

# Hexagon #1

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And so I once again find myself compelled to pub my ish. Arnie Katz was right – there is no escape from fanzine fandom. I tried to escape, for a while. Each time I thought I was free, an unexpected envelope would show up in my mailbox, and I'd once again feel the urge to put fingers to keyboard. "Just something small," I'd say to myself. "A four-page perzine. That should do it." But I knew it would never be enough – being the perfectionist type that I am, I could never intentionally publish a crudzine. (Unintentionally publishing a crudzine would be another matter entirely, but since I'd managed to avoid it my first time out, I should be able to avoid it again.)

So, with Real Soon Now finally having arrived (see below), my next task was to decide what I wanted my new zine to look like. In designing my format, I set two commandments for myself: "Play to your strengths" and "steal from the best." My strengths lie in writing rather than in drawing or layout, hence the rather text-heavy format of *Hexagon*. (If any of you are inclined to send me art, I'll find a way to include it, but I'm not going to drive myself to distraction trying to find art and include it in mass quantities the way I did with *All Sinking, No Power*. Having assessed my strengths and weaknesses, I then set out to see what I should steal from those who had come before me. I ended up taking:

- From Fred Lerner (*Lofgeornost*) and Eric Lindsay (*Gegenschein*), I took the basic two-column, all text layout,
- From the late John Foyster (*eFnac*), I took the landscape layout for ease of reading on-screen (although David Burton seems to have beaten me to stealing this one, with his new zine *Pixel*), and
- From Dale Speirs (*Opuntia*), I took the idea of an issue numbering system which includes fractional numbered issues. For those of you not familiar with Dale's excellent zine, "[w]hole-numbered OPUNTIAs are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, x.3 issues are apazines, and x.5 issues are perzines." In my case, it will be "Whole-numbered Hexagons are per/genzines, x.1 issues are Stipple-APA commentzines, x.2 issues are Phoenix

commentzines," with subsequent proliferation of subtypes as needed. No need to worry with trying to remember the system, though – it will appear in the masthead of every issue after this.

## About the Title

When I first started writing this zine, I had already fallen in love with the name *Hexagon*. Of course, this was probably premature, as I didn't know for certain that I'd be able to use it. A Google search had failed to turn up any previous zines with this title, but that didn't necessarily mean that it was safe to use the title, as I know that some faneds deliberately avoid having their works on the net. So I wrote to Arnie Katz and asked if he knew of any zine that had ever been created with this title. He did ask, though, if I wasn't concerned that people might mistakenly think it was a gaming zine. I'd never thought of that, but since gaming is a part of my fanac, the idea didn't particularly worry me.

So where did "Hexagon" as a title come from? It all started about a year and a half ago, when I was browsing through an online T-shirt shop and saw a shirt with a design that said "70s science fiction was all about the hexagons." This idea resonated with me, immediately making me think of the original *Star Trek*<sup>1</sup>, the first *Star Wars* movie, *2001*, and, one of my all-time favorites, *Logan's Run*. As these movies, and the books that were published at the same time, had been extremely influential in defining my experience of SF, I decided to pay tribute to the idea by naming my new zine "Hexagon."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Yes, I know this was from the 60s, but I experienced it in the 70s, and it was very important in informing the 70s SF aesthetic.

<sup>2</sup> Plus, it fulfilled my desire for a snappy one-word title, something I'd never successfully come up with before.

## ***Upon the arrival of Real Soon Now***

As those of you who've been following my life for a while know, I had enrolled in library school in an Internet-based program from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. This semester (spring 2006), I finally started classes (after a one-year postponement because of difficulties inherent in moving from New Orleans to Minneapolis and getting set up in a new city). And about halfway through the semester, I had an epiphany – I hated library school. It's entirely possible that I'd make a wonderful librarian, but we'll never know, because there's no way in hell I could make it through the degree program. Not at this point, anyway. I've been out of school too long – I've gotten used to being able to read what I want, when I want, and I now find myself fundamentally unable to conceive of a data search conducted not because anyone actually *wants* the data, but just so that I can practice search techniques, as anything other than a waste of time. And so, my part-time employment obtained to help support the family while I go to school having come to a precipitous and unexpected end, I've been conducting a job search so that I can go back to working full-time and Angel can go back to school and get her RN. At the time of this writing, I've had a couple of interviews but no offers yet, although hopefully I'll have a new job before I finish this issue. Only time will tell.

At any rate, since I'll no longer be in school, and since one of my criteria for my job search is a job with a definite schedule, where I can leave work at work when the day is over, I will now have time to pub my ish, and hence, for me, that mythical fannish time of Real Soon Now has finally arrived.

