Tucker Tributes have emphasized his professional achievements. That's appropriate, because Wilson Tucker is one of science fiction's outstanding writers. Among his numerous novels and short stories are such classics as *The Lincoln Hunters*, *Wild Talent*, *Year of the Quiet Sun*, and *The Long, Loud Silence*. He also wrote a half-dozen mystery novels, one of which won the Poe Award (that field's equivalent to the Hugo) for *The Chinese Doll* (1945) as the year's best mystery novel.

Much as I enjoyed those and other Tucker stories, the two things that most impressed me about his pro career have nothing to do with the literary quality, theme or popularity of his science fiction and mysteries. Even when he was Wilson, he was still Bob.

Tucker never lost his fannish sensibilities, even when he was writing for money. He started, or at least perfected, the flourish that still bears his name: Tuckerizing. Right from the start, Tucker took great delight in inserting his friends' names into his books as characters. The practice won so much love for BT that many other science fiction writers have followed suit — even including me once or twice. *Tucker himself was tuckerized many times, notably as “the bum of the spaceways” on *Captain Video*.*

Overshadowing this charming idiosyncrasy, though, is that Arthur Wilson “Bob” Tucker set a standard of behavior that all science fiction professionals would do well to emulate in their dealings with fans and Fandom. In this day, when people who pay to have their books published strut around like they're Robert A. Heinlein, Tucker's aplomb in seamlessly blending the fan and pro aspects of his life is worthy of fans' respect and pros' emulation.

Tucker was a fan who became a pro — and who never stopped being an outstanding fan. He was proud of his fiction, but he was proud of being a fan, too. He understood that professional writing and editing, whether in or out of the science fiction and fantasy field, is a career choice, not ascension to a higher plane of existence.

He hated the artificial separation between fans

The LeZ-ettes

Bob Tucker anticipated the current vogue for “flash fiction” by about six decades with his invention of the LeZ-ette. They were the distillation of the novel form. It’s brevity and pertinence are hallmarks of Tucker’s writing, streamlined to the maximum. Here’s a sample:

Chapter One: Vampire

Chapter Two: Mirror

Chapter Three: Long time, no see

Got one of your own in mind? Send it here as a memorial to BT — Arnie

and pros — and the elevation of the latter to “star” status — that increasingly typifies the Convention Era. Fans and pros should mix informally and on equal footing, he felt. Though he often appeared as a speaker and panelist on convention programs, Tucker actively opposed events that segregated the pros from the fans.

Bob Tucker produced the second fanzine ever published. He also produced an electronic fanzine about seven decades later. He not only saw it all in Fandom, he did it all in Fandom.

I miss him as a friend, as a fan and an individual whose creativity helped create the unfettered Fandom that means so much to me.

“There’s a special gesture that goes with ‘Smooth,’” I whispered to Teresa Cochran

“There is?” she asked.

“Yes, I told her. “Give me your hand.” I took her slender-fingered hand in my ample paw and, as I said, “Smoo-oo-ooth,” moved it through the swooping arc so well known to fans. She smiled, understanding.

Fan-Father and fan-Daughter, sharing the rite learned from the Fan-Father of us all. The parade marches onward, the timebinding connection holds, Tuckers legacy lives.

I was glad that Teresa could not see the tears that stood in my eyes.

— Arnie Katz

The SFWA Obituary

Wilson Tucker passed away today: Friday, October 6, 2006. He had been in a hospital in St. Petersburg, Florida since Tuesday. He would have turned 92 in a few weeks.

Tucker contributed to many aspects of genre Science Fiction. As "Bob" Tucker, he was well loved as a convention guest and fanzine writer. He served on the committee of the 2nd World Science Fiction Convention, Chicon, in 1940. He was the author of 60 short stories and novels, including the Campbell Award winning “The Year of the Quiet Sun.”

His many other honors included three Hugo Awards (two retro), the First Fandom Hall of Fame Award, E.E. Smith Memorial Award, Archon Hall of Fame Award - Grand Master, Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America Author Emeritus, and he was a 2003 inductee in the Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame.

