

Another Ghost From Southern Fandom Past

When I rejoined SFPA in 2012, I had recently opened a long forgotten box and discovered documents from my previous fannish incarnation. To wit: My file of letters from Al Andrews and Lloyd Biggle Jr., an envelope of never published illos by Robert E. Gilbert, a collection of author photos given to me by JT Oliver. The photos were subsequently published as *The JT Oliver Photo Collection*, a one-shot for Mailing No. 293. One of the images was a casual shot of JT, the great Lee Hoffman and Paul Cox. Paul, who later became a successful sports writer and editor, was one of the small group of fans in the Columbus, Ga., area.

Although I came to know JT, who passed on the photos, a few issues of Hoffman's *Quandry* and other items, I did not know Paul until later and not as a fan then. Our paths crossed as journalists.

Another fan from that area I corresponded with but never met was Robert Cox, the younger brother of Paul. One afternoon late in July Nancy said she had received a Facebook message from a Bob Cox, who wanted to know if she was married to Bill Plott, who used to be a science fiction fan or something to that effect. I told her I thought I did know him and to give him my regular email address.

Thus, here is an update on Bob Cox, who went by Robert Cox back then:

July 24

Bill, I don't know if you recall me, but back in the 50's when you had a zine going, I wrote to you a couple of times. My brother and JT Oliver had a fanzine, *TimeStream*.



**From left, Lee Hoffman,
JT, Oliver Paul Cox**

I was surfing around the internet and saw an article you wrote that had a photo of them. So I checked Facebook and saw your page ...which went dead in 2015... but mentioned your wife's name and I saw she was active so I wrote and asked her if you had croaked, and she said no, in fact you still go to SciFi events. So I thought I'd drop you a line.

I left Columbus in '58 and went to Florida to live with my brother Paul, and in 1960 I hooked up with an Italian Circus

(Cristiani Brothers) and stayed and stayed on the road for about 15

Another Ghost From Southern Fandom Past is a one-shot for Southern Fandom Press Alliance Mailing #319 from Bill Plott, 190 Crestview Circle, Montevallo, AL 35115. Also, wjplott@aol.com 205-908-8703. This is Banshee Press publication No. 68.

other shows and wound up in Mexico where I still am... I live in Apizaco, Tlaxcala and became an Accredited Tourist Guide. Amongst other things, I worked as a freelance photographer journalist for awhile on an English language tourist newspaper. Got married during the Olympics in '68. My wife and I have 2 children and 4 grandkids. I became a Dual National about 6 years ago, (I have 2 passports). I'm not getting rich but I have a great time and enjoy meeting people here, most of my clients I meet through the internet. Almost always English Speaking, been getting a lot of Canadians and now I get the Trump Effect..People who are interested in getting away from politics in the USA.

But how are you doing? It's been many many moons.... The last time I was in Columbus, about 1999, I could hardly recognize the place, only found one person that I knew.

Drop me a line... get back on Facebook so we can chat once in awhile.

On your last day on earth, the person you became will meet the person you could have become.

check my blog at...<http://mexicomystic.wordpress.com>

Bob Cox

* * *

July 24

Bob,

Indeed, I do remember you. Back then you went by Robert and I went by Billy Joe. In fact, I have a b&w snapshot of you, cigarette in hand, standing outside (Comer?) Auditorium. By the way, do you still smoke Pall Malls? Actually, I hope, like me, you gave up smoking long ago.

I don't think you and I ever met, although we did correspond. Another person on the fringe of fandom back then was Millard Grimes, editor at the Ledger-Enquirer, where I interned in the summer of '64. My acquaintance with your brother Paul was through sports writing, not fandom. I stayed active until the middle '60s, then

Robert Cox, back in the day, 1960?

drifted away from it. In 2012 DeepSouthCon50 was held in Huntsville, Ala., in honor of the very first one having been held there in 1963. It consisted of about six of us sacking out in sleeping bags on Dave Hulan's living room floor. He was invited to Huntsville as Fan Guest of Honor for the 50th. Somehow I found out about it and decided to go see if Dave remembered me.



One thing led to another...

My fanac is largely confined to the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, an apa I helped found in the '60s. My resurrected fanzine, *Sporadic*, is available on efanazines.com. Mine looks about as crappy as it did in the beginning compared to all of the slick products available on that great web page. Still, I think my content is acceptable. SFPA, which has about 20 members, and the small DeepSouthCon is about the extent of my activity. I'm not really interested in expanding that. It's been fun and rewarding to be back in fandom at that modest level.

I spent 10 years in higher ed public relations/teaching journalism but most of my work was as a reporter. My wife and I were blessed with great buyouts at *The Birmingham News* when the newspaper business started tanking. We are retired and raising a 7-year-old grandson. His mother, our youngest, is deceased. We have three other Hers-Mine-Ours children and 10 grands.