## ***In which I perform computer surgery***

Friday, 21 April: In our house, we have two computers, mine and Angel's. Due to the configuration of our desk, I'm the only one who can use my computer, so Angel's computer is also the computer that the children use. Which made things quite bad when Angel's computer started acting up – from time to time, for no particular reason that we could tell, the monitor would go black, then display a message “No signal. Check line cable.” The problem could only be fixed by turning the computer off and then on again.

So I asked my LiveJournal friends list, got some suggestions for diagnosing the problem, and waited for it to happen again. The next time it happened, I went down to the basement, brought up the spare monitor, and connected it to the computer. Still no signal. However, while I was crawling around under the desk, I noticed something. From my computer, I could hear the hum of a cooling fan, from Angel's computer, no such hum. Touching the cases confirmed that her computer was much warmer than mine. With the problem now successfully diagnosed, all that remained was for me to replace the fan without damaging the other parts of the computer.

Saturday, 22 April: I opened the case, took the fan out, and headed to Radio Shack. Unfortunately, the only fan they carry is 3 in. x 3 in., and our computer uses a 70 mm x 70 mm fan. So I came home, ordered the fan online (\$4.99, plus \$4.99 shipping), cleaned all the dust off the heatsink, and hooked the computer back up, with the side of the case left off for better airflow.

Thursday, 27 April: The UPS arrived with the new fan. After a bit of fumbling while trying to plug it into the motherboard, I manage to get it installed with no problem. I plug the computer back in, reconnect everything, and turn it on. Of course, at this time, I still don't know if I've solved the problem – if things continue to mess up, then I'll know that I've replaced the wrong part, and that whatever's actually wrong with the computer won't be so cheap or easy to replace.

Friday, 28 April: The computer has been on since yesterday afternoon with no problems whatsoever, so replacing the fan has apparently fixed the problem. I feel very accomplished.

Saturday, 30 April: Angel's computer crashed again. Apparently the problem *is* the cooling system, since having the case open and a desk fan blowing on the computer's innards fixes the problem, but replacing the CPU fan wasn't the key to fixing it. Eric has recommended a slot fan – I'll probably give that a try once finances improve. At any rate, even though I didn't manage to fix the computer, I managed to fiddle around inside it without breaking it, so I still feel rather accomplished.

## ***In which I comment on my recent reading***

Starting with the next *Hexagon*, each issue I'll be able to list/review everything I've read since the previous issue. Since this is the first issue, I've had to decide on an arbitrary cut-off point – April 19, which is one month prior to the date I am writing this.

1. J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. This is, I think, my second reread of this one. It still remains my favorite in the series to date. (Or, at least, as “to date” as one can be without having read *Half Blood Prince* – I decided to go back and reread the whole series before tackling that one.)
2. Kendall Hailey, *How I Became an Autodidact (and the advice, adventures, and acrimonies that befell me thereafter)*. This book was recommended in a discussion of autodidacticism that started in Carol Kennedy's LiveJournal after she wrote about my decision to drop out of library school. Hailey had some very good insights about the relationship (or lack thereof) between school and education. However, if you decide to look into this book be forewarned: For all that the author was a very insightful teenage girl at the time that she wrote this book, she was still a teenage girl, with all that that entails (i.e. there are some parts of the book which are very “Dear Diary, fantasy crush” stuff). It was still an entertaining and thought-provoking book.
3. Craig Unger, *House of Bush, House of Saud: The Secret Relationship Between the World's Two Most Powerful Dynasties*. I picked this one up at the recommendation of Kurt Vonnegut. Okay, he didn't recommend it to me *personally*; he recommended it to all readers of his latest book, *A Man Without a Country*. After reading this, I fear even more for the future of our country. Prior to this I knew enough to be scared, now I know enough to be *terrified*. I had no idea the links between the different parties involved here were so deep and went back so long.
4. Ray Bradbury, *Bradbury Speaks: Too Soon From the Cave, Too Far From the Stars (Essays on the past, the future, and everything in between)*. Even after reading the somewhat equivocal review of this one in Joseph and Lisa Major's zine *Alexiad*, I decided to give

it a shot anyway, as I usually enjoy essays, letter collections, and memoirs from authors I like. In this case, I'll make an exception. Anyone who's not a Bradbury completist can take a pass on this one. If you still insist on trying to read it, I'd recommend reading every fourth or fifth essay – Bradbury repeats the same anecdotes so much that the odds of you missing anything are infinitesimal. (I swear, if I had a dollar for every time he told how he wrote the screenplay to *Moby Dick*, I'd have been able to pay someone else to read this book for me.)

5. Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, *Better in the Dark*. I had originally been scheduled to be on a vampire novels panel at Minicon 41, but had to drop out when finances made it impossible for me to attend the con. I still finished reading this book, however, which I had picked up in preparation for the panel, as I realized I had never read any of Yarbro's St. Germaine books, for all that I consider her to be one of the major figures in the vampire subgenre. I enjoyed this book, but I'm not sure I'll be reading any more in the series. Yarbro has managed to twist the rules of vampirism in such a way that St. Germaine's vampirism hardly affects the plot at all (i.e. so long as he keeps the soil of his homeland in his shoes, he's able to go out in sunlight). She seems to have written around all the inconvenient parts of vampirism and kept it around strictly so that St. Germaine could be immortal, thus providing him with a justification for knowing things that someone in 9<sup>th</sup> century Germany (where this book is set) would have no way of knowing. Perhaps one of my readers who's more familiar with Yarbro's body of work will be able to tell me if this one is typical of her writing.
6. Elizabeth Vaughan, *Warprize*. I saw the sequel to this book (*Warsworn*) on the book rack at the grocery store and decided to give the series a try. This book is a mixture of fantasy (specifically swords and sorcery-type fantasy) and romance. Publishers and librarians can't seem to agree on where it belongs: Tor had marked it as romance, but my local library had it shelved with fantasy. It's basically Conan with a woman's touch. The hero, Kier, is an enlightened barbarian, and with the aid of the heroine, Xylara, is seeking to improve the life of his tribe, which has just conquered her country. The battles all take place off-screen, but you still have

enough duels and miscellaneous fisticuffs to satisfy your desire for action, plus a heroine who's just as clever and competent as the hero (probably even more so) and an author who goes blessedly light on the descriptions of clothing (one of the chief failings of romance novelists, to my mind). Two thumbs up – if this gets picked up by the SF crowd rather than the romance crowd, I can picture fanfic, costuming, re-enactment, etc.

7. David Edmonds and John Eidinow, *Bobby Fischer Goes to War: How the Soviets Lost the Greatest Chess Match of All Time*. Having recently decided to take up chess again, I decided to use chess as the topic for my pathfinder paper for my reference skills class. During the course of researching that paper, I came across this book. Unlike many books about chess players, I think even a non-chess person would enjoy this book. You have a great cast of personalities and a chess match that is being used as a proxy for the Cold War. The look at goings-on inside the Soviet chess establishment was particularly illuminating. One throwaway line has provided me with an interesting course for further reading: The authors say that Soviets relied on ballet, chess, and *the circus* to provide evidence of the superiority of their political system. Now I want to learn more about Soviet circuses.
8. Ian Christie, *Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal*. Heavy metal was the music of my youth, and even though I'll move away from it for long stretches of time, I still come back to it fairly regularly. Spotting this in the library catalog, I decided to check it out, and I'm glad I did. I now have a much broader view of the development of metal – southern Mississippi was hardly a center of the metal world, so my early exposure was somewhat haphazard; add to that the fact that I missed most of the metal developments of the 1990s and the end result was that I had a rather limited view of the genre. I feel like I've remedied that now and that I'm able to take a more nuanced view of the importance of my favorite metal bands. While Christie's biases come through – I think he greatly underestimates the importance of hair metal, for example – the book is about as evenhanded and comprehensive as a single-volume history of a subject as sprawling and inchoate as metal can possibly be.

## ***In which I make my first professional sale***

The July 2006 issue of *Knucklebones* (a new board-gaming magazine) has two articles in it by me: A review of *Empire Builder* and an article on train games. The train games article even got mentioned on the cover! I received my contributor copies and (even better) my check this week. Squee! Even more exciting than seeing my name in print, oddly enough, was seeing my article with photographs and captions added to it! I'm not going to make enough writing for *Knucklebones* to be able to quit my day job, but it's a nice thing to see my name in print and be paid for it.

## ***The letter column***

This being the first issue, there's nothing to report here, save a WAHF from Arnie Katz in response to my query about the name. I had considered using some of the letters I had received in response to *All Sinking, No Power*, which would still have been usable despite their age, only to discover that I had lost them in a computer mishap. I'm sure I'll have something to put here next time.

## ***Feeling odd about hurricane season***

When we decided to move to Minnesota, one of the things I was pleased about was that we would no longer be prone to hurricanes. Listening to the radio news this week, as they talk about the forecast for this year's hurricane season and the preparations being made while the area is still trying to recover from Katrina, I've been having rather strange feelings about it. Sort of a survivor's guilt, I suppose. I'm not about to deliberately move back into the hurricane zone, but I never thought that fear of hurricanes would be something I would miss about living in southern Mississippi and then New Orleans.

## ***The end***

That's it for now. Expect another issue soon (i.e. within a couple of months, not Real Soon Now). Feel free to send LOCs, articles, books/games/CDs/movies for review, or whatever else you feel like.