Bob was preceded in death by his wife of 52 years, Fern Delores Tucker, on June 7th.

He will be cremated and his ashes will be interred next to hers in Bloomington, Illinois. No details are available at this time, but a memorial will probably be conducted in Bloomington in a few weeks.

The 2007 North American Science Fiction Convention (NASFiC) in Collinsville, Illinois will be dedicated to Bob.

Bob Tucker

As I parsed through the various things written about Bob Tucker after his death, one thing became clear to me. The authors of these tributes and reminiscences, both fan and pro, many of them persons unknown to me, held a uniform opinion of Bob: He was friendly, outgoing, and often was the one who welcomed them into fandom, a convention party, or whatever situation in which they found themselves newcomers.

A large number of people shared that common experience of Bob – a really *large* number of people. I would guess that this “large number” included the majority of con-going Midwestern fans, but certainly included many from beyond that region as well.

Like me.

I became a fan in 1951, when I was 13. I cannot remember where I first saw Bob’s name, but I knew him to be a BNF by the time I knew what “BNF” meant. And in 1953 he did a column for Joel Nydahl’s VEGA. It was in that column that I read about interlineations for the first time, for example. (And that column sparked a revival in interlineations – clever one-line bits – in the fanzines of the time, leading to an entire fanzine, “Art Wesley’s” – Dean Grennell’s – *Filler*, devoted solely to numbered interlineations. You could then cite a number and break up your audience.)

Late in the summer of 1953 I published the first issue of my first fanzine, a little pocket-sized zine called *Zip*. It wasn’t very good, a fact I realized immediately, and I mimeod only about 35 copies. When I put together my mailing list I did not include many BNFs because I was too embarrassed to send them such a crudzine. (And with justification. When I sent #2 to Redd Boggs, he informed me by return letter that it wasn’t worth trading for his *Skyhook* – then one of the top fanzines of the day.)

But I did send a copy to Bob Tucker. And I

got a kind note from him in response. That was typical of Bob.

A year later (and several issues of *Zip* later), when I was 16 and feeling a bit less shy about meeting my fellow fans (all of them older than I), I decided I should find out if a SF club existed in my area. I lived in Northern Virginia, a half-dozen miles outside Washington, D.C. So I wrote to Bob Tucker, asking him if he knew of any D.C.-area clubs. And Bob directed me to WSFA, the Washington SF Association. Typically, he did so cheerfully and promptly and without the least bit of condescension. I joined the club in September, 1954.

In 1955 I attended my first convention, the Cleveland Worldcon. By now I’d been an active fan for four years, I’d been in FAPA for half a year, and I “knew” by mail a lot of fans and was equally well-known to them. I was finally meeting them face to face. That was a great convention for me because I met so many fans who would be life-long friends – people like Harlan Ellison and Boyd Raeburn and Howard Lyons and Bill Donaho and Dick Ellington and Larry Shaw and Lee Hoffman and Jack Harness, and, of course, Bob Tucker.

Bob was an instant friend when we met. His eyes twinkled and he had a welcoming smile for me. He impressed me enormously with his wit and good humor and his *inclusiveness*. A year later, at my second convention, the New York Worldcon, he would impress me all over again with these traits.

I hung out at the New York convention with a West Coast fan my own age, Ron Ellik, who had hitchhiked across country for the convention. Ron was a big guy for his age, and that maybe fooled some people into thinking he was older than he was. He and I had been contemporaries, peers in fandom, both of us putting out crudzines which improved with each issue, and in person he was youthful and boisterous, a cheerful guy who got on

Ted White

some older fans' nerves a bit. (A couple of years later Ron would be dubbed "The Squirrel," and Bjo created a cartoon persona for him with a big bushy tail.) Some people at the convention tried to avoid Ron, and to keep him out of their parties, due to what they called his "juvenile antics." And, to the extent they identified me with him, they excluded me as well.

Bob Tucker noticed this, and at each appropriate opportunity, Bob would slip me the room numbers for the best "private" room parties for that night. And, when I showed up at the door – with or without Ron – it was Bob who would vouch for me (or us) and get me (or us) in. (I usually sat quietly in the back of the party and listened to the stories being told. Often they were being told by Bob.)

That same convention was the one at which a bunch of us, not wanting to pay what was then considered a high price for the convention banquet, adjourned next door to a Childs Restaurant and returned after the meal to hear the after-banquet speeches. Bob Tucker was one of our number.

When we got back we were told we could not enter the banquet hall – not even its balcony – to hear the featured speaker, Al Capp. Chairman Dave Kyle was annoyed because less banquet tickets had been sold than he'd expected, and he'd over-guaranteed the banquet to the hotel by 100 tickets – a significant shortfall which might plunge the convention into debt. So he banned all convention members who had not bought banquet tickets from hearing Capp.

When we settled down in the anteroom outside the banquet hall to wait, flunkies came out and moved us out of that room, uttering the now-immortal words, "Dave Kyle says you can't sit there." When we moved into the space beyond the anteroom, they came back and delivered the same message.

Some of us – the cream of fandom! – got annoyed at this, especially when we were moved a *third* time, banished



Tucker won two of these Retro Hugos.

to a distant area. But not Bob. He and Walt Leibschler started telling our group of between one and two dozen fans stories about the '40s, when he and Walt had been close buddies. And it was Bob Tucker who christened us The Balcony Insurgents. We had our own program! It was almost anticlimactic when we were finally allowed onto the balcony itself to hear Arthur Clarke speak and see the Hugo Awards handed out.

To me, Bob's role in the Balcony Insurgents was emblematic of the kind of person he was. He was one of *us*.

He could have made something of the fact that he was a major SF author (*The Long Loud Silence* was then a recent and highly regarded book), I suppose, and he might have tried throwing his weight around. He could have insisted, bellicosely, on "his rights." He could have separated himself from the rest of us, I think, and gained entrance for Capp's speech. I don't think Kyle would have excluded Tucker alone.

But Bob stayed with the rest of us, and maintained his humorous outlook, cracking jokes about the situation (and giving it a name). He kept our spirits up. That was the kind of guy he was.

Bob Tucker, despite publishing over a dozen SF and mystery novels, despite being what we then called "a dirty pro" (Bob may have coined that phrase, too), *remained a fan*. He was a model for younger fans like Terry Carr and myself when we "went pro" but stayed active in fandom.

I could tell you about my personal relationship with Bob, how I read the manuscripts of two of his never-published novels in the mid-'60s, how he and Fern gave my second wife Robin and me their bed one night when we visited them at their home (at their invitation), etc., etc. But an amazingly large number of people can tell you the same or similar things. Bob's warmth and generosity seemed to have few limits, and a great many were beneficiaries of those qualities in him.

And that is Bob Tucker's personal legacy to us all: He was never a man to put himself above his fellow fans. He never presumed upon his status as the BNF's BNF. He was always our friend.

Farewell, Bob. You lived a great life.

—Ted White

Bob Tucker: Writer and Fan

Tucker and I go way back, in a manner of speaking. Back before I discovered fandom I used to read lots of science fiction, in book and magazine form. I don't remember *all* of what I read of Tucker's back then, but through the miracle of my parents' inability to throw away all the stuff I left behind when I moved out in 1965 I have my copies from back then of the paperback editions of *The Long Loud Silence* and *Wild Talent* (although under the title *Man From Tomorrow*). I remember reading *The Lincoln Hunters* in an SFBC edition and *To The Tombaugh Station* in *F&SF*, too, but my copy of that issue of *F&SF* is a reacquisition and of *The Lincoln Hunters* a 1968 Ace Special. I think I also read *The City in the Sea* back then, too, but I digress.

Last year I got a copy of Tucker's first mystery novel—actually his first published novel in any genre—*The Chinese Doll*. I read and very much enjoyed it. It was the first in a series featuring detective Charles Horne, and before long I sought out, purchased and read the other four books in that series. I loved the tone of his narrative and, of course, the rampant “Tuckerizations” in all of them. Some discussion of his other mysteries and thrillers took place on one of the e-lists, and that led me to getting all of his other mystery novels in recent months.

When Carol and I went off to New Mexico in early October to visit one of my sons living outside Taos, for nighttime motel reading I took along two of those books: *The Man In My Grave* and *This Witch*. I finished them both, and was looking forward to dropping Tucker an e-mail of egoboo

when we got home.

So imagine my surprise and shock when, before checking any of the lists, I downloaded *Vegas Fandom Weekly*'s 86th issue (an issue number of some significance in this case!) and encountered the boldfaced headline, “Bob Tucker Dead.” I felt numb as I proceeded to the e-lists and read post after post mourning his loss. I mourn his passing, too, belatedly but far from alone.

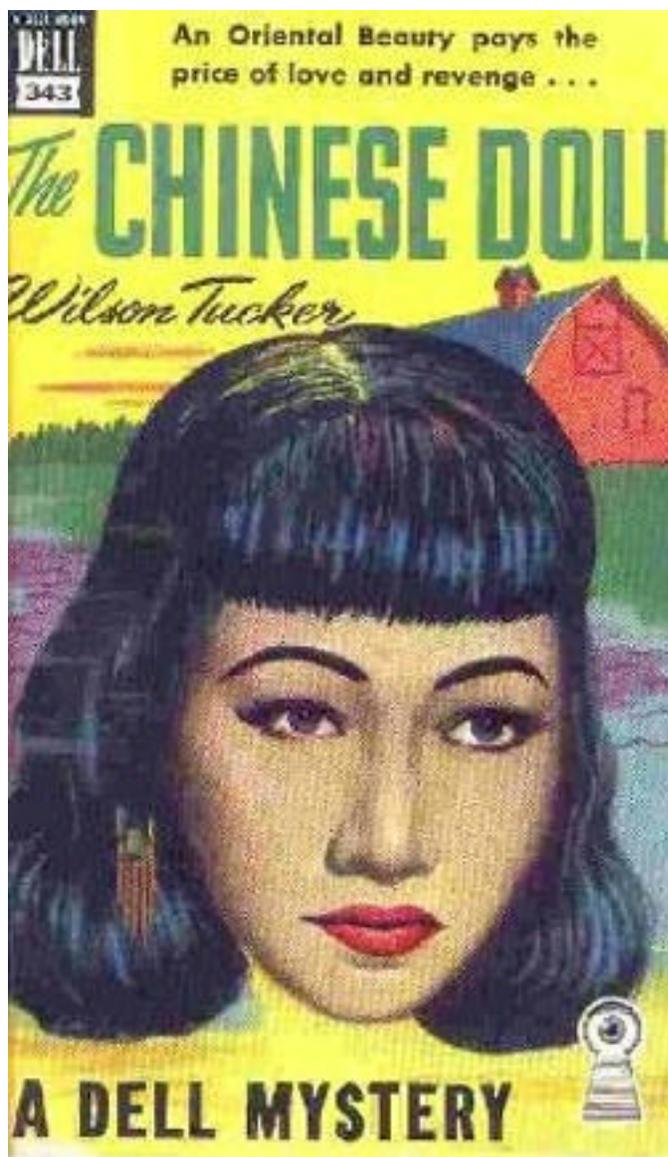
Tucker was a presence in the very first fanzine I ever received. Over the years I've enjoyed his fan writing in hundreds of fanzines, most especially including his own legendary *Le Zombie*, a near complete set of which I've managed to slowly gather. He never wrote an article for *Trap Door* but would occasionally show up in the letter column—in the eleventh issue he made this pithy remark:

“A sterling fanzine such as TRAP DOOR needs more but shorter letters of comment, such as this one. The way will thus be paved for more and longer columns and articles such as those in #10. I have writ.”

I did my best to comply, and in the twenty-third issue was rewarded with this longer letter relating a mellow reminiscence:

“I was delighted with Benford's ‘Adventures in H'wood’ because his opening sentence captured my attention and rekindled my memory banks. He had lunch at the Fox Studios! He doesn't know it until now but he may have eaten that lunch in the same dining room I patronized for about five months. This revelation will plunge all fandom into war.

Robert Lichtman



“In 1946 I went to Los Angeles for the Worldcon and afterward stayed five months because a job at the Fox Studios fell into my lap—not as a lowly writer but as a lowly set electrician. I was the new man with the lowest seniority in the electrical department and so I was assigned to the scut work—crawling between the walls of back-to-back sets and wiring the lighting fixtures on those walls,

or crawling inside a locomotive boiler to wire the headlight hanging on the faceplate. Lucky me.

“The movies I worked on are now 50 to 55 years old and I no longer see them on the black-and-white late shows, but none of them were sci-fi and none contained errors that might upset a physics professor. They dealt with George Montgomery as a private detective, with Maureen O’Hara as the owner of a prized race horse, and with Ronald Colman raising a family in Boston. Dull stuff with nary an astronaut strolling by without his helmet.

“Thank you for a splendid issue, memories and all.”

To the best of my recollection I only met Bob once, and there’s a Las Vegas connection in that meeting: it was at the fourth and final SilverCon, also known as ManureCon (so named because of the pungent fertilizer spread on every patch of lawn between the rooms at the convention hotel), where he was the fan guest of honor. I wish I remembered *anything* about our interactions other than that they were very pleasurable, but I do remember the party at Arnie and Joyce’s on the Thursday evening before the convention officially began where I got to witness the first meeting in nearly half a century between Tucker and Charles Burbee (Art Widner and Jack Speer were there, too). Tucker told the story of his job at Fox Studios related above there, and then tried to needle Burbee into telling the watermelon story. And didn’t succeed. Nonetheless, it was a wonderful reunion and I was pleased to be there and be part of it.

I’ll certainly miss Bob, but he had a good, long run and an enjoyable life—and his footprint of good humor and his mighty legacy echo down through the annals of fandom from its very beginnings until now. I can’t imagine how different it would have been (and be) without his presence and example. — Robert Lichtman

The Neofan’s Guide

The Neofan’s Guide, written and published by Bob Tucker in the mid-1950’s, is a brilliant explanation and encapsulation of the essence of Classic Fandom. It has been revised several times in an effort to keep it relevant. You can take a look at this vintage piece at the following URL:

<http://efanzines.com/NeofansGuide1/index.htm>

A Hard Good-Bye

Saying good-bye in person is really a bitch. Saying good-bye to a loved one who left without hearing you say it is especially difficult. 'Bye, Bob....

Arthur Wilson Tucker was a member of the group of very active Midwest fans who, in 1952, pulled me up from obscurity and allowed me to sit on the porch with the big dogs. He was also, in fannish terms, a close neighbor, living downstate Illinois while I lived in Chicago. During those intense fifteen years, there were many occasions when we found ourselves together at conventions or A-list fan parties, including a few held in my house, and in his.

Without exception, he always greeted me with warmth and made a place for me to sit close to him, and to Bob Bloch, the other half of that fabulous Bobsalot duo. Over the years he was always Johnny-on-the-spot for anything I asked of him regarding science fiction conventions, MCing special events, arranging extra special thrills for extra special fans, etc.

The history of science fiction fandom has accolades to Bob Tucker on almost every page. There is nothing I can possibly say to add



Bob Bloch and Bob Tucker, shown here during a Tucker visit to Bloch's home, were closely identified with each other in Fandom for many years.



Bloch and Tucker at Niagara Falls.

anything to the legend.

Even these few words are very difficult for me to write. I keep seeing Bob, through the years, appearing before me, saying those good things to me, sharing the knowledge of the past, passing along a thousand little torches to light the way for the rest of us in his absence.

It will be very difficult without him.

See how rambling and incoherent all this is? I'm so sorry, Bob, that I can't do it right.

But I do have this one thing to pass along, my most favorite of all photos of you. Bob Tucker as hood ornament, taken at the North Plaza Motel in Cincinnati at a Midwestcon circa 1956.

Have a good rest, old friend, and give Bloch a hug for me. Keep a sharp lookout; I'll be along shortly....

--Earl Kemp

Earl Kemp

Glorious, in Retrospect

A landmark event has occurred.

Arthur Wilson Tucker, known to many as Bob, shifted from his earthly plane of existence to join other science-fiction immortals on October 6, 2006. His wife, Fern, died in June, and some believe her departure hastened his.

Tucker was a very successful author, having sold over 60 short stories and novels in his lifetime and won many well-deserved awards such as Author Emeritus by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. His “Year of the Quiet Sun” earned him the J W Campbell Memorial Award and won or was nominated for many others.

While well-known as a science fiction writer, Tucker also penned eleven successful mystery novels, in which he endeared himself to sf fandom by using names of fans in his novels.

Tucker’s career started in the movies – as a film projector. He enthralled many with his tales of slips he noticed as he watched the films, night

after night, year after year.

Bob Tucker is also immortalized in science fiction fandom, having been a part of what is called First Fandom, the first group of sf fans who printed fanzines, formed clubs, created conventions and activated feuds. Even a brief listing of his fannish achievements would take way, way too long.

As “Hoy Ping Pong”, an alias he carried thru his life, he had a spoof story in the old Gernsback magazine *WONDER STORIES*. It wasn’t published as a paid-for story, but in the magazine’s letter column. Nonetheless, it made a splash, the ripples of which still widen.

Of great importance to us, Tucker is known as the originator of the term “Space Opera”. Because of that, our next issue will be dedicated to him.

You don’t look good in black, Bob!

— Shelby Vick

Shelby Vick

Bob Tucker in *Fancyclopedia II*

BOB TUCKER Nickname by which Arthur Wilson Tucker (of the Bloomington, Illinois Tuckers) is generally known. Besides adding several pages to fan history (which you will find scattered thru this volume) he has had a number of items, to us of interest, associated directly with the Tucker name.

The Tucker Hotel was based on a suggestion of Bob's, in 1952 when the ChiCon II and its prices signalled the start of the Big Convention movement, that fans simply build a hotel of their very own for holding conventions in it from one site to another as required. A campaign arose to send Bricks to Tucker for the construction of this edifice; Rich Elsberry, denouncing this as a vile proish plot to get free bricks, recommended that BT be sent straw with which to make bricks for himself. A group of Anglofans designed, and draftsman Bob Shaw drew up plans for, a Tucker Hotel; Walt Willis and Chuck Harris located a fine site for it.

Tuckerism is the practice among professional authors of using their friends' names for characters in stories they are writing, Bob being a leading exponent of this sort of thing.

There have been two Tucker Death Hoaxes. The first was that mentioned under Staple War, in which a fellow boarder made the announcement to the proz -- not actually meaning it as a hoax, but as a joke, tho a sick one. Another came a few weeks before the CinVention; at that time Ben Singer, an 18-year-old Michifan stationed at Chanute AFB near Tucker's place, dropped in on Bob and suggested pulling off a Tucker Death Hoax for the con. Bob deprecated the idea and thought he'd quashed it, but Singer found it a fascinating notion and upon leaving sent Don Ford [CinVention chairman] a telegram, ostensibly from Mari-Beth Wheeler, telling him of Bob's death, and sent Art Rapp a news release giving gory details. The story ran that Bob had written a love novel which Rinehart desperately wanted to buy, tho they had lost the manuscript he had sent them; and that when Tucker got their message his children had just finished burning the only carbon copy. Tuck, *per* Singer, drowned his sorrows, went to sleep drunk while smoking in the projection room of the theater where he worked, and started a fire in which he was fatally burned.

His last words deserve recording: "Tell them I'm sorry..." (i e the CinVention attendees, because he couldn't make it to the con). Rapp took the message at its face value, and flashed the news out to fandom; Will Sykora called Bloomington to check up and found out from the manager of the theater that it was all a hoax, which, accordingly, he indignantly denounced. So did the manager, suspecting Tucker of seeking phony publicity for his writings; only his strong union, Bob says, kept him from being summarily fired. --

— Dick Eney (in *Fancyclopedia II*)

Grandfather Tucker

Bob Tucker was my grandfather. Not by blood, but by Corflu, Jim Beam, sweat, and tears. He was one of the earliest contributors to my fanzine, GRANFALLOON, and I was always grateful when he sent me another humorous article. Somewhere along the line I learned that his "Neo-fan's Guide" was pretty much out of print, and asked him if I could update it and reprint it. I'd always found it an extremely useful item for new fans.

When I met him in person, he was charming and so friendly and funny that I felt as though I'd known him all my life. I'd read stories about his Tucker Hotel and other exploits in Dick Eney's *Fancylopedia II* and read many of his professional SF books. I learned how to drink Jim Beam and "smooooth," with him. After meeting him a few times, I told him I felt like he was my fannish grandfather. And he responded with something like, "That's right. You are my granddaughter."

I'll never forget going to Byobcon I in 1976 (I think) in Kansas City, which was the first (and only) time I was ever a Fan Guest of Honor. Bob Tucker was the Toastmaster, Bob Bloch was the Pro GoH, and Harlan Ellison was there too. What a great con! On the night before the banquet, I memorized my GoH speech for the morning. It was a good thing that I rehearsed it the night before. I filled it with jokes about the other pros on hand (something about my writing a new book called "The Beast that Shouted Love at the Heart of the Quiet Sun" and how it wasn't safe to shower in the hotel without a friend since the author of Psycho was around, and so on -- I don't remember exactly, since that was 30 years ago!).

Anyway, on the night before the banquet I made the round of parties, and everywhere I went, there was Bob Tucker. I met Tucker and "smooothed" with him and Jim Beam. I left him, turned right, and went down the hall, and there

was Tucker. We "smooothed" again and said goodbye. I went right down the hall --- and somehow there he was again, and so on. He was so delightful to talk to and we were having a great time. And the Jim Beam or Beam's Choice was excellent -- the con committee had given him a case of it I seem to remember.

The next day, I woke up feeling mighty under the weather. But the con must go on. So I had to go and give my GoH speech. Fortunately it was well received. I knew it was going well when not only were Tucker and Bloch laughing, but Harlan Ellison at a few points laughed so much he literally rolled off his chair. Of course Tucker and Bloch gave their speeches, which were hysterical (and no doubt far superior to mine in wit and chuckles).

After the banquet I had to go to my room to lie down awhile to overcome the effects of too much Jim Beam. When I later told Tucker I may have "smooothed" a little too much the night before, he smiled and said no one had noticed a thing during my GoH speech and that he'd loved it. And he pulled out another bottle of Beam and asked if I'd like to try another sip. And we "smooothed" once again.

I have many fond memories of that particular con, and at the center of them are memories of a wonderful man.

Now this dear man is gone, and it is a great loss to all the fans who knew him and knew of him, and to fandom itself. This time there is no "Tucker death hoax," but in the hearts of those of us who knew and loved him, there is no death - this man touched our lives and will always be a part of us.

I raise my glass, as I did many times with him, and say once again: "Smooooth."

-- Linda E. Bushyager

Linda Bushyager

I'll Be at the Party

Arthur Wilson “Bob” Tucker was already a legend in fandom when I was a teenaged neo in the early 1950’s. He’d written a murder mystery, *The Chinese Doll*, in which he named characters after members of the science fiction community. As far as I know, that was the first time this had been done; hence, “Tuckerization.”

A few years later, in the spring of 1957, I was a very young soldier and sorely missing my fannish fixes. I had hooked up with a local fan club in central Indiana and could often get a Friday night off to attend meetings. My Army assignment was actually pretty cushy. I had no real complaints about it. But even so, my personal high points were those evenings with the fans.

The Midwescon that year was the first science fiction convention I’d ever attended, and even though it was a small event the number of pro’s in attendance was surprising. Doc Smith was there, Isaac Asimov, P. Schuyler Miller, L. Sprague de Camp, Wilson Tucker and Robert Bloch. The whole thing was thoroughly informal. Closest thing to an official program was a communal dinner one night at an Italian joint near the motel. Bloch and Tucker put on an hilarious after-dinner show. Martin and Lewis had nothing on them.

I had a camera with me and shot a couple of rolls of film. Then I got prints back from the lab (!) I sent copies to the people in them, including Bob Tucker.

Just about this time, in one of the prozines of the era, probably *Startling Stories* or *Imagination*, I came across a review of a publication called *Science Fiction Fifty Yearly*. It was co-produced by Tucker and his longtime pal, Robert Bloch. The title was justified by the fact that Tucker and Bloch had been fans together for twenty-five years, hence, a cumulative half-century.

As a freshly-minted second lieutenant in Uncle Sam’s Army, I was earning a munificent \$222.30 per month, minus taxes. I wrote a letter to Mr. Tucker. In it I introduced myself and enclosed some Midwescon photos including a couple of him.) I also added a crisp new dollar bill, requesting a copy of *Science Fiction Fifty Yearly*.

Back came a letter on the stationery of the Dean A. Grennell Fan Club. I have treasured that letter for fully half a century. I have it still, and will append a photocopy of it to this little memoir. In short order I did re-

Dean A. Grennell Fan Club

Ron Parker, President Bob Bloch, Vice-President Dean A. Grennell, Treasurer Bob Tucker, Drinks

P.O. Box 702
Bloomington, Ill.

Cheers, Richard:

Under separate cover I am sending you a copy of SCIENCE FICTION FIFTY-YEARLY, and Lieutenant, Sir, you dang near lost out! As you will see, this copy represents the bottom of the barrel -- I should apologize for its poor condition, but I won't, because my mimeographer (Nan Gerding) ran a flock of them off for me, and threw in the left-overs for free. You are getting one of the left-overs.

And enclosed, good fan, you are getting your buck back. I would not charge you a buck for a fanzine that I have sent free to others, and I publish fanzines so infrequently that you would not receive a dollar's value for some years to come. So, read this copy (if you can) on us, and next year at the Midwescon you can buy me a drink.

And thank you for the photos --- mighty pleased!


Bob Tucker

NEW NUMBER

INFREQUENTLY

ceive my copy of *Science Fiction Fifty Yearly*, some of the pages slightly tilted or smudged, but all there and all legible. I loved it.

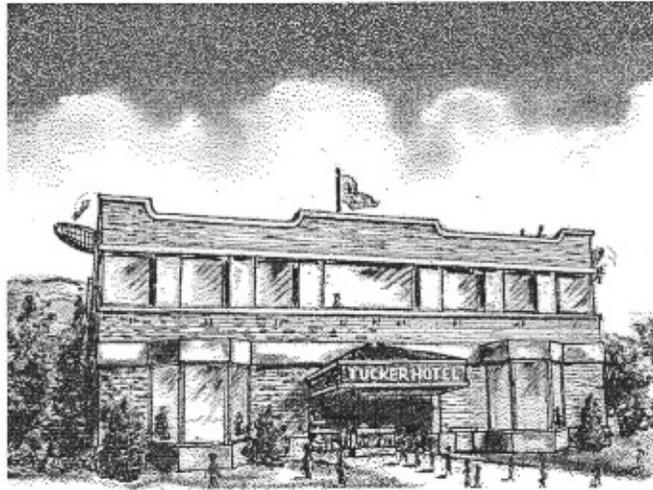
Tucker and I became friends, and remained friends for the rest of his life. A few years after our first encounter he even contributed a hilarious send-up of his friend Bloch to my fanzine, *Xero*. It was called “The Master Shall Not Abate.”

In the autumn of 2004, as the anniversary of Tucker’s birth approached, he sent me an e-mail inviting me to his intended ninetieth birthday party. I was unable to attend, alas, so I sent a reply expressing regrets and wishing him a happy birthday. Tucker then responded. He said not to be upset at missing his ninetieth birthday, he would invite me again on the occasion of his one hundred eightieth.

I know Tucker, I know that he was – *is!* – a man of his word, and I fully expect to be invited to his birthday party in 2096. It’s going to take place at the Tucker Hotel, and I am sure as hell going to be there. I’ll bet that Tucker and Bloch will put on their show again, too.

— Dick Lupoff

Dick Lupoff



The Tucker Hotel