I took Atticus to his first con just last weekend. It was DeepSouthCon55 in High Point, N.C. He had a ball, as I knew he would. A con report will be in SFPA Mailing 319.

Your new line of work has thinking again of how much we'd like to get to Mexico. We have close Hispanic friends here in Montevallo.

By the way, I am puzzled over the not on Facebook since 2015 thing. I'm not a regular, but I post something about once a month. Send me a friend request.

Would you be interested in writing something for *Sporadic* about the fan scene in Columbus in the '50s? There are fan historians who would love to see that. I could run the article with that hoodlum-looking snapshot!

Delighted to hear from you after all of these years, Bob. Thanks for making the effort to find me.

Bill

* * *

July 24

Billy Joe.. you're right... But I haven't smoked a cigarette since 1968, I woke up to the fact that tobacco kills.

Hey... what's your phone number... I called 205-665-5538 and it sounds like a fax machine.

Are you in Montevallo, Alabama?

I can't recall much of Paul's SciFi fanzine. I was only 12 and I used to help staple pages together or take the Zines to Bibb City Post Office to mail out on my bike.

Paul moved to Ft. Walton Beach, FL about '67 and was working for Southern Airways as a ticket agent. Later he retired and bought a 40 acre farm in Laurel Hill, Florida where he passed away. JT Oliver passed away in Columbus, he was working at the Swift Mills...

Looks like we are the last of the Legends Bill.

I put a request on your FB page... hope you see it... I'm listed as Bob Cox on Facebook.

I presume you are still married to Nancy... ? I see her page but there's no request button... I see she is anti Trump... I think he is mentally disturbed also, but I feel that way about all politicians.

Try to find me on FB... send ME a friend request...

Also I'm on Skype as bobcox70.

Bob

* * *

July 29

The reason I asked about the cigarettes was because you also sent me a snapshot back then of your bedside table or such. The Pall Malls were among the contents. I quit in 1978 and am amazed at what people will pay for cigarettes today.

Yes, I am still married to Nancy, and we are in Montevallo. That phone is old landline which we dropped. My cell is 205-908-8703.

I'll try to get on FB today and respond to the friend request.

Bill

* * *

Aug. 5

Bob,

Hope things are well with y'all this weekend. (You do still say y'all down there, don't you?)

I decided to put a little piece together for next *Sporadic* on our renewed friendship. Looking back over your emails, I see I'd like a little more information on one aspect of your life - -circus days. My maternal grandfather was a carney for a number of years, working with Tinsley and Beck shows. One of our middle daughter Maggie's best friends in high school went to Baraboo, Wis. to clown college and was with Ringling Brothers for two or three years. I lament the passing of the Big Top.

So, what did you do with the various shows?

Bill

* * *



Bob at Cinco de Mayo battle site

worked there till closing in November. He asked, "Are you joining us in April?" I told him , "Only if I'm on the Concessions crew."

I saw where the money was and I almost always worked concessions. Only two exceptions were one year in Canada I was the Road Manager"

Bill,

After I left Columbus, I went to Florida's panhandle and lived with my brother, working several blah jobs. One day a hurricane blew in, and I went to the beach to watch waves crash in. I heard calliope

music and saw a circus attempting to put up their tent; they never did, the wind was too much. But as I watched a guy came over and asked "Do you want to work?" Sure I said, and he said, "Pack a bag we're leaving tonight."

It turned out he was the superintendant, and he put me on the prop crew. I

and one year I was a booking agent. But Concessions was my strongpoint, I worked on a dozen different shows but the most fun was the first show Cristiani Wallace Bros. Ran by an Italian bareback riding family it was like a party every time we had a day off. Many aerial ballet girls on the show. Being a concessionaire was special, we didn't take any crap from anyone, not even the owners, we knew our job and we did it, no matter what the conditions were. It was a fraternity, even now 50 years later I still have contact with a half dozen or so survivors.

I enjoyed a season on the King Show, but the Show where I made the most money was the Clyde Beatty Cole Bros. A very tough show. It



Bob with wife Raquel and great-granddaughter Vicky

went by the book...this is what we want, this is what we offer... which was fine with me. I can handle people like that. Lots of fights on that show but it was necessary. New guys would come around and start slacking ,and we would tell them right away...either do your end of the work or prepare to get your butt kicked. And we weren't kidding because if they didn't do it, then we would have to do his part, and as a friend once said, "My hemorrhoids will touch the waterline in the toilet bowl before that happens, and they never will."

Anyway I became tougher than nails, people really don't know what teamwork means until they've been on a "mud show." So the shows don't work in the winter so I started to find other things to do. Christmas parades, which I dislike because it got me arrested twice for not having a license... sometimes we'd hit a town late and couldn't get one, some places let you slide others don't. Then I'd have people call me and offer spots like Festivals, The Indy 500, races, fairs, etc.

I was wintering in Columbus and decided to go see the Thanksgiving parade, I was watching floats when I spotted this cute Mexican girl in the parade, selling candy. I thought...I know her, She's a flyer from the circus. I called her over and she recognized me. She had married a concession friend of mine and she said, "he's down the street, just a block away." So I went to talk to him and he said, "We're making parades for 2 weeks then going to Mexico... c'mon and go with us." So, on a whim, I said OK and 2 weeks later I was in Mexico and we wound up working on the Atayde Bros, Circus for the winter...

I've been writing a novel about experiences on the road, got about 32,000 words so far. Basically it's anecdotes about life on the road. Someone said I should sell it as a Kindle book on Amazon

what's your opinion? You've got a book. How can a starving writer get printed cheaply. I think I need an ISBN number ? Or any suggestions?

Other thoughts: Carnys and Circus people don't mix well... it's kind of like Sailors and Marines' it's sort of similar business ,but I don't like your lifestyle. I worked with a friend for 3 months on the Straights Carnival and I didn't like the "Rob everybody, even your own grandma, attitude".... On the Circus they said, "never rob or cheat a cripple or disabled person...you will bring a hex on the show". At least we had some ethics.

9 out of 10 clowns are gay... I think it's psychological, something about putting makeup on. Same thing with sword swallowers... it figures right?

Passing of the Big Top... the Ringling Show went out from under canvas years ago and mostly worked buildings. I went over and talked to the manager but they don't want to pay a decent salary.... Animal Rights people have caused many problems, and they are kooks and they will tell bald-faced lies... but the thing killing the shows, is Television, too much entertainment and Insurance Companies.

It's late and I'm going to bed... keep in touch...go to FB more often.... Bob

PS. If a person calls me Robert, they probably knew me from High School days.

If they call me Bobby, they were on the Circus with me.

If they call me Bob, they met me in Mexico.

Aug. 8

Bill... I've got two clients to tour Tlaxcala tomorrow... we will see some historic sites but they are eager to see apartments and move here... its the trump effect. I expect to see the USA turn into a 3rd world country. Then next week I've got 8 people from Chicago.

Oh yes, I can say "Y'all" in Spanish ... "Todos Ustedes".

I'll write more later. Bob

Aug 23

Anyway.. here's the story about the Platters...

There was an American living downstairs from an apartment that Raquel and I had. He came by one morning and said he had heard that the Platters were in town. I investigated and yes they were, It was a Government promotion for Teachers day and it was free for Teachers, Raquel was an English teacher so we decided to go see them. I liked the Platters, lots of 50's ballads, Smoke gets in your eyes, Great Pretender, etc., So we went to the Cockfight Arena that night to hear them, we muscled our way in and lied that we were All English teachers. It was a cold and rainy night, Less people showed up than I expected about 300 or so. So we enjoyed the band, actually it was a tribute band as all the platters were dead except for one at the

event. But they did a good job of reviving old songs. On the way in I saw a street vendor selling MP3 CD's with ALL the Platters songs for one dollar.

now we watched the show and as it came to the last song the band members came through the audience shaking hands, the girl singer came by my seat and I was going to offer a free tour of the city for them and I handed her a card and said "this is for you"... And she glared at me and pushed me... Then they announced... anyone wanting an autograph come back to the dressing room and buy a CD for \$20 dollars... now I'm pissed off... I'm thinking you are on your last legs playing in a chicken fight arena in Mexico and you really need some Public Relations to keep from disappearing completely but you're insulting to the public. I don't know why that girl did that, maybe she didn't like my southern accent? Or she just didn't like Mexicans? Or I don't know but I was pissed... I handed my wife my camera and told her...get ready !!... The Platters were taking bows on stage and throwing kisses so I jumped on stage and took a couple of bows also...Raquel took my picture. A guy in the front row gave me a thumbs up... My neighbor was laughing so hard he almost fell out of his seat. He mentioned this to some missionaries that lived nearby and they said, This is why you have to be careful around Bob.

Hell...people don't know how to enjoy life anymore.
Write me... Who knows how much times left. Bob

Every once in awhile a UFO in the shape of a cylinder is seen entering Popocatepetl Volcano (about 80 miles west of me.

Every once in awhile a UFO in the shape of a cylinder is seen entering Popocatepetl Volcano (about 80 miles west of me.

On Saturday, August 5, 2017, 2:23:09 PM CDT, <wjplott@aol.com> wrote: