

WHO KNOWS WHAT ETHER LURKS IN THE MINDS OF FEN?



PHIL CASTORA 1934—2009

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

PREFACE

The manuscript which was edited to create this volume was originally sent to Lee Gold by Phil Castora in 2004. Previously Phil had provided me with three chapters of his autobiography which I pubbed in *NO AWARD #12* (Fall 2002), *NO AWARD #13* (Spring 2003), and *NO AWARD #14* (Fall/Winter 2003). When editing this manuscript I noticed not only the material added in this later version but changes and additions in the material which Phil had previously sent to me.

Phil was only a year older than me; but, when I joined LASFS in 1975, my affinity for APA—L soon had me getting to know Phil, a person with a fund of interesting tales from his time in fandom which predated my joining it by several decades. Mostly, Phil and I shared a love not only of the written word, but for putting it down on paper. Off and on during the past thirty-plus years, Phil joined me in both APA-L and LASFAPA in producing zines for both of these APAs. And when he offered me three chapters from the autobiography he was then beginning to write, I was only too willing to put them into my genzine (as noted in the preceding paragraph).

A few months ago, hearing of Phil's death, I reprinted those three chapters of his autobiography and put them into APA-L, one of the outlets where Phil loved to put his words. Lee Gold then sent me the expanded version of Phil's autobiography which she had; and, when I heard of the upcoming Memorial for Ken Porter and Phil Castora, I decided to edit what Lee sent to me with a view toward pubbing it for the attendees at the Memorial.

- - Marty Cantor
- February, 2010

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WHO KNOWS WHAT ETHER LURKS IN THE MINDS OF FEN?

being the memoirs of the author as a science fiction fan, and little else

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*NOTE #1: For the benefit of anyone not familiar with the vocabulary of science fiction fandom, certain words are defined in a glossary near the end of this work. The first occurrence of any word so defined is underlined. And please note that the word “fantasy” as used herein refers **only** to stories of the supernatural, not to everything other than fact such as lies, dreams, or fiction in general.*

NOTE #2: Apparently I’ve begun this none too soon, as a few things that I’ve recalled very sharply and clearly have been contradicted by the people involved to whom I’ve shown a advance copies. Fortunately, it’s not likely to ever be needed as evidence in a court of law.... And I can’t guarantee everything is in strict chronological order.

NOTE #3: Most of this is about my life as a member of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society. I’ve been a member since 1962, and I can’t express my appreciation of my good fortune at that fact. I’ve never known another organization of any sort that has consisted so largely of truly good people. Oh, there have been a few members who weren’t so good, but they either didn’t stay around long or, in a very few cases, were kicked out — like the one who broke into another member’s home, stole his comic book collection, and sold it to a dealer. (Yes, the victim got them back.) But I’ve never been in any other group of any kind — including church congregations — that consisted so largely of people who not only didn’t want to hurt anyone but seemed to be happy to find an opportunity to help. And I want to point out that I’m not trying to whitewash the club or otherwise deliberately present a distorted image of it — though a certain amount of distortion is inevitable firstly because this is not intended as a history of the club; and, of course, since I enjoy providing such entertainment as I’m capable of, I try to generate a chuckle or two writing about it the way I do about everything else, not to mention picking and choosing among what all has happened.

1: In the Beginning I Created...

I was born at a very early age in the quiet, pleasant, and virtually unknown town of Salem, Ohio, almost exactly halfway between Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Cleveland, Ohio. My parents had moved there from Pittsburgh a little earlier, and, when I was five, moved back — taking me along, for which I am still grateful.

For some reason, they didn't order a local newspaper delivered for several months; my father would bring a copy of *The Pittsburgh Press* home every day after work six days a week;¹ we usually got the Sunday edition after church.

The comics fascinated me, even though I was too young to understand most of the gags or keep track of the plots in the ones with plots. But my father quickly tired of being greeted every afternoon with "Read me the funnies, Daddy!" So one day he told me he wasn't going to do it anymore — he'd do it that day, but from then on if I wanted to know what the funnies said I'd have to read them myself. I made what I thought was a perfectly reasonable objection: "But I can't read." Well, as usual, he was a step ahead of me — "I'll teach you."

And he did. Having been brought up on the McGuffey readers of a century ago, he knew how to do that (I'd had a set of alphabet blocks for a couple of years, and my mother had taught me the alphabet some time earlier), and next thing I was plowing my way through the absurdities of the exception to English spelling rules.

To encourage me, he started bringing home the occasional comic book, mostly a fairly new one (actually in 1939 there weren't any old ones) named *Action Comics*, which ran a feature called "Superman". That *might* have been called a fantasy, and certainly the last feature in the book, "Zatara, Master Magician", was.

But then one Saturday evening Daddy went out after supper, about six-thirty, to get a copy of the bulldog edition of the *Sunday Press*,² and my mother promised I could stay up till he came back — well, he was going to stop by the local American Legion post for a minute, and my bedtime was seven o'clock.

I don't think he got into a poker game, but once he got started talking you'd have had better luck stopping an avalanche with a garden trowel. Anyway, it was after nine when he finally reappeared — my mother, refusing to go back on her word, had been trying to talk me into going to bed voluntarily; and, at age five-and-a-half, I was having very serious trouble keeping my eyes open two hours after bedtime, but I always hated having to stop what I was doing and retire. But when Daddy finally returned, I got a good look at the front page of the comic section, which in those days was always on the outside of the Sunday paper, before I climbed upstairs. (I suspect my parents had a nice, long talk once I was out of earshot.)

Next morning, I couldn't be sure I hadn't dreamed what I'd seen the night before — sure enough, that beautiful Burne Hogarth "Tarzan" artwork on the first page of the comic section had been squeezed down to the bottom half to make room for the adventures of Superman — it hadn't, either, all been a dream! And that first Sunday strip was devoted to Superman's origin, his trip as a baby from the planet Krypton in his father's model rocket. That was my first exposure to science fiction. (And yes, my father knew what a "planet" was and explained it to me in a way I could understand it, though without going into the inconceivable distances involved.)

There was precious little science fiction in comics in the Good Old Days, though a few comic book writers (besides Superman's creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster) used it to account for the superhuman powers of most of the relatively few Heroes that had any superhuman powers beyond sympathetic writers.

The other afternoon paper, the *Sun-Telegraph*, carried "Flash Gordon" on Sunday — with that beautiful drawing by magazine illustrator Alex Raymond (every panel was an art lesson) — but we rarely got that paper. Hero Flash Gordon, his girl friend Dale Arden, and scientist Dr. Zarkov were stranded on the planet Mongo, and often fought the evil dictator Ming the Merciless. (Between the gorgeous artwork and getting an

episode only once a week, no one noticed how bad the stories were — and the writer was never credited.)

No local paper carried “Buck Rogers”; this hero was a twentieth century man who’d collapsed on encountering a pocket of some odd gas while exploring a cave, and woke up five hundred years in the future, when things will be a bit different; it was based on two novelettes by the same writer that had appeared in *Amazing Stories* in 1929 and 1930, in which the hero’s first name was given as “Anthony”.

Even less popular was “Brick Bradford,” who traveled to past and future in his Time Top. I saw Buck and Brick only in a couple of comic books that reprinted newspaper strips.

There were both fantasy and science fiction in the movies. But most of the science fiction consisted of Dr. Frankenstein’s monster in cheap Universal horror films, and devices used or sought by the villains in many of Columbia’s, Republic’s, and Universal’s kids’ serials shown Saturday afternoons (with two B pictures, at least one a western) — though Republic made three Flash Gordon and two Buck Rogers serials (all five starring Buster Crabbe), while much (not all!) of the fantasy was, again, Universal horror characters, such as Dracula and the Wolfman. Oh yes, I saw Disney’s *Pinocchio* and *Fantasia* when I was six.

Finally, around 1950, waiting for a train, I found the current issues of the pulps *Amazing Stories* and *Amazing Stories Quarterly*. (The latter consisted of three back issues of the former, returned as unsold, with covers removed, stapled together with a new cover, and selling for only twice the price of a new issue.) No, they weren’t great, but they were very readable, and certainly far better than just sitting there on the train, twiddling my thumbs and watching the cows go by.

In the summer of 1951, I discovered *Astounding Science Fiction* (since renamed *Analog Science Fiction and Science Fact*), *Galaxy Magazine*, *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, and *Other Worlds Science Stories*. The first three were really good — and very different from each other in the type of stories they ran; I have no idea to this day what I saw in *Other Worlds*, but I’ve always had a soft spot in my **head** heart for it. Of course, it’s hard to dislike a magazine that ran the first of Poul Anderson and Gordon Dickson’s “Hoka” stories — and if you’ve never read any of them, find a copy of *Earthman’s Burden* in your public library or look for it on line!³

I also discovered PSFA, the Pittsburgh Science Fiction Association, about that time. Most of us were young, but we had two middle-aged members, a gentleman named P. Schuyler Miller and a lady named Dirce S. Archer. (In more recent years, the club has been re-organized with a new name at least once.)

Sky Miller was one hell of a nice guy. He’d written stories for *Astounding* (and other magazines) in the past, and was now its book reviewer — and damned good at it! He never gave away the ending, but whether he liked a book or not (he was an admitted sucker for space opera) you finished his review knowing whether *you’d* like it or not. He was living in Pittsburgh because he’d taken a job there as a technical writer with Fisher Scientific Laboratories.

Dirce was one hell of a nice gal. She had some mundane office job and had the peculiar habit of smoking Kool cigarettes, which were, then, made of cheap tobacco whose irritation potential (and flavor) were overpowered by a heavy dose of menthol — I have no idea what they’re like today. (She explained that she’d had to switch from Camels when she came down with a bad cold complete with sore throat, and noticed that her boss stopped bumming butts from her; by the time she got over the cold she’d gotten used to them and stuck with them.)

Another of our members wasn’t coming around anymore, having recently moved to New York, but he was back in town for one of the monthly meetings I attended a couple of years later — Frank Kelly-Freas. (His name got changed, probably because a typesetter at Street and Smith kept leaving out the hyphen on the illustration credits on the contents page of *Astounding*: “Cover by Kelly Freas”.)

Anyway, after that meeting, whatever-his-name-is must have been desperate for someone to talk to that night; he took me to a bar downtown (I had a soft drink, being under drinking age — twenty-one in those days) and he got to talking about ideas for fanzines. I still remember his idea for one with a circle cut out of the top of each sheet: “*Schizophrenia* — the fanzine with a hole in its head!” Funny, I don’t recall his having had all *that* many beers. But I had to take a streetcar home anyway, since he wasn’t going my way.

I don’t know precisely where Frank had lived, but he was an alumnus of Pittsburgh Art Institute, which at one time had reproductions of some of his best work at eye level on one side of the stairway to their second-floor studio. They were very proud of him, surprise, surprise.

Though I had nothing to do with it, having missed a meeting or two, I was present when we gave our first (and, I suspect, last) Annual Fantasy Award. The awardee was a local DJ, Rege (as in Regis) Cordic, who’d later follow me to Los Angeles. The award was for the character of Omicron, a *very* little green man from Venus, who was heard from time to time between records on Cordic’s radio show (6-10 a.m., WWSW,

then KDKA). Cordic was an excellent actor; he sounded genuinely concerned for a moment one morning when Omicron tripped and fell into Cordic's coffee cup and almost drowned! (Unfortunately, Cordic later came out here to replace Bob Crane at KNX — and six months later KNX switched to an all-news format.)

I don't suppose this qualifies as fannish, but it's mildly amusing, so wotthehell, archy. At that time or a little later, Cordic would occasionally interview the fictional Sir Reginald P. Frothingslosh, brewer of the equally fictional — at first — Olde Frothingslosh Pale Stale Ale, "So light the foam is on the bottom!" I say "at first", because after a couple of years Cordic sold the name to one of the three Pittsburgh breweries which used it for years on one of their products during the holiday season, from about Thanksgiving till Christmas.

Cordic never joined our club, but Charles Sords was a member. Sords was heard on Cordic's show as athletic coach of East Overshoe U., Vermont; and I recall his telling Cordic one morning about a recent problem when someone had mistakenly scheduled two baseball games the same day, one home at East Overshoe U., and the other away; five members of the team showed up for one, the remaining four at the other. (Yes, they lost both.)

But it was another PSFA member, a college student then, who gave me my first taste of Trufandom. (He's asked me not to use his name, maybe because he's the one who got me into the club and without whom all the rest of this wouldn't have happened.) One day at the end of August of 1952, I squeezed into his '47 Oldsmobile with him, his sister, two other local fen, popular young Baltimore actfan (= active fan) Dick Clarkson (who'd die if I forget what all too few years later), and somebody or other visiting from Cleveland named Harlan Ellison, and away we went to the tenth World Science Fiction Convention in Chicago.

(Seriously, Harlan, at age eighteen, was already well known in fandom as publisher of one of the better genzines. A couple of years later he'd begin making a name as a very talented writer of stories written from unusual viewpoints.)

To this day I'm totally unable to understand how Harlan was able to survive the trip; he sharpened his tongue on most of us the whole way — nearly five hundred miles and no Interstates (gentlemanly, he left the young lady alone), and one of the others weighed at least twice what Harlan did. (If you don't know Harlan, a very clever and talented writer, despite his mouth he's always been a Good Man and True; we could use a few more of him running around loose.)

The convention, ChiCon II, (second World Science Fiction Convention held in Chicago⁴ was less of a surprise to me than to most of the other attendees; I had *no* idea what to expect. One thing no one expected was the attendance — about three hundred had been anticipated, and the actual figure was 852, nearly triple that.

There weren't any Hugos to give out in those days, but there was one, fellow name of Gernsback (who in 1926 had started *Amazing Stories*, the first magazine devoted exclusively to science fiction, and after whom the awards would be named), to accept the title of "Father of Science Fiction"; Ray Palmer, a fan who'd made good, former editor of *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic Adventures* (he'd been eighteen when hired!), and now editor and publisher of *Other Worlds* and *Fate*, was named "Son of Science Fiction".

I don't remember most of the activities, but because it took up so much time I do recall the politicking. The Elves', Gnomes', and Little Men's Science Fiction, Chowder, and Marching Societys had arrived in force from San Francisco determined to win the bidding for the 1953 convention, and had a hospitality room for attendees to take a break in, open every day well into evening (no, not twenty-four hours, but this seems to have been the first one).

You have to understand that in those days most people drove or rode trains or buses long distances, since plane travel was expensive and would have taken a good deal more than twice as long as today — and that's not counting a couple of refueling stops on the longer trips. Mounting this campaign in Chicago was a major effort on that score alone, never mind trying to persuade all these Mid-Westerners and Easterners to trek all the way out to the West Coast and, one presumes, back home afterward next year.

But they were, rightly, worried San Francisco might win the bidding. I was invited into the Smoke-Filled Room (and it was! — any thicker and you could have sliced up the air and used it to make window blinds) where were gathered the heads of most of the larger Eastern clubs — Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Baltimore, and I think — but don't quote me — one of the perpetually feuding New York clubs, and possibly one or two others. (I have a vague and just possibly correct memory that Toronto was also represented. And I can't recall if Chicago was represented, though it's a lot closer to any of the others than to the West Coast.) They came up with a plan: Each one would put in a bid, then each withdraw "in favor of Philadelphia" — well, except Philadelphia, of course.

And that's the way it happened.

Almost.

Oh, it worked all right, but the head of the Indianapolis club, Ray Beam (yes, Ray Beam!), didn't withdraw, and drew just enough votes on the first ballot that Philadelphia had a plurality but not a majority. There being no other candidates that hadn't withdrawn, Indianapolis was dropped from the second ballot, over Beam's strenuous, though not disruptive, objection, and Philadelphia won by a little more than the number of votes that had gone to Indianapolis.

(~~Frisee~~ The City by the Bay won the next year, with some help from sympathy and guilt, and of course this inspired the Rotation Plan for moving the convention site to a different third of the continent each year.)

I should — well, at least I will — mention something that *didn't* happen at ChiCon II. My anonymous chauffeur wanted to put on a short musical (about twenty minutes) he'd written entitled "The Demolished Null-A; or, Now You Don't,"⁶ which would have featured Harlan as the Games Machine (he would have popped out of a box on demand — shades of the ancient Greeks' *deus ex machina!*).

Of course all the programming had been scheduled earlier, and it was too late to insert it anywhere. I almost forgot to mention this — it took me five minutes of concentration just to recall the title — and I wish at least a copy of it still existed, though I don't recall anything else about it more than fifty years later, except the line "Fission, opposition, and sedition have begun — RIP!" and can't say if it was good, bad, or indifferent. But it seemed like fun when I was over half a century younger.

Harlan was going home to Cleveland rather than coming back to Pittsburgh with us after it was all over, so we had barely enough room for someone else. Sedans were larger then than they are today — unlike so many modern cars, you got in them; you didn't put them on — but they weren't the size of railroad cars! We returned to Pittsburgh with Jack Harness taking Harlan's place — physically; neither of those two could take the other's place in any other way!

And I found that Jack lived only a mile away. Well, a mile away as the crow flies; closer to twice that if the crow has a sore wing and has to take a taxi. (I recall many years later finding a map of Pittsburgh at the bottom of a box and showing it to a friend; replying to a remark I'd made some time earlier, he said in astonishment "You're right! It *does* look like a map of a plate of spaghetti!")⁷ Over the next couple of years, Jack and I talked to each other a few times in person or by phone, in addition to seeing each other at many of the monthly PSFA meetings.

I'd picked a good — well, at least appropriate — time to join science fiction fandom, if not in an active role. It was the middle of a boom in the field — in quality as well as in quantity; around 1950 magazine publishers began flooding the market (relatively speaking) with new titles, as well as a couple of old ones that had been discontinued when the World War II paper shortage hit in 1943. But even earlier than that the two pulps *Future Science Fiction* and *Science Fiction Stories* had been combined into *Future combined with Science Fiction Stories*. Revived after the war, it soon changed to the now-popular digest size; it uncombined into two separate magazines around 1952, and the publisher even came out with a third title, a pulp, *Dynamic Science Fiction*. But the timing was bad, and *Dynamic* ran only two issues.

Editor Robert W. Lowndes (later Robert A. W. Lowndes) was a very good editor, but had such a small budget he could pay only a fraction of what the better magazines did, and had to make do with stories not quite good enough to sell for the top rates in other magazines. He was desperate enough that he once came perilously close to violating a cardinal rule of magazine publishing: Never repeat a name in the table of contents!⁸ He had two stories by Gordon R. Dickson that he wanted to put in the second issue of *Dynamic*, and Dickson was a very good and popular writer, and the name alone would add at least a little to the sales — but one story would have to appear under a pen name. So one ended up "by Gordon R. Dickson", the other "by Dickson R. Gordon" — and I seem to recall both of them being billed on the cover (several inches apart).

Suddenly, Jack packed up and moved to Washington, D.C., then the location of the headquarters of the Scientology organization. Whatever you (or I, or anyone else) may think of Scientology, its founder L. Ron Hubbard, and the people who administer its techniques, it certainly did Jack some good! Earlier, it had been like pulling teeth — hippopotamus teeth — to carry on a conversation with him; now he was bright, cheerful, and talkative. And writative, too — he joined FAPA and SAPS, and with Ted White would shortly revive the Cult when it became moribund.

I followed Jack about a year later, without giving him advance warning. One day I walked up the steps to the Elmwood Guest House, a large boarding house in an old, very slightly run-down area a mile or three northwest of the White House. Jack was standing by the inside staircase newel post and his jaw

dropped nearly to his knees when I walked in and said “Hi!”. (I’ve never made a grand entrance in my life, but over the decades I’ve made a couple of pretty good ones — I’ve only topped this one once.)

Jack and I ended up sharing a good-sized room. And Jack introduced me to WSFA, the Washington Science Fiction Association, who counted some very fine people among its members including Dick Eney and Ted White, both of whom lived in Virginia suburbs. Other members I recall with pleasure were Bill Evans, Bob Pavlat, and Bob Madle, though I never had the opportunity to get to know these — or others I no longer remember — as well as I would have liked.

Evans was a physicist who worked for the federable gummint. I recall at one of the monthly WSFA meetings the subject of anti-gravity came up; when asked what he thought of the subject he replied with a single word: “Classified”. I never found out if he was kidding (he insisted he wasn’t) or if whatever agency he worked for had actually been doing research on the subject. (The government *was* in fact investigating such possibilities at the time — or so I have recently heard from an often reliable source.)

For those of you who know about the great Eney-White feud, which has been going on and off, mostly on, for nearly a half-century, I have to say I can’t shed any light on it. I’ve heard only Ted’s side of it and tend to be somewhat biased because I got to know him much better than I got to know Dick, and we became fairly good friends. But *both* of them have extremely well-deserved reputations for being Good Men and True, and I can’t imagine how *that* many people on either side could be wrong. And of course there has to have been some kind of provocation I find it impossible to believe of either of them. All I really know is *I don’t want to hear any more about it!!!*

(Oh, yes, I was introduced to Lafayette Ronald Hubbard. Some people have what is called “presence” — I do not exaggerate saying that that word was totally inadequate in Hubbard’s case. To illustrate: I’d gotten a job as a clerk in a local drugstore. One afternoon, while I was turned away from the door, someone walked in! Okay, people were walking in and out all day, but suddenly I knew SOMEONE HAD JUST ENTERED! I turned around and saw Hubbard passing my counter and going to the back of the store. Shortly he left — and the store suddenly felt empty, as though a crowd had exited simultaneously. I actually felt a slight sense of loss! In a much earlier age, he could have passed for, at least, a demi-god. But, a smoker myself, somehow I found it hard to be awed by anyone who smoked Kools — even the new, longer ones with filters.)

Jack got me into SAPS, as well as the Cult, which he and Ted were in the process of reviving. (I might have gotten into FAPA if the waiting list had been less than a quarter-mile long — seriously, there must have been nearly fifty names on it, and turnover was very slow, to the point that it’s often been called “the elephant’s graveyard of fandom”.)⁹

I especially enjoyed SAPS because it was sillier to the point of being called, for a while, “the slap-happy apa”. Ted wrote a fairly regular column — serious, as I recall — for Jack’s SAPS_{zine} titled “Why I Won’t Join SAPS”, but Jack himself and Wally Weber of Seattle and occasionally other members wrote some truly inspired silliness — and Jack contributed cartoons as well. For the Cult he drew delightfully mad “Cultoons”, in which members (usually not specific ones) were dressed in cowed robes.

In SAPS, Art Rapp, inspired by some of the more uninspired stories in some of the pulp magazines, produced “The Squink Blog Handy Plotter”, an all-purpose plot outline with various portions left blank, such as the type of villain, what the villain was after, the locations of the action, etc. For each blank there was a list of possibilities; from top to bottom, the items got progressively sillier and more hilarious. The items numbered thirteen or twenty-six in each list, and were to be chosen by random with a deck of cards.

Art chose the name “Squink Blog” because it was the by-line being used by a Seattle fan, whose name I regret I’ve forgotten, for some truly absurd stories which went beyond mere parody and satire, and which even *Mad* might find too far out to publish. (For quite a few years, “blog” was a fannish word for strong drink.)

Before The Feud, Ted once picked up Jack and me in his car and drove us across the river to Eney’s house in Alexandria, Virginia, where we participated in a FAPA AssemblyCon — Dick was the Official Editor of FAPA and was putting together a quarterly mailing; he’d invited us over to save himself some time and a small amount of effort, as well as to socialize and share some refreshments.

Two or three dozen of the sixty-five members had sent in sufficient copies of their contributions, and we walked around a couple of tables, collecting one of each so that Dick could stuff them into mailing envelopes to be addressed and mailed, costs borne by the members in the form of annual dues.

Dick’s refreshments included Nuclear Fizzes — and yes, I was now of legal age. Various recipes for

the drink exist, but none I've seen is appreciably different. We were told that it consists of a jigger of gin, a jigger of lemon juice, a jigger of Cointreau (an orange-based liqueur), and enough cracked ice and soda water to fill an eight ounce glass. These were a little smaller, since Dick had only six -ounce glasses available for us. (If you substitute vodka for gin, the result is called a Nuclear Fuse.)

In an immortal word of comedian Red Skelton, "Smoooooooooooooooooth!" I drank mine slowly; it had a very pleasant flavor, and its effects sneaked up so gradually I didn't realize I wasn't still perfectly sober until an hour and a half later, about halfway through my second one, when I suddenly noticed that my head had come loose and was floating around the ceiling.

I've never been much of a drinker, but I accompanied Ted into a bar one day along with Larry Stark, visiting from somewhere in the middle of New Jersey, who got bent out of shape when Ted, nineteen but with steel-rim glasses and goatee, was served a beer without question; but Larry, twenty-six, but with a more youthful-looking (clean-shaven) face, had to show ID.

There was another science fiction fan living at the Elmwood named Bob Burleson, but he never became active; he didn't even go to the WSFA meetings with us. But he and Jack and I, and often Ted, who'd drive in the ten miles from Falls Church, Virginia, would play cards together on weekends; I taught them a game called Five Hundred. No, not Five Hundred Rummy; it was invented about a century ago at the behest of the United States Playing Card Company, and is a cross between Auction Bridge and Euchre, if you happen to know of those games.

Five Hundred, played with the joker added to the usual fifty-two card deck, requires each player to be dealt ten cards, with three left over. If three or four play, you remove the twenty or ten lowest cards from the deck; if five play, you use the entire deck. But if six play (and here's where United States Playing Card Company came in) you have to use a special deck which contains, ranking between the tens and the face cards, an eleven and a twelve in each suit, and a thirteen in each of hearts and diamonds.

Jack bought a deck and arranged a surprise for Ted. Jack and I and Bob and a couple of others we'd dragooned into playing a hand sat down at a table waiting for Ted to show up one afternoon. Like most people, he'd never heard of such a deck, and wondered where the extra ten cards were coming from. They were dealt out — and he didn't get any of them! When he led the ten of hearts and someone played the eleven and someone else the twelve, he reacted pretty much as we'd hoped.

(Jack liked odd cards. Years later he'd find a deck with colors reversed: the hearts and diamonds black and the clubs and spades red; and he'd occasionally bring them to a party. Of course after a few minutes of play they'd all start to look alike.)

I remember one day, alone in our room, I was reading F. M. "Buz" Busby's SAPSzine, *Retromingent* (don't ask!), in which he was going on about the activities of his local (Seattle) club, The Nameless Ones. Hugo Gernsback had begun publishing another prozine, *Science Fiction Plus*, and contributed some stories to it he'd written himself. They weren't very good, but they were remarkable for the names of the characters, because almost all of them were anagrams of his own, like "Greno Gashbuck", "Grego Bانشuck", and others even less probable. The Nameless Ones had decided to help him out by devising some more, and Busby listed maybe a dozen of them, ending with "Cube H. Rankeggs" and "Norah B. Eggsuck." I thought that was hilarious! Then in the next paragraph he referred to one of Wally Weber's regular absurd reports on something or other, certainly very funny, which Buz, tongue-in-cheek, wrote "galvanized the entire meeting." And I thought of the other meaning of "galvanize" — to plate with zinc. That did it; I fell off my chair convulsed with laughter.

I looked up from the floor, after a couple of minutes, to see Ted at the open door with an expression on his face as though he was trying to figure out what, if anything, needed to — or could — be done for me; that look set me off again. Finally, I recovered and decided I needed a drink of water. Ted followed me to the staircase and down to the water fountain at its foot — where I saw gathered three or four other denizens of the building; it occurred to me that they must have heard me and wondered what in the world had been going on. I demonstrated.

Buz once briefly described Seattle's weather. He said that the locals never bothered with weather forecasts; they just looked out the window toward Mt. Rainier. If they couldn't see it, it was raining; if they could see it, it was going to rain. And he invited us to come up for the Rain Festival they held every year — from January 1st to December 31st.

But after a few years of this sort of nonsense, my father died suddenly, just after New Year's Day,

1958, and I returned to Pittsburgh and moved in with my mother for a while; what with one thing and another I just dropped out of fandom. Except that in 1960 Sky and Dirce put on PittCon, the Eighteenth Annual World Science Fiction Convention — and I could hardly miss that since it was only a thirty-five cent bus ride away.

PittCon was a lot of fun. I don't remember, but I've recently been told that writer Ted Sturgeon was supposed to have been Toastmaster — meaning he'd have given out the Hugo Awards, but that he'd then begged off because of a death in his family. The Good Doctor (Isaac Asimov, though I'm not positive he'd gotten that title yet) filled in for him.

Probably the highlight of the convention was while Asimov was handing out Hugos and grumbling — hilariously, of course — about never having gotten one himself. (This was really because he'd turned his typewriter to non-fiction at about the time the awards were established.) He finally got around to a special one for something like "lifetime achievement"; he opened the envelope, looked at the name, stopped in his verbal tracks, then turned to the committee to complain loudly "You blew it! You blew my whole shtick!" — followed, of course, by thunderous applause.

By the way, there are worse places than Pittsburgh to hold a convention! While no generalization is true of everyone, Pittsburghers are mostly a *little* nearer fannish than the people of most other cities — as you may have guessed from the popularity of Olde Frothingslosh Pale Stale Ale. A decade or three earlier, some fans had begun using the acronym FIAWOL, Fandom Is A Way Of Life — and the answer to that, FI-JAGH, Fandom Is Just A Goddamn Hobby. The hotel obligingly put, on alternate days, each phrase (but leaving out the G word) on the sides of their Grant Street (main) entrance marquee.

The lasting effect of Pittcon on my life was my meeting with a few members of LASFS, the Los Angeles Science-Fantasy Society, who'd traveled twenty-five hundred miles to be there, including Ron Ellik, Ted Johnstone, and Bruce Pelz. And Jack, who'd moved to Los Angeles a year or two earlier, and who introduced me. I could hardly be said to have "gotten to know" them, but they seemed like good enough guys.

Then, two years later, as I was getting ready to leave work, a fellow employee I hardly knew asked if I knew anyone who wanted to Go West; he was leaving for Los Angeles in three days, and wanted someone to come along and share the driving and the traveling expenses. I gave this serious consideration for nearly a second before saying "I'll come." And thought of the LASFS never occurred to me. Well, not at the beginning of that second, anyway.

After arriving, I tried real hard to get used to my Aunt Ann, my mother's next older sister, with whom and whose husband and son I stayed not quite briefly enough. Aunt Ann must have once been acquainted with whoever it was whose remark had been quoted in *The Reader's Digest's* "Toward More Picturesque Speech" page: "She had a whim of iron." (Her genuine good-heartedness did make up for an enormous amount — but not all; many years earlier, when she was still living in Pittsburgh, she was the one person my father would not have in our house — at least not while he was there.)

The LASFS has a long and rather honorable history. It was founded in the fall of 1934, about five months after my birth, as Chapter Four of the Science Fiction League, which had recently been organized by Charles Hornig, then editor of *Wonder Stories*. The club met irregularly till February 2nd, 1936, when Forrest J ("Forry" or "4E" or "4SJ") Ackerman was at least largely responsible for an upsurge in activity and for meeting regularly on alternate Thursdays; by 1939, the meetings were being held every Thursday.

When the Science Fiction League showed unmistakable signs of dying, the club decided to become the independent Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, February 27, 1940, and still exists under that name — except that in 1967 it added ", Inc." to the name.¹⁰

In one sense, former SFL Chapter Two, later the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society is older — but it ceased to exist during World War Two, probably due to too many members entering the armed forces. It was started up again afterward, but the LASFS has been in *continuous* existence longer than any other science fiction fan club on this planet — and has certainly had far more meetings! I attended a PSFS meeting in 1973, and it was meeting only monthly at that time.

At one point in the early forties the LASFS threatened to split into two clubs and almost certainly would have if Paul Freehafer hadn't managed to remain a close friend to several members of each faction. He died of a severe heart condition a few years later, while still in his twenties; since then, wherever the club meets is "Freehafer Hall".

In the late fifties, when interest in the club was waning dangerously, Betty Jo Wells found the club. At some point, for whatever reason, she changed her name to Bjo, pronounced BEE-joe.

Bjo injected enormous amounts of fun and enthusiasm into the club, conceivably saving its life. One of her projects was making a couple of short amateur films. At some point (before or after this) she met and

married a fine man and fan named John Trimble, but they settled in Long Beach, inconveniently distant from the Freehafer Hall of the time; and by 1962 the club had become less active and fewer members now were coming regularly. And yes, for some of you reading this who aren't olde-tyme, active fans, this is the Bjo Trimble who later organized the letter-writing campaign that kept the original *Star Trek* series on the air for a third season, and after the series ended produced *The Star Trek Concordance*.

Anyway, one day I took the plunge, and a bus and a streetcar for the address I had for the club. (They made me give back the bus and streetcar, but I was allowed to keep the plunge.) I got there just in time; since November, 1960 they'd been meeting at an apartment or rooming house called the Fan Hilton where several members had been living — and were at the moment in the process of moving out. I walked up the steps, in the door, and over to the staircase newel post and said "Hi!". (It wasn't hard to blow Jack away, but it could be very expensive and time-consuming.)

Jack wasn't moving far, and he gave me his phone number, and so I found out where the LASFS meetings were now to be held — at the Silverlake Playground at the corner of Silverlake Blvd. and Van Pelt St. (You may recall that Van Pelt is the surname of Lucy and Linus in the *Peanuts* comic strip — funny how these things sometimes work out.) So one Thursday evening I showed up at the meeting place in the recreation building. The meeting started about eight, after we'd dragged out a folding table and a dozen or two folding chairs from a small room off the large room where we met, which had a stage at one end and a basketball backboard and hoop suspended from the ceiling at each end.

It was a couple of months before it was convenient for me to return, but the first time had been the 1300th meeting, and this was the 1313th; I was told I was entitled to three free meetings before being required to join and pay dues, but with those numbers I decided not to fight it. I paid my dollar initiation fee on the spot plus thirty-five cents dues — and I've never begrudged the extra seventy cents my rashness cost me, even figuring that in today's money that would be around five dollars!



2: Home on the Derange....

Hoooooome on the derange,
Where the weird and the addled all play;
Where seldom is heard
An intelligent word,
And bad puns are heard loudly all day.

Getting into the LASFS so quickly helped ease my transition to the Los Angeles way of life. In this town at that time (it's a little less true today), if you *didn't* have some sort of obvious peculiarity or eccentricity, people would look at you funny! And so the only thing that's really blown me away was once, after I'd been here a couple of years, walking down the street I passed two guys in fancy cowboy boots, blue jeans, heavy leather belts with fancy silver buckles, and yoked shirts — holding hands! Controlling my reaction, I merely raised both eyebrows at that — but I'd have raised three or four more if I'd had that many.

It will help if you understand that, until late in the 1950s, if you got caught in public carrying — never mind actually reading! — a science fiction magazine, you'd get funny looks, even in Hollywood, the capital of Southern California, then known as the Land of Fruits and Nuts. Science fiction fans were few and far between, but they naturally wanted to be able to discuss their interest with others.

When *Amazing Stories* began publication in 1926, as soon as possible it began including some letters from readers — with (unless denied permission) the names and addresses of the letter writers. They began writing to one another, first individually, then mailing out carbon copies, which developed into the publishing of fanzines, containing comments on published stories and, in some cases, amateur stories and art by themselves or their readers.¹¹

And many readers of *Amazing*, and later other professional magazines, were now able to find other fans in their own towns, and eventually organize local clubs. But they felt, at least in this matter, isolated and set apart. Some, able in such publications and clubs to express themselves freely on the subject for the first time, began expressing themselves freely on other things, so there's always been at least a slight amount of silliness above and beyond the level approved of outside of fandom — and, *usually*, *not* as dumb and mindless as often encountered elsewhere. Hence, the relatively high absurdity quotient, especially, for some reason, in the LASFS.

The LASFS meetings were rather less formal than a coronation in Westminster Abbey, and certainly more poorly attended at the time I joined. I recall twice when we had to wait till nearly nine o'clock for the fifteenth paid-up member to show up and complete a quorum before we could transact some piece of business — and it might have been oftener if we'd had much business to transact. In fact, only the first and third Thursdays of the month were true Business Meetings, though we went through the usual rituals of minutes and treasurer's report each week.

For a while, the treasurer's reports were the highlight of the meetings. Well, we had this Treasurer... One of Ed Baker's many monomanias — thanks to 4E — was the artificial language Esperanto, *la lingvo internacia*;¹² he was good at it — spoke it like a native! (Forry still speaks it with a heavy American accent.) And, given the opportunity, he'd go on and on and on about it. But we put up with it because he certainly wasn't a fanatic; when someone once told him that Esperanto sounded like Spanish spoken by a drunken Czechoslovakian, Ed thought for a second and then just nodded.

He discovered that the international Esperanto movement (I disremember its exact name) had deposited a very large sum of money in a Dutch bank and was issuing its own coins against it. Dues back in those days were thirty-five cents per meeting;¹³ one *stelo* ("star") was worth seven and a half cents; so a five-*steloj* coin was worth thirty-seven and a half cents (try not to get too far ahead of me, folks), and he'd sell

them two for seventy-five and accept one in payment of dues, the LASFS keeping the odd half-nickel as a donation.

This meant that we now had treasury reports that ended in "...and a half cents." Well, sometimes an even number of half-cents would cancel out, but not often — I'd bet a whole lot more than even today's dues that he paid his own dues last and chose the method that would prevent all the half-cents from adding up to exactly so many whole ones.

Never ones to let well enough alone, LASFSians got carried away (not literally — something that's surprised me for over forty years, now) and started donating other sorts of furrin money to the treasury. At first, most of it was readily convertible into genuine United States currency, but too much of it (probably including at least one coin whose country of origin no one could figure out) wouldn't have been worth what a bank would have charged to make the exchange. At one point we passed a motion restricting the Treasurer to a maximum of three currencies and three languages in any one report.

Finally, about the time someone contributed a hundred-dollar bill from a Monopoly game, Director¹⁴ Paul Turner called a halt and ordered the Treasurer to remove from the Treasury all purported funds that weren't, or couldn't be readily converted into, United States legal tender.

Next week, Ed obediently reported the amount in the Treasury in U.S. dollars and cents, then the amount in the Pun Fund (you got socked a nickel per pun, unless you got a laugh — or applause, as Bruce Pelz — who else? — got once) — and then pulled out the Nut Fund. Paul had ordered all that stuff removed from the Treasury; it hadn't occurred to him to say anything about disposing of it. "However," lamented Ed, holding up the container, "the Nut Fund is in trouble."¹⁵

Well, it turned out that someone had contributed a few real pennies to the Nut Fund. Suddenly Paul lunged for it, and Ed jerked it away; when Paul rose, Ed got up, looked around, and tossed the offending financial travesty to someone sympathetic (Owen Hannifen, I believe), who as Paul approached threw it to someone else... until Paul gave up chasing after it and returned to his chair, defeated. It was one of our more vigorous meetings — but Ed retired the Nut Fund.

This, combined with some other sorts of nonsense, later inspired Paul, after being replaced in office, to "Move the Treasurer is a chowderhead." It was two or three years before I found out that Ed's sillinesses were all very deliberately being put on for our amusement, and he knew exactly what he was doing at all times.

I recall one other matter that was mentioned occasionally for a while; every other occasionally, when Old Business was called for, someone would bring up "rubber tips for the chairs". It seems the club had earlier met in the home of Zeke Leppin. (I don't remember ever meeting Zeke, though I recall his being pointed out to me.) The ends of the metal legs of the folding chairs used had begun doing some — apparently real but relatively minor — damage to Zeke's floor or floor covering, and a committee had been appointed to obtain rubber tips to prevent further damage. But the LASFS had moved out before anyone had gotten around to doing anything.

Eventually, directors got tired of its being brought up to no purpose. The subject was ruled "out of order", then "forever and eternally out of order", and finally it was tabled for one hundred years; it was never brought up again — well, not after a fine of twenty-five cents was established for mentioning the subject.

So, at a meeting several years later, when the club had more than doubled in size, Old Business was called for and I walked up to the officers' table and wordlessly emptied the contents of a small paper bag onto it, leaving Secretary Drew Sanders to explain to half of the membership why the hell the other half was laughing hysterically, without mentioning by name the objects of their laughter. (He did a great job of it!)

I can't remember who all came to the meetings in those days. Of course, many who did didn't come *every* week. I recall Bruce Pelz was a regular, as were Fred Patten, Ted Johnstone, Jack Harness, Ed Baker, Dave Fox, Lee Sapiro, Betty Knight, Virginia Mill and her daughter Terrie, Sam Russell, Al Lewis, and Robert Lichtman — though he was Bob Lichtman in those days — and, I believe, Don Fitch, Ernie Wheatley, and Ron Ellik, who I'd like to have gotten to know much better. Forry Ackerman now was coming less and less frequently. Naturally, the members elected as officers rarely missed — but of course it was the regulars who'd get elected.

Lee Jacobs was a regular when he was in town. I heard that a company in Georgia would employ him for long enough for him to be eligible for maximum unemployment benefits; then he'd return to California where those benefits were considerably greater, and stay here till they ran out. John and B? o Trimble came once in a great while, as did Bill and Jane (or Jayne) Ellern,¹⁶ who also had been coming more often. June Moffatt (then June Konigsberg) hadn't been around in a long time, but began appearing regularly in

1964.

Most of these and others were coming more or less frequently according to a copy of *Menace of the LASFS* I found in 2002 from the month of October, 1964 included Dan Alderson, Bill Blackbeard, Dan & Luise Brannon, Alex Bratmon, Ed Buchman, Ann Chamberlain, Bernard & Edith Cook, Arthur J. Cox, Sylvia Dees, Don Franson, Tom Gilbert, Ron Hicks, Dave and Katya Hulan, June's son Bob Konigsberg, Roy & Deedee Lavender, Adrienne Martine, Blake Maxam, Larry Niven, Durk Pearson, Paul Puckett, Neal Clarke Reynolds, brothers Allan and Larry Rothstein, Don Simpson, Milt Stevens, Jerry Stier and his sister Lynn, Hank (now Jean-Marie) Stine, Earl Thompson and his about-to-be bride Gail Knuth, Paul & Ellie Turner, and Fred Whitley and his son Lonnie. (In those days, we had a sign-up sheet at the meetings, and the names were included with the minutes. And of course some of these stopped coming shortly after this, and some had just started.)

And member Fritz Leiber, Jr., writer of a good deal of excellent fantasy, came several times at widely separated intervals with something to talk about; he was interesting and amusing, though I don't remember any of his topics. Founding member Walt Daugherty appeared infrequently, usually to talk about something; he certainly had enough to talk about — he seems to collect hobbies. I remember once he spoke on Egyptology, and most of us found his remarks at least a little more interesting than we'd expected. (In the early 1970s, when we moved into quarters on Ventura Boulevard, Walt built several yards of bookshelves for our library.)

Oh, Sam Russell was an FBI agent who'd joined the club early in World War II — long before anti-Communist feeling in this country started getting out of hand. One can only guess whether his joining was his own idea or that of a Bureau worried about spies and saboteurs and checking out small, quiet organizations on general principles; in any event, he stayed with us over two decades, and none of us ever got busted or hauled before the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities.

That's a lot of names, but not everyone came every week, and certainly a lot fewer than that were coming around at all when I joined. And I regret I didn't get to know them all.

The park threw us out at ten o'clock, but not everyone had to get up early in the morning — and some that did didn't worry about it. Little by little, everyone who didn't rush off home got into gathering afterward at Kal's, a coffee shop on Vermont Avenue north of the gas station at Third St. This had originally been an Al's; Al (I've seen his last name but don't recall it) had begun with a place on Sixth St. near Rampart not far from downtown which he kept 'till he died.¹⁷ He seems to have made most of his money opening more Al'ses, getting them running well, then selling them; sometimes he'd buy one back, get it running well again, and resell it; in fact, that would happen to this one eventually, though some years later it became a Japanese restaurant.

Anyway, we quickly settled on a long booth in the back, soon with overflow at another table or two, where we only slightly harassed a waitress named Phyllis every Thursday night and, apparently, amused her — she eventually joined the club, though she couldn't attend a meeting, being at work at the time.

Ed Baker would always put on an act. Once he put seven or eight spoonfuls of sugar in his coffee; asked why he didn't stir it, he replied "I don't like it too sweet." Another time, he was going on and on about something or other with an untouched pineapple malted milk shake in front of him; Owen Hannifen, sitting next to him, handed him the pepper shaker saying "Here's the pepper, Ed." Without a break in his monolog, Ed took the pepper shaker and started shaking it into his malt, then stopped, looked at what he'd been doing, and gave Owen a really dirty look. It was something different every week, though not always as remarkable as these.

For a while, every week or two, Ed would say something that had an obvious double meaning and, when it was brought to his attention, he'd blush! I've known people who could act — Ed had us all convinced — but I'd never known before that it was possible to blush on cue.

Kal's hadn't been everyone's first choice for the after-meeting caucus, but it slowly came to be — and gradually the attendance at the meetings began rising as the amount of additional socializing was now making it worth while for more members to go to the trouble of abandoning their television sets and going out.

Oh, the Ted Johnstone mentioned back a ways, who served from time to time as Director or as Secretary (now called President and Scribe) was a little unusual in an unusual way: he'd later write [books](#)⁸ under his real name (David McDaniel), while he conducted his social life under a pen name.

Well, unlike many of us, he occasionally exhibited a trace of good sense; when he was twelve, I think he said, he started answering an occasional interesting-sounding ad. They weren't generally quite as interesting in *certain* ways as so many are today, but the proportion of con men and grifters among the general population was probably a bout the same, so he decided to use a different name with each one just to be on

the safe side.

And when he was seventeen one of our members was running a cheap classified ad for the club in one of the smaller prozines, and the name Dave used to answer it was “Ted Johnstone”, so that was his name when he joined. (He was also known as Tedron, but that is a story of which I know little and few are willing to speak, none at length.)¹⁹

Ted was the best Secretary/Scribe we’ve had, at least as long as I’ve been a member — and that’s a real compliment, considering some of the other highly talented people — especially Mike Glycer, who’s won awards for Best Fanwriter, Drew Sanders, and several others — who’ve held that office, whether or not you include me! In 1960, shortly after he joined the LASFS, Bruce Pelz began publishing mimeographed copies of the minutes of the meetings, humorously titling them *Menace of the LASFS* (and they’re now generally referred to as “the Menace”) every two weeks (10¢) and then monthly (25¢), with a cover cartoon by Dian Girard, whom he’d soon marry.

I recall reading an issue while Ted was Secretary, marveling at how realistically he’d captured the scene just exactly as I remembered it, enabling me to see and hear the meeting again in my mind. I had a little trouble with the fourth set of minutes, but I was more than halfway through before it occurred to me that I’d missed that meeting!

Very quickly, I decided to involve myself in the club. We had five offices; they still exist, but the titles that go with them have all changed. Director, Senior Committeeman, Secretary, Treasurer, and Junior Committeeman are now President, Vice-President, Scribe, Treasurer,²⁰ and Registrar, the last a kind of Official Greeter.

The title “Secretary” had to be given to the recording functionary among the Directors when we incorporated, to simplify any required correspondence with the state Department of Corporations because a different title would confuse them; the title “Scribe” honors Jack Harness, who held that position so often — it was, in fact, his nickname among us partly because of some calligraphical work he’d done — and of course because he sometimes signed himself “Scribe J. H.”, kidding the Rosicrucian Society.²¹

But Jack never learned to drive a car, and public transportation from his apartment to the meeting place was less than convenient (under five miles, it required riding three buses, and the third one ran only every half-hour); during one term as Secretary, he began showing up late every so often and, rarely, not at all. I volunteered to fill in one Thursday.

Well, first I took adequate notes during the meeting. Then I sweat blood all week over the final wording to make sure they’d come out as humorous as possible; I had a large pair of shoes to fill in that respect. Of course I had only my own sense of humor to guide me.

I must have done a good job — at least as far as *I* was concerned. But I was so worried about making the minutes traditionally humorous that I wasn’t able to relax and enjoy them.

’Till I got to the meeting.

Reading them to the assembled throng, I got about half-way through the third paragraph before I collapsed helplessly in laughter, sliding off the folding chair onto the floor.²² Director Dian Girard looked down at me judiciously, banged the gavel, and called for the Treasurer’s Report.

Maybe it was reading my minutes in *Menace* that inspired some Director to try me again; maybe it was just a lack of any other volunteers. I know I was filling in for Jack one Thursday when a motion was passed to impeach him for “quasi-feasance.” He was voted out of office, the result being announced just as he finally arrived. Bruce rose, nickel fine in hand, and walked to the officers’ table announcing “The LASFS has often been called ‘*indescribable*’; we have just proved that it *is*, in fact, de-Scribe-able.” He didn’t have to pay. Our rules required that we immediately elect a replacement; the winner by a landslide was Jack, a result I noted in the minutes as “almost as astonishing as the fact that it gets dark after sunset.”

I even managed to get elected as official Secretary as early as 1964, and on a few occasions later on, which I can’t help construing as a pretty good compliment, considering the talent we’ve had — though the best alternatives have not always chosen to run at every semi-annual election. And while I managed to inject an appreciable amount of silliness into the minutes, I never did something that June Konigsberg, later June Moffatt, informed me that one of my predecessors had done as Secretary some time before I joined the club. (If she told me his name, I’ve forgotten it — and so has she.)

Anyway, whoever it was always used “*th*” with date numbers — including 1th, 2th, 3th, ... 21th, 22th, 23th, ... 31th. I’ve never done that, and refuse to admit I’ve ever been tempted!

Meanwhile, Jack and Owen Hannifen made a change in their lives that would change the LASFS forever, if a little less than drastically.

3: Which Way to the Egress?

Jack and Bruce had been living in separate apartments in a building on Mariposa Avenue behind the Ambassador Hotel, and I'd occasionally visit — usually Jack, of course, since I'd known him ten years. Every once in a while (once when I was visiting), somebody in Vermont named Owen Hannifen would call him and talk for an hour or so. Finally, in an act of supreme lunacy, he moved out here. (I have the excuse that I didn't know what I was ~~doing~~ getting myself into.) He stayed with Jack briefly, then moved into another apartment in the same building, with Joanne Gegna, who came to club meetings about as long as she and Owen were together, but that didn't last long.

After a few months, Jack and Owen moved into a fourplex about a half-mile east at 3065½ Leeward, a couple of blocks east and south of Wilshire Boulevard and Vermont Avenue, and let the rest of us know we were welcome much of the time, including Thursday nights after the LASFS meetings. (At roughly this time Bruce moved to Santa Monica, much closer to his job. This *may* have been when he married Dian.)

The place was arranged rather simply, most of us thought, with living room, dining room, kitchen, and two bedrooms in that order from front to back, with a corridor down one side and with bath, storage closet, and front and rear staircases on the other side of it — but it was too much for one Sensitive Fannish Mind whose owner called it a labyrinth. So it became the Labyrinth, all but instantly abbreviated to Lab. And after a couple of months, unemployed and un-housed, I began renting their sofa for a nominal sum, making it a full-fledged slant shack!²³

We got along really well. The nearest thing to a problem we ever had was that Owen was a Morning Person and I never have been. (I've never really understood the purpose of mornings, though in fact I wouldn't mind them so much if they just didn't come so early!)

One day Owen passed my sofa on his way off to work and was just a little *too* bright and cheerful — I threw a shoe at him, cowardly being careful not to hit him. But he took the hint and controlled his matutinal effervescence thenceforward, and guess who's been reading my thesaurus again.

Mealtimes were interesting, even fascinating, if not in the senses those adjectives would later be used by Mr. Spock. The three of us mostly fended for ourselves in the kitchen, but Jack's manner of fending was unusual, not to mention unique, and he occasionally asked my opinion on a sample of something and even fed me once in a while.

I've described Jack's cooking as "part cosmopolitan and part something else"; that's actually fairly accurate. It was a lot like what you'd expect of someone — yes, human — who'd been raised *extremely* elsewhere, then brought to Earth and was learning to make do with the foods available here.

And I'm no gourmet, but he never offered me — even just a spoonful or forkful to taste — anything I didn't like. Or anything quite like anything else I've ever had, or ever heard of! If there'd been a contest for best *and* most outré cuisine, he'd have won in a wok. Regrettably, he doesn't seem to have written down any of his recipes.

Anyway, now we had someplace to go after the meeting! Yes, we'd been going to Kal's, and most still did before showing up, but at the Lab you didn't have to spend money. But if you really wanted to you could risk a little playing Brag.

Brag is a kind of British mini-poker²⁴ where you get only three cards and there's no draw, and there's no equalizing of bets — each player in turn either bets at least as much as the last player or folds. The gimmick is that you can't call if there are more than two of you still in! This enables you (at our piddling stakes) to lose ten cents a minute instead of six dollars an hour.

I have some talent at cards, but the mental exercise of playing at my best for much more than a half hour is too much like work, and overall I figure that if I lose less than the cost of a cheap night out I've come

out ahead. But I did well at Brag — in fact, for a short time I'd usually start out borrowing a quarter (worth a couple of dollars today) from Ted Johnstone and then paying him back after a while from my winnings. He always seemed surprised when I paid him back, but he was always willing to lend me the quarter.

I didn't do quite as well at Bourrée (pronounced — by us — *BOO-ray*), which is a mind-rotting cross between Whist and Five-Card Draw imported from Louisiana by Dave Hulan; which, of course, became all the rage among the more enthusiastic card players, some of whom (like me) will never forgive him.²⁵

I recall the time Lee Jacobs showed up for a Bourrée game showing the effects of just enough beer to show effects, bearing a six-pack, and promising to stay in every hand — a normally suicidal tactic. Some say God takes care of fools and drunks, and He must have that night, because Lee staggered away a winner.

On the other hand, Milt Stevens attributed his pretty consistent ability to win at the game to his praying to the Roman goddess Fortuna; when one time he did badly, Jack guessed that he must have been praying that night to the goddess Forsardines.

With something fun to do afterwards, now, attendance at the meetings kept increasing. And then Diplomacy™ reared its ugly head. Diplomacy is played on a map of Europe and a little of the surrounding land and sea area about as it was at the outbreak of the First World War (a few of the tiniest countries are left out) by seven players, each of which assumes control of one of the seven Major Powers and tries to conquer all the others.

This of course requires making temporary alliances with other players; and, while tactics and strategy are essential components, the name of the game is Diplomacy, and you're not going to do well if you get a reputation for double-crossing your allies *too* often. The gimmick is that all players simultaneously submit orders for their armies and fleets, so it's *possible*, in theory, for them to commit as many as forty-two double-crosses at once — though there were rarely as many as two on any one move, and most of the time there weren't any.

The first game began with Ed Baker, Steve Cartier (who rarely attended a meeting),²⁶ Jack Harness, Ted Johnstone, Fred Patten, Bruce Pelz, and myself. I lucked out (pity it wasn't *good* luck — though I could have done slightly worse) being assigned, by lot, Austria-Hungary.

I might have had a decent chance of winning if it hadn't been for a bad ruling early in the game in a complicated situation which wasn't covered by the original version of the rules, leaving me in an untenable position. A few moves later I gave up with my four armies outnumbered by surrounding forces.

Instead of submitting my next set of orders for their (attempted) movements, I merely handed in a press release from my Prime Minister Hornswoggle P. Schmidt-Nagy, which read, "They say the weather in Transylvania is very pleasant this time of year...."

I suppose I should have known; before the first move we paired up planning strategies against the others — all except Bruce. Finally I went over to him (hoping of course to make a deal of some sort) and asked if he wasn't worried about everyone else ganging up on him; with all the self-assurance of a Greek god — but no trace of the arrogance! — he informed me that he was capable of ganging up on everyone else. He wasn't being completely serious, of course, but damned if he wasn't right!

Four games were started, and three of them were played out to the bitter end, though in one case more privately from about halfway through. Each Thursday night the board would be set up, the players would submit their orders, armies and fleets would be moved (except in the case of an occasional stalemate), and the players would then gather together in twos and sometimes threes to plot against the others for next week's move.

Bruce even published a fanzine for each game, including the orders submitted the previous week, the results, and silly press releases from the Heads of State. He called the first game *WorldDip*, from the remark of someone some time earlier that the LASFS was a kind of half-world, hence half-**world** Diplomacy.... The second was of course *WitDip*. Encouraged by our reaction to that, he titled the third *AsDip*. But then he ran out of "half-" ideas, and called the fourth one *SheepDip*.

We thought it was a lot of fun, though we did, eventually, tire of it. But the early conclusion of the *WitDip* game had a different cause. At one point two of the players had prepared alternate sets of moves, each intending to double-cross the other, and the discussion as to whether the second sets had been submitted in time — or were even permitted — began to heat up uncomfortably.

The matter was settled when Owen brought his fist down sharply on the table as he anachronistically shouted "Cobalt bomb!" and pieces bounced into new locations, one fleet ending up in Switzerland — in gross violation of the rules, which do not even permit an army there.

(The game has its interesting features, and several people have attempted to improve on it. Jerry Pournelle expanded it to include Asia and much of Africa as well as a few extra rules. Dan Alderson came up

with a modification he called Calculus Diplomacy in which the fleets and armies didn't move instantaneously and portions of any one might be found in two or even more adjacent areas. Neither of these seems to have come near being commercially feasible, although Jerry's game was played on a homemade board certainly more than once.

(Dan also invented a game he called Space War, unaware at the time that the name had been trademarked for a completely different game then being commercially sold. Dan's game was played on a four-by-four-by-four cube; while basically similar to Diplomacy, in several ways it was very different. I know — partly from personal experience — that Dan's Space War was played a number of times; he even developed three levels of complexity for it.)

Of course we did more fannish things, too. In fact, Owen bought a used²⁷ mimeograph machine from someone; I don't remember what he named it, but fanzines produced on it were credited to "Grishnakh House".²⁸ I got back into SAPS and the Cult for a short time,²⁹ and it was about this time that Jack and Bruce made their briefly successful attempts to join all the fannish apas then in existence. (That didn't last long, as soon afterward someone organized APA 45 for the exclusive benefit — if that's the right word — of fans born no earlier than 1945.)

But other fanzines were produced at the Lab, too. Fred Patten made the mistake of starting a one-shot "Hearts at Midnight" (named for the card game, not the internal organ). It was contributed to by fans dropping over Thursday nights and weekends — very slowly; Fred let it go on for a couple of months before it got to a size barely worth bothering with, and he finally ran off the stencils, collated, stapled, and distributed the copies.

But wait! There was more! Bruce had heard of APA-F, a small informal apa, sort of a fanzine co-op, at the meetings of the Fanoclasts, one of those perpetually feuding New York clubs I mentioned earlier. The way it worked was that any member could bring some specified number of copies of a zine, and was then entitled to take one of each of any others dumped off there that evening.

Bruce, who always liked things well organized (though he was never a fanatic about it!), decided to not just found but organize something similar at the LASFS to be called APA-L. Wife Dian was the first Official Collator. The duties of the OC were to 1) arrange for a cover illustration; 2) make sure each contributor had brought the required number of copies; 3) produce a table of contents; 4) get all the copies properly collated; 5) staple all the copies; and 6) distribute a copy to each contributor and to any of last week's contributors who'd missed this week. Other non-contributors could get one copy each for doing some of the physical work, usually collating.

I didn't get anything into APA-L the first week, but I did contribute something the second, and often for some years afterward; I titled my zine *Voices from a Hot-Water Bottle*, and I no longer remember where I got the inspiration for it.

From almost the beginning it has consisted largely, though never exclusively, of comments on, replies to, and arguments with what had appeared the previous week — sort of conversations in print. (Oh, and it is not unknown for the subject matter to have some relation to science fiction or fantasy.)

APA-F lasted quite a few months, I understand. APA-L started in 1964, ran three and a half years, was suspended for five months, was restarted, and has been going ever since. And if that isn't unlikely enough, Fred Patten has had at least one page (and nearly always more) in every distribution, with no exception. Oh, yeah, APA-L didn't do a thing to hold down the attendance at the meetings!

One of the better things that appeared in APA-L was a series of articles from Dave Fox at irregular and all too infrequent intervals about happenings in the fictional country of Khorlia, ruled by King Xof, between France and Italy. I don't know how to describe them; there was nothing exciting or hilarious or frightening or over-the-top, or even near-the-top, about them, but everyone seemed to like them, some even more than I did!

Of course, he was thoughtful enough to give us the English version — the more so, since Khorlia has not only its own language but also its own alphabet. Modern computers would have frustrated Dave, because the Khorlian alphabet of thirty-three letters has only seven letters shaped like Roman letters (C, I, O, U, V, X, and U with a little circle above it, like the Swedish AA (pronounced like O) which in Sweden is single A with a little circle above it, two like Greek letters (gamma, which looks like an upside-down L, and lambda, which looks like an upside-down V), and a few others that might be acceptably faked by combining a letter and a symbol; but the rest would have to be done by hand. Fortunately, he could do them by hand on mimeograph stencils.

Over the centuries decades since, more than a hundred fans — I can't guess how many more! — have

contributed zines to APA -L, including several professional writers; for our 40th anniversary distribution (or “disty” for people who aren’t as easily nauseated by cuteness as I am), 10/21/2004, we were honored with a page from septuagenarian fan legend Dick Eney to help us celebrate!

One of the more memorable contributions from a professional was a six -page flyer from Larry Niven, Chairman of the TrantorCon Bidding Committee, outlining some of the advantages of holding the 23,309 convention on Trantor — advantages for humans, kzinti, and other life-forms as well.

The Lab managed to last several years, but got moved three times for reasons I mostly don’t recall. And got renamed each time. Many years earlier there’d been a short series of “Skylark” novels by Dr. Edward Elmer Smith, or E. E. Smith, Ph.D. as he preferred to be billed, also known as Doc Smith, who did a truly dreadful job of writing really great stories. (He was the first person ever to write of civilizations beyond our solar system; his style has to be undergone to be believed.)

Smith’s “Skylark” series consisted of four novels: *The Skylark of Space*, *Skylark Three*, *Skylark of Valeron*, and *Skylark DuQuesne*. (“Skylark” was the name of the hero’s successive spaceships.) So, when Jack and Owen and I moved to a second location on a very short street named Sunset Place a few blocks away (and nearly three miles south of Sunset Boulevard), Jack retroactively renamed the first Lab “The Labyrinth of Space”, and named the new one “Labyrinth Three”.

We didn’t stay there long due to a plethora of tiny freeloaders which apparently infested the whole building, and we quickly moved to The Labyrinth of Valeron at 615 S. Hobart about a mile west and a couple of blocks north. Later Jack and Owen moved a little east and north to the 300 block of S. Berendo, the Labyrinth DuQuesne, which turned out to be the last one. By unlikely coincidence, each of these was the upper right (as seen from the street) apartment in a fourplex, except the second one, which was the downstairs one full of bugs — the six -legged kind, as distinguished from the electronic eavesdropping or programming kinds.

The Labyrinth of Valeron, on Hobart Street, provided a mildly amusing sight on one’s way to and from. At the end of the block on the other side of the street at the corner of Wilshire Boulevard was the Wilshire Temple, one of the largest Jewish temples around. On our side, across Hobart from the side of the temple, there was often parked a DeSoto with the license plate GOY 408.³⁰



4:

But I'd been working and I finally got tired of sleeping on a living room sofa, as cheap as it was, and I found three other club members who needed a place to crash nightly: Ed Baker, Don Simpson, and Hank Stine. Okay, they found me.

Anyway, we moved into this house about six blocks north of The Labyrinth of Space. It was actually half of a very old duplex— well, very old for Los Angeles; it must have pre-dated the First World War, and had probably been intended for guests or in-laws or whatever of the original family in the other, slightly larger half. It had three upstairs bedrooms, a second, narrower stairwell to be used by a servant, and a servant's bedroom with tiny bath all but hidden behind the kitchen. I've lived in apartments that were smaller than the living room; it had a good-sized fireplace and a pair of sliding doors for privacy, which we tested once but never used.

Of course, before moving in, we had to take a look at the place. We agreed to meet at the place one evening "a little after eight." Don was attending Chouinard Art Institute at the time (this before it was bought by Disney) and had an evening job working in an office, and this was his lunch hour.

When he got there about twenty after, I made some remark about having expected him a little earlier. His watch was in a shop being repaired; with complete aplomb and nonchalance he reached into his jacket pocket to pull out and consult his wind-up alarm clock.

Luckily I was standing next to a couch abandoned by the previous tenants, and could fall on it, laughing helplessly — it took him a few seconds to realize the reason for my reaction, and the surprise on his face before he did didn't help.

It had to be called "The Booby Hatch." A couple of decades earlier, Ayn Rand had written *The Fountainhead*, a novel about an architect who, among other things, had designed a home for a millionaire which had been given that nickname (not, of course, by the owner) because of its very unconventional appearance; more recently she'd expounded her philosophy in rather more detail and at greater length in *Atlas Shrugged* — and, if I recall correctly, as I often do, all four of us were at least partially sympathetic to her ideas; but Ed and Hank were particular and occasionally vocal fans.

We were a fairly odd assortment, even for fans. Bruce talked about getting up a pool betting on how many weeks we'd last, but this is one of the few times I've ever known his judgment to be faulty. The Booby Hatch remained in operation for two years; it might have been much longer if Ed hadn't joined the National Guard to escape the draft and was later called up for six weeks of Basic Training and couldn't handle paying rent during that period. We replaced him with Jim Glass; but, while we all got along, Jim didn't stay long.

It helped that we all drank different kinds of milk. I drank regular, Ed drank extra-rich (remember when stores sold extra-rich milk with 20% *more* fat?), Hank drank low fat, and Don drank skim or, as it's called today, non-fat. I asked Don about that once and he said it dated back to when he was a tad and, escaping his mother's eye, got into the fridge and attacked the butter one too many times and got sick of butterfat.

As for that extra-rich milk Ed drank, again he'd fooled us. He'd always looked kind of pudgy, but when he came back from basic training he now looked *very* muscular, though he'd lost very little weight! He wasn't tall, he was big-boned and had already had lots of muscle; the surface layer of fat he'd lost had made him look considerably overweight. We should have guessed — at a party sometime earlier, he once held out an arm horizontally while Gail Thompson chinned herself on it! Yes, she weighed only ninety pounds — but on an unsupported arm!?

We'd moved in in 1965, and the following year I scraped together \$150 (worth several times that in today's money, of course) and bought a badly repainted '57 Olds Super 88, which ran real good — after I started using the super-premium gas then being made for the high-compression motors of the period. Premium was 96 octane at that time; this was 102, and cost more than thirty cents a gallon! (In case you're wondering, that would be four or five dollars a gallon in today's money)

Anyway, one evening I drove Hank, Don, and myself over to the home of Earl and Gail Thompson to watch the premiere of the *Batman* TV series, at the end of which I couldn't make up my mind whether to laugh or throw up; though, as a comics fan, I tended toward the latter. (Ed had gone somewhere else that evening.) When it was over, I took the other two home and drove downtown to the BIG magazine store then on Sixth St. between Broadway and Hill St. I took my time and did some browsing, before spending a good deal of cash, largely on comic books.

Back home, I entered and started up the stairs to my room. Don and Hank were sitting on the living room sofa very quietly discussing something. I thought that was odd; yes, they got along well, but they never seemed to have much to talk about to each other. I got almost to the top before I saw the neat little label with Don's eldritch lettering on the closet door facing me across the narrow hall: "BA T CLOSET". I dropped the

bag of magazines — and then it occurred to me that that might not be the end of it.

I had no idea!

In my room I found my dresser now had a Bat-Drawer, one window opened onto a Bat-Screen, and my un-emptied ash receptacle had become a Bat-Tray containing Bat-Butts. Finding myself in need of plumbing facilities, I passed the door to the servant's staircase — sorry: the Bat-Door to the Bat-Stairs — entered the Bat-Room, walked past the Bat-Tub by which was hung a Bat-Towel, and approached the toilet. It was labeled “Guano.” (Look it up in your Funk & Wagnalls.)

After all that, I needed something stronger than water, so I went downstairs to the Bat-Fridge and got a Bat-Coke. But I was astonished when I went over to the drawer and found the bottle opener unlabeled; I couldn't imagine either Don or Hank missing that! I went into the living room and said, “You forgot the bottle opener.” Don explained, “You got home too soon.”

I said above that Ed had us all fooled. I didn't tumble to him till he came clean with me one day at the Booby Hatch. I was talking with him and mentioned his absentmindedness. With a halo of innocence almost visible over his head he asked “What absentmindedness?” Totally unsuspecting, I reminded him of a time at Kal's not long before.

He and Jack had been sitting next to each other in a corner of our long booth, Ed at the end and Jack near the end along the back. Ed had ordered a second cup of coffee and was ignoring it, reading to us from a book about someone's invention of a modified, pseudo-archaic form of Esperanto suggesting the equivalent of the slightly archaic form of English found in Mother Goose rhymes and the more traditional fairy tales. He was holding the book close in front of his face as he read, and Jack took the opportunity to spoon ice from a glass of water into Ed's untouched second cup of coffee, to the point that the cup was full and one piece hadn't completely melted. Finally, Ed put the book down, looked at his coffee in (apparent) astonishment, and exclaimed “What happened to the cream in my coffee?!” Then he picked it up and tasted it. “And the sugar?” Of course we broke up.

Very kindly — no, not patronizingly — Ed asked “Phil, when was the last time you saw me put cream in my coffee?” The answer, of course, was never. In fact it now occurred to me that I'd once noticed he took his coffee like mine — black and sweet. But his act had been so good that I'd completely forgotten! Well, I've made a worse fool of myself — but if you think I'm going to tell you about *that*, you'll still be waiting when hell starts advertising its ski resorts.

Like many another person of above average strength, Ed was very gentle — and not just physically. Arguing on any subject, he never said you were wrong; he'd give his opinion; and, when you gave yours, he'd just ask questions trying to get you to see for yourself that you'd made a mistake.

We had enough room in the Booby Hatch that we began hosting the odd party now and [then](#).³ They were open parties — all members were welcome (some more than others, of course). You had to be careful with open parties, as Bruce once found out; with so few members showing up at meetings in 1962, he offered his small one-bedroom apartment as a party location in lieu of a meeting on the evening of Thanksgiving Day, probably assuming most of us would be spending the evening home with families. (The city didn't open the park building on holidays.) Thirty of us showed up; two more and we'd have had to butter ourselves to move around. But the Booby Hatch was far larger.

One of our parties, rather well attended, seemed ready to break up early — nothing anyone said or did seemed to inspire anyone else to much more than a yawn. But Thom Digby had brought a camera and had been taking pictures. Then he got the idea of taping the pictures onto the walls along with blank paper for people to write captions for them. One of them did me in and I fell on the floor laughing. (Yes, I used to do that a lot!)

For this picture, Don had put on top of his head of short but thick hair a wire sculpture he'd done for an art class; it was a length of rather heavy metal wire, apparently relatively soft, that he'd twisted around in a couple of loops and a figure eight to make something maybe six inches in diameter and two or three high. Jack Harness's caption was “Three weeks ago, I was bald as a doorknob...!” Anyway, suddenly the party was a success, and no one left early.

Don and I got along surprisingly well, considering he wasn't what you'd call talky. But once in a while one of us would break up the other. The best job we did was elsewhere and a little later, during the era when marihuana was beginning to become nearly as popular as breathing, and the best grade at the time was a variety known as “Acapulco Gold”, often just “Gold” for short. Noticing the presence of Barry Gold, and recalling Brutus' line “I come not to bury Caesar but to praise him!” in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, I declaimed “I come not to Barry Gold, but to smoke it!” After a good two minutes, Don got his laughter under

sufficient control to be able to explain, “It wasn’t the bad pun — it was that sickening lurch in the middle of the sentence.” And, at his description of my phrasing, I reciprocated.

We had a couple of scares at the Booby Hatch. The serious one happened one Hallowe’en. About eleven o’clock a couple of guys we guessed were from a fraternity house at the other end of the block came by and tried to get in; Owen turned them away. Two or three hours later they (presumably) came by again — at higher speed, in a car, firing three shots from some sort of firearm. One person, Dian, I believe, got a couple of tiny splinters in her cheek from debris as a slug tore through the wall and barely missed her; no one else was touched. If the police ever found the perps, we never heard about it.

The other scare wasn’t quite as bad and turned out much better. Our members included John and Bjo Trimble and Bill and Jane Ellern. All four were generally recognized as Good People, but there was something about each of Jane and Bjo that seriously bugged each other. Actually they did get along quite well — for a while, then one of them would get up on the wrong side of the bed (or of the month??) and we’d all be thankful neither of them was violent. Anyway, at one of the first parties we hosted, both the Trimbles and the Ellerns showed up, and we all held our breaths. Shortly, Bjo and Jane were found standing in the kitchen doorway exchanging recipes, and we all started breathing again.

Eric Hoffman had begun showing up at the meetings, and soon started bringing old B pictures, mostly Republic or Columbia movie serial episodes from the early forties, to be shown occasionally as programs.

The first time, Fred Patten was in a small adjacent room putting together APA-L. For one reason or another, he came out three or four times — each time when whichever hero and one or two friends were fighting a bunch of criminals in a warehouse.

Then Eric decided to show them at our place, since they weren’t that popular with the membership in general, and he had friends who weren’t LASFS members who wanted to see them. Before long, he was showing up every other Friday evening. The Booby Hatch’s big living room was a good place to show films because of its size, and Eric could put on some longer shows there — like an entire serial of twelve or fifteen episodes. (They were on film, of course, in those days; Eric would bring a projector and large rolled-up screen.)

I recall, in one episode of the serial *The Masked Marvel*, Our Hero, inside a very large house, found a bomb maybe fifteen inches square and at least a foot high, with a pointer hurrying around a dial and a flashing red light (yes, it was a black and white film, but you knew the light had to be red); without enough time to deal with it, Our Hero jumped out the first floor window and made it to shelter behind a very wide tree trunk an instant before the entire twenty-room mansion turned into flying toothpicks. One of Eric’s friends, sitting next to me, sighed, “I wish we’d had explosives like that in Korea!”

Of course, our biggest audience was for a showing of Fritz Lang’s 1926 silent spectacular science fiction film *Metropolis*, one of the better and more nearly complete prints; 4E Ackerman showed up for that one! (I don’t recall, but it must have been announced at a club meeting.) I think Forry said it was the thirty-fifth time he’d seen it. And I seem to recall Fred Patten being credited with turning up that particular print, though *he* has no memory of it and he certainly would if he’d been the one to go to the trouble of finding and obtaining it. Whoever it was, if you’re still alive and reading this, many thanks — from all of us.

Meanwhile, Ted Johnstone, using his legal name of David McDaniel, had begun writing the *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* novels I mentioned back there a ways. He’d really gotten into the TV program, and now went a few steps further. On TV, U.N.C.L.E., the United Network Command for Law and Enforcement, occasionally had to fight off another world-wide organization which called itself Thrush and was intent on world domination. No explanation for the name Thrush was given on the show, so Ted came up with one in his first effort, *The Dagger Affair*. He decided that Thrush had been founded long ago by Sherlock Holmes’ enemy, Prof. Moriarty, as the Technological Hierarchy for the Removal of Undesirables and the Subjugation of Humanity; but, re-organized after Moriarty’s death, it had dropped the full name and now used only the acronym.

But in *The Dagger Affair* U.N.C.L.E. and Thrush were forced to co-operate! Well, Don Simpson had thought up names for a pair of opposing organizations: CLOAK and DAGGER. CLOAK was the good guys — Committee for Law and Order of All Kinds — while DAGGER stood for Destruction-A-Go-Go and Electronic Revenge. Ted decided to use DAGGER (*not* specifying what the letters stood for, of course) as a third force headed by a lunatic out not to conquer the world but to destroy it.

But of course he didn’t stop there. Several Thrush badges (white cloth ovals with black edges and a

black stylized bird inside each, close copies of the ones very infrequently seen on TV) were made up and sewed onto a few suit or sport jackets. Ted, Don, and Owen Hannifen and one or two others occasionally wore these around town in public.

When Robert Vaughn, who played hero Napoleon Solo on the show, appeared in a play at the Pasadena Playhouse, they showed up at the premiere and milled around in the lobby briefly beforehand, talking quietly only among themselves. One of the TV show's creators was at the theater with his wife; she saw the badges and said confusedly "But I thought we invented them!"

On another occasion, Hilda Hoffman, who'd begun seeing Owen regularly, was moving out of a dormitory at UCLA — but it sure looked like she was being taken against her will when a few Thrush agents showed up to help her move. Apparently, no one got quite worried enough to call the FBI, though I was told they got a few strange looks.

I regret I no longer remember the name of the instigator of these activities; I don't recall ever seeing him at a LASFS meeting.

Ted's novels sold much better than any of the others in the series, and at one point he asked for a raise. The show was owned by MGM, and their deal with Ace Books was that MGM got royalties, the writers got a flat fee of \$1500 per book, and Ace kept everything left over.

Of course, \$1500 then was *several times* more than it is today, but it was hardly a fortune. Ted asked for \$2000, of which he deserved every cent and many more. I don't know Ace Books' owner A. A. Wyn's reply, but I got the idea it could be summed up in three words: "No!" and "Absolutely not!!!" Well, Ted needed the \$1500 — but in his next book, *The Monster Wheel Affair*, the first letter of each chapter title reading down the table of contents page spelled out "A. A. Wyn is a tightwad."

Ted's stories were a good deal more fanciful in one other way. He was great at characterization, but not at *creating* characters. Napoleon Solo, Illya Kuryakin, and Mr. Waverly's characters had been well established very early in the TV series, and Ted's versions were identical — unlike a few of the other writers' versions who were very nearly generic heroes. But, for the other characters, all he could do was base them on people he knew. And most of us didn't mind getting our names in print — though some of the names had to be modified because editor Terry Carr was a fan, and, having been in FAPA, was familiar with some of us at least by name, and would have demanded everyone sign a release, which would have been a bit more of a complication than it sounds. But Ted wrote Forrest J Ackerman into a story and Forry signed a release readily.

Ted wanted to use me in a story, but couldn't find an appropriate role until *The Final Affair*, which has never been published. He knew the series wouldn't last forever, so he wrote a story to wrap up everything, with Mr. Waverly retiring and being replaced by Napoleon at the end. But at one point Wyn just decided not to publish any more stories and that was the end of that. Ted died accidentally around 1978, to the great sorrow of all of us who'd known him; his widow, the former Joyce Potter, a few years later found an opportunity to have the book privately printed — but suddenly MGM decided to do a pilot in an (unsuccessful) attempt to revive the show, and withdrew permission to publish the book. (Leo G. Carroll, who'd played Mr. Waverly, had died. Patrick McNee, who'd played John Steed in *The Avengers*, played another character as Waverly's successor. I've seen much worse, but also much better.)

But you may enjoy my small contribution to *The Final Affair*. While it was still in the planning stage, Ted was telling me about it on the phone one evening and said, as the old cliché goes, "I've thrown in everything but the kitchen sink." I replied, "Why stop there?" He didn't say another word for at least two minutes, maybe more — I suspect a record for him. Sure enough, when I got a chance to read the finished manuscript, I found a scene in which Napoleon and Illya were being chased through a restaurant by an enormous mass of muscle who, running through the kitchen after them, ripped a utility sink off a wall and heaved it at them.

And, even if you don't remember the TV series, if you ever run across any of Ted's novels in the series at a price that won't quite impoverish you, buy them! They're good stories and lots of fun.

Ted and I were pretty good friends, if not as close as I would have liked. I don't recall any memorable occurrences I shared with him, but I do want to say a few words about his words. He was very good with them. He once defined "adventure" as "great discomfort, viewed from a great distance." I remember that well, because U-Haul rental trucks had a slogan on all their vehicles: "Adventures in Moving!" Fortunately, on the couple of times I've rented a truck from them I've managed not to have any adventures — unless you count the effort of loading and unloading which you get with anybody's truck.

Of course, being a LASFS member, Ted would sometimes get silly in his use of words. Suggesting they go to a Baskin-Robbins ice cream store, he once invited Dan Alderson and Charlie Jackson to go Bask-

ing and Robbing. And he liked to split words incorrectly; he always pronounced the name of Foothill Boulevard not as foot + hill but as foo + thill.

I mentioned Thom Digby back there a ways. I should say a few words about him, but that's very difficult to do. He's a Good Man, but he gives new meaning to the word "unique" — someone once said he was tilted about twenty degrees to the rest of this universe. For a while I described him as the sort of person that, if he were a character in a story, it would be the kind of story in which he'd be living around the corner from a place that sold dill pickle ice cream — then one day I was stunned to recall that in fact for a while he *HAD* in fact lived around the corner from a place that sold dill pickle ice cream!

Okay, it was a gag. To try to get people talking about them, Swenson's Ice Cream stores had made up some ice cream with real dill pickle flavor — minus the salt and vinegar, of course — and gave out small samples. It was really strange; on the one hand I had no desire to eat any more, but you wouldn't have had to hold a loaded Uzi to my temple to get me to do so.

Thom would throw the occasional party, and it'll be at least a century before I forget the first one I attended. Because of his clocks.

The one in the dining room was a wall clock of a type that had, a while earlier, enjoyed a brief vogue — like maybe a week and a half. It was a blown-up mirror-image replica of an old-fashioned pocket watch. It kept the right time, though it took a second or two to figure out what that was, with its reversed face.

The kitchen clock didn't keep the right time. It was a wall clock of course, of very modern design, but Thom had replaced the works. The hands would be motionless for, randomly, anything from about five seconds to about a minute and a half. Then they'd move quickly, randomly either backward or forward, some random amount.

The clock in the living room was a perfectly ordinary cuckoo clock that kept the right time, and cuckooed the correct number of times on the hour, and once each quarter hour in between, just exactly the way it was supposed to. Still, somehow it always went "Cuckoo!" immediately after someone had said something *particularly* silly. I can't guess how he managed that, and I'm not completely convinced I want to.

Thom's mind works at least as well as most other people's — better than those of many people I've known! — it's just that he has fewer, if any, of those automatic shunts the rest of us have that would keep it from going off in unusual directions. In the mid-sixties, the local transit agency replaced the last few trolley lines with buses, and in the downtown area removed the safety zones in the street and put up signs at the curb saying "Bus Stop." Then they moved some of the stops, and in the previous locations replaced the signs with new ones saying "Not a Bus Stop." Thom wrote a short story about being at a "Not a Bus Stop" sign late one night when a large bus-like vehicle stopped; it bore a sign saying "Not a Bus", and took him where no bus has gone before.

A Möbius³² strip is a long strip, as of paper or plastic, that's had its ends fastened together to make a loop, except that one end has been turned over before being fastened to the other. Follow one edge all the way around with your finger and you'll find that what you thought were two edges are now both parts of one double-length edge, and in the same way it has only one side. Thom made one out of a piece of plastic and fastened it to the radio antenna of his VW Beetle; in a day when a large percentage of cars on the road were VW Beetles, he had no trouble finding his in any parking lot. If you're on line, I don't know his web page's e-dress, but look for "Bubbles"; it's worth whatever trouble it takes to find it.



5: Home, Sweet Loony Bin

I recall a routine from many years ago, where one guy asks, “Is your company a non-profit corporation?” and the other replies, with a deep sigh, “Yes — it isn’t intended to be, of course, but....” Well, the LASFS (as you might expect) got it backward. Since we were *supposed* to be a non-profit organization, the park charged us nothing for the use of their building Thursday evenings, so there was nothing we needed to spend our money on. When the treasury hit a hundred or two, we’d spend a little on a party, and we might buy a page in a convention program book to help out — conventions didn’t take in small fortunes in those days, and often had a tough time getting enough cash in advance to properly prepare.

But, as I mentioned, we had more people coming to the meetings, and that meant more dues-payers, and suddenly we were (comparatively speaking, of course) awash in $\$$. We had no *real* politicians in the club — people with the attitude that money *must* be spent as long as it’s everyone else’s — but while we were at the Silverlake Playground someone (Lee Jacobs, I’m told; I don’t remember) came up with a truly ludicrous idea for getting rid of our surplus and a lot more besides — we’d buy our own clubhouse!

The original idea was to find a vacant lot and move onto it a small house that otherwise would have been demolished and that one or two members would live in as caretaker(s). Paul Turner, who’d always seemed to me one of the more down-to-earth and practical members of the club — for years I wondered why he’d been allowed to join — used every legal means at his disposal to persuade us to set up a building fund. Of course it was just silly enough to squeak by a vote — I remember calculating that the proportions were close to 55% and 45%.

Bruce, who’d opposed the motion, looked around to see how many he was positive were competent enough to run the building fund (few) and how many of those he was sure were willing to expend the time and effort to do it right (one); and, being himself that one, volunteered to handle it. No, he never actually said anything like “I’ll do it!”, he just went and did whatever occurred to him that might be helpful — and for once in its existence the club did something intelligent: It let him! We owe our ownership of our present property as much to him as to all the people whose money has gone into it. (Not to take anything away from Paul, whose lunacy vision and persistence got us to actually do something constructive!)

But it would be a few years before anything really happened, because 1) we were starting from scratch, financially speaking; and 2) Bruce hadn’t yet been able to exercise the power he’d later have — in fact, his success in this cause created a large part of the power base he’d eventually develop.

One of his ideas was to establish awards for members that had donated various amounts of money. The lower levels have been ignored for quite a while, now, but when one’s accumulated donations reached \$500 (the requirement has since been increased to \$1000), one was to be given the title of “Patron Saint of the LASFS”, with one meeting a year dedicated to the saint.

Now, at the beginning of the meeting (well, after the reading of the menace minutes) that week’s Saint is mentioned, nice things are said about him or her, and we then give three cheers.

In the meantime, we had to keep people coming to the meetings so we could collect dues from them, and we had to keep finding places to meet — I don’t remember the reasons for the latter.

Bruce helped in this, too. I don’t know about finding places to meet (we had some problems with this — more later), but he certainly was an enormous help in encouraging members to stay involved with the club by organizing other popular activities. I’m not quite certain his *first* concern was always the club, but somehow everything he got us involved in helped.

The least effective, to my knowledge and recollection, was a group that played miniature golf for

more than a couple of months. Like the others, this was very informal with no formal organization or membership.

One of the other activities didn't seem any more fannish than miniature golf — playing poker. But any group with both Bruce and Jack Harness would somehow manage to do anything in a fannish way.

Unless you've heard of them, and maybe not even then, you wouldn't believe the variations on poker they, particularly Jack, came up with, several of them actually playable! (The borderline cases were generally tried and generally either dropped quickly or adopted.) But the wildest one I ever heard of was described to me by Dave Pollard, a member who came around for a year or so and, to the best of my incomplete knowledge, never played with these clowns.

I was talking with Dave after a meeting one Thursday evening about LASFS poker, and he described a game called Prime he claimed he'd actually played. (You need to know that a prime number is one like 3, 7, 11, 13, etc. that can't be evenly divided by any number smaller than itself except, of course, 1. They gradually, if irregularly, get farther and farther apart as they get bigger, but they don't stop.)

This game is perfectly plain, simple seven-card Stud Poker with a single tiny modification: After each one of the five rounds of betting is complete, you count the number of chips (or coins) in the pot — if it's a prime number, everyone passes his hand to the player on the left.

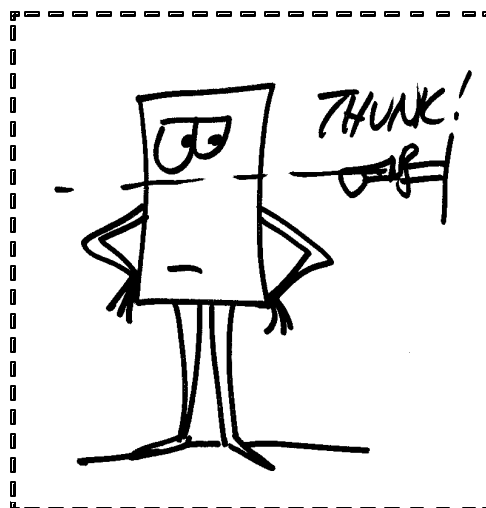
When Dave described the game to me, I exclaimed something slightly louder than my normal speaking voice; Ted Johnstone heard and came over asking what had inspired my reaction. I explained, and he let out a yelp of combined astonishment and incredulity. Wife Joyce came over and asked what had happened! He replied "Phil Castora just tore off the top of my head!" (I've never been accused of *that* before or since — and, since I got what did it from Dave, I can't even claim credit for it.)

Bruce and Ted also became active in filking; it was actually invented by Karen Anderson,³³ but they were big helps in popularizing it, Bruce even publishing a generous collection of filk songs in *The Filksong Manual*.

"Filk song" is a typo of Lee Jacobs' that made good. Filk songs were originally folk songs with alternate lyrics about characters from science fiction or fantasy stories. I don't know that Bruce ever played a musical instrument, but Ted played guitar, and both (and others) wrote filk song lyrics and even composed new melodies of folk type for lyrics written in stories where musical notation would have been impractical even if the writers had had any melodies in mind, and then began writing both words and music for songs, so that the definition of "filk song" is a little broader than it started out.

I've never gotten into filking myself, but it's not *quite* impossible that I've contributed to the field. Ted played by ear, and one day when he and I happened to be together he was trying to play some popular song for the first time, but there was one chord that eluded him, the submediant.³⁴ It's the major chord based on the note that's the sixth in a major key; in the key of C major it would be the A major chord, for example. Of course I don't know that he ever used it in anything he composed — I tend to doubt it — but *if* he ever did and *if* you ever hear someone play it, you have me to thank for his getting the right chord in there.

Anyway, filking has contributed at least a little to fandom in general and to the LASFS. I don't know how much, but it has to have been more than a negligible amount.



6:

The Fan Square Mile was an area more like triangular in shape but probably covering no more than a square mile of area. It included all the residences I've mentioned except the Fan Hilton; its southwestern corner, two blocks west of Western Avenue and nearly two blocks north of Wilshire, was a large house, larger than the Booby Hatch's half of its building, with a large master bedroom and two good-sized but smaller bedrooms on the second floor. Next to the kitchen there was a small servant's bedroom (not quite microscopic, but you might want a pocket magnifying glass), and a sunroom off the staircase landing. We called it the Hill, as in the location of Bilbo and Frodo Baggins' home — yes, the door was solid wood, but no, it wasn't round.

The master bedroom went to Owen Hannifen and Hilda Hoffman, who'd soon change her surname to Hannifen (yes, they did marry) and her given name to Éclairé, but not in that order I believe. I got the sunroom — and yes, it did have shades, but not curtains. The others were Barry Gold, Don Simpson, and Jim Schumacher. We agreed to let Jim run the place, but when he and I had a disagreement about one of his policies, rather than fight or even just grumble and complain, I moved out.

But that didn't happen right away, and I enjoyed staying there as long as I did. And I moved back in later.

Comic books from the 1940s hadn't yet become more expensive than flawless half-pound blue-white diamonds, and one day I was in a Hollywood bookstore and found a copy each of five issues of *Sensation Comics* from around 1945; the three with covers were 50¢ apiece and the other two were a quarter each. *Sensation Comics* had featured a Wonder Woman story each month along with some fairly forgettable other characters.³⁵ It had never been a real favorite of mine when I was a kid, but they were cheap enough and I wanted to refresh my memory about the characters.

When I got home, Owen glanced at the magazines and said something like "Oh, you got the *good* stuff!" That raised *both* my eyebrows, and I read them a little more carefully than I would have if he hadn't said that. I think it must have been three days before my eyebrows came back down below my hairline.

In 1941, some people worried about kids reading comic books, apparently because they enjoyed them too much. Publishers Harry Donenfeld and M. C. Gaines formed an Editorial Advisory Board to try to keep their titles unobjectionable on *any* count. It included a professor of English, a child psychologist, and a specialist in abnormal psychology. Gaines got together with this last, Dr. William Moulton Marston, to create what was supposed to be the ideal character for the little ones, Wonder Woman. For several years, Marston wrote the stories under the pseudonym Charles Moulton, using his and Gaines's middle names.

Well, Marston certainly proved he knew something about abnormal psychology! Wonder Woman came from Paradise Island, the refuge of the Amazons of Greek mythology — though, being of a younger generation, she was anatomically complete. She was the daughter of Queen Hippolyte, and excelled in the sports and athletic contests they all seemed to love. Her costume was not quite as revealing as possible, but her shoulders, much of her back, and most of her thighs were bare, and she wore high boots with high heels. The stories were drawn for most of a decade by an artist named Harry Peter (he signed himself "H. G. Peter") who got Wonder Woman's proportions right (her bra size wasn't 47-F, but she certainly wasn't flat) but somehow managed to make her look less appealing than most other artists would have. But wait! There was more!

In one of those issues of *Sensation Comics*, Wonder Woman found Atlantis at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. She got in through an airlock and encountered a race of eight-foot-tall beautiful, strong, athletic women and four-foot-tall homely, weak, wizened men. Our Heroine overpowered a guard, got her face-down on the floor, and proceeded to tie her wrists and ankles together, explaining "On Paradise Island, where we play many binding games, this is considered the best way...." There was a little more of this kind of thing in the other issues. Oh yes, she had a golden Magic Lasso; anyone caught by it couldn't help obeying any orders given by the person holding the other end. And she wore very heavy plain black metal bracelets on her wrists, which she used to deflect villains' bullets — on the very few occasions someone managed to remove them, she went berserk and could be controlled only by someone grabbing her Magic Lasso to subdue her and putting the bracelets back on her.

Of course, this has to have gone over the heads of at least 99.99883714% of the kids who read these stories — and I wouldn't have noticed if Owen hadn't mentioned it. But then I was brought up by pretty unsophisticated parents in an era almost Victorian by today's standards — whatever they are.

7:

The club stayed at the Silverlake Playground for a few years, but at some point, for some reason I don't recall, we decided to move.

In desperation, we relocated our meetings to the Hill. Of course, there was a good deal less room, even if we spilled over into the dining room, but suddenly a number of members, some who'd been showing up weekly and some less frequently, stopped coming at all.

It was the atmosphere.

Oh, the place was aired out well enough beforehand, but you could have torn off a piece of the wallpaper, rolled it up and smoked it. Yes, I know the statute of limitations has long since run out, but I'd still rather not name those of us (no, not all of us) who smoked a certain herb, in those days mostly imported very unofficially from south of the border. This was not a well-kept secret, and some of the members decided to avoid the place, whether out of caution or paranoia — and I suspect that in one or two cases it was used as an excuse to disguise more personal feelings.

But the club survived — and it was while we were meeting at the Hill that the club incorporated. Well, if we were going to get our own clubhouse, it would have to be in someone's name. Members come and go, and all eventually die, so we had little choice. The more responsible members (all kidding aside) investigated what all was involved and dealt with it, including concocting articles of incorporation, filling out the forms, paying the fee (from the club treasury), deciding that the best number of directors should be eleven, getting us to elect them, getting them to choose a chairman and secretary, and getting us to choose new titles for the officers we already called “director” and “secretary”.

So the member who chaired the meetings was now “Procedural Director,” and the meeting secretary was now “Procedural Secretary”. We could have given the corporate officers different titles, but our Articles of Incorporation had to be approved by the State Department of Corporations, which of course is a bureaucracy and might have taken a couple of decades to adjust to a non-standard set of titles. It would be several years before we'd bother to completely change the titles of almost all the meeting officers as I mentioned 'way back there somewhere.

But the Hill was available (sometimes with a little warning) at any time, and we began hosting card games Friday evenings. This included the odd — sometimes *very* odd! — poker games that Earl Thompson, if he had still been around, would have called “weird and pervery”, his favorite phrase for anything unusual. But some of us preferred an entirely different game called Oh, Hell! (and sometimes other names, as well). We've been playing it ever since, and I've appended the rules at the end of this weird and pervery literary exercise.

But, either because of the drop in attendance or because of the reason for the drop in attendance, and also because we still needed more room, the search went on for new quarters. Finally we found the Palms Playground, just north of a municipality that rejoices in the name of “the City of Culver City.” And the weekly attendance gradually increased to new levels.

It was while we were meeting at the Palms playground that June Moffatt bestowed the title “Talky Li'l Bagger” (a reference to the “Pogo” comic strip) on Connor Freff Cochran, known then simply as Freff, and at one point I tried to steal it away from him. At the time APA -L had fifty or more contributors each week! If your IQ has at least one digit in front of the decimal point you're probably able to guess by this time that I can go on for a while on any of a number of topics, and my zines, consisting entirely of comments on what was in the previous week's distribution, were running pretty consistently six pages each week. I'm not sure Freff was appearing every week, but he was publishing some rather larger efforts — including, of

course, some of his extraordinarily fine drawings. (Very talented, he also contributed some of the best cover illustrations we've ever had.)

Anyway, for an assortment of reasons, at one point I published nothing for four consecutive weeks. The fifth, I got caught up, with thirty pages of remarks on over a month's previous issues. But I was broke and running out of paper! (I may have used some for a contribution to CAPA-Alpha, an apa for comics fans.)

I had a little white paper, but it wasn't intended for mimeography. It had a slick, non-absorbent surface, which required inserting a slipsheet on top of each sheet as it came out to prevent the wet ink from being picked up by the back of the next printed sheet, then letting the ink dry overnight, removing the slipsheets, and printing on the other side and doing the same again. (Paper for mimeographs and some other purposes is uncoated and highly absorbent, so that the use of slipsheets shouldn't be necessary.)

But I had some Tru-Ray, highly colored mimeo paper, and I had just enough each of red and green for the remaining twenty-eight pages. So I ran off seven sheets of red, seven of green, and one of white for each copy.

And I didn't want to have fourteen pages of solid red and then fourteen pages of solid green; I thought it would be better to alternate the colors.

This was a mistake.

I said the Tru-Ray was highly colored. It really was, if a long way from iridescent. And not pastel, either, if not dark enough to require the use of white ink. The result wasn't *quite* as bad as I've kiddingly described it — twenty-five or thirty personal complaints, a half-dozen optometrists' bills, and three threatening phone calls — but I'll never do that again! But I beat Freff in size that week, if in no other way.

One Thursday evening, I was helping with A PA-L, collating along with three or four others. One or two of them were giving Official Collator Fred Patten a hard time — I have no recollection about what; all I remember is I thought they were being dumber than three buckets of rocks — especially since the position of Official Collator is a purely voluntary one. Fred isn't one to argue, and when it got more than marginally excessive, he just quietly walked away. I noticed this (the others didn't seem to), looked around at who was there, somehow managed not to visibly shudder at the idea of any of *them* being in charge, and started giving orders.

Fred of course took his mimeograph machine home that night, and didn't bother bringing it again. Fortunately, I had my own mimeo which Lee and Barry Gold had kindly offered me sometime earlier (it leaked ink, but very slightly and not in a way to be a serious problem), and I had this old Chevy sedan — from the days when General Motors' cars had trunks almost big enough each to contain one of today's smaller models — so I brought my machine every week.

Since the mimeo was heavy and it was some distance from the nearest parking space to the building where we put APA-L together, I'd park in a space under a light (and the light in the trunk still worked), type up the stencil for the table of contents in the building, take the stencil out to the parking lot, and run it off in the trunk. I suspect I'm the only one who's ever printed even part of a fanzine — or much of anything else, for that matter — inside a car. (Well, most of *me* was outside, but the printing took place in the car.)

Oh, and there were a few times when it was a little more trouble than usual. APA-L was very popular in those days and we now had a whole lot of attending members to draw from, probably around a hundred, and on several occasions I had *two* stencils to type up and run off — there were a few too many contributions to be listed on one page, what with a few lines for the heading and one at the end for the page count total. (Today, of course, I'd use the Make It Fit option in WordPerfect to reduce the type size just the right amount needed to get it all on one page, but computers small enough to fit even inside a tractor trailer were still science fiction in those days.)

Then there was a problem of another sort. We nearly ran short of copies a couple of times, so one Thursday I announced the number of copies required would be increased the next week, from 70 to 75. Bruce came perilously close to getting bent out of shape; though normally a very reasonable person, he refused to run off more than 70 copies of his zine. Sure enough, I counted them carefully that next Thursday, and there were exactly seventy copies of *Nyet Vremya* (No Time).³⁶

Well, I knew better than to argue with Bruce. (My mommy didn't raise any dummies! Three nut cases, yes, but no dummies.) I couldn't keep his practically perfect prose all to myself, so I took the seventy copies home, retyped everything on two of my own stencils to make seventy-five identical copies, and included them the following week.

Blew him away!!! Bruce couldn't believe anyone appreciated his literary efforts that much. But the next time he had a contribution, there were the required number of copies. (A year or two before he died, he handed out copies of a report he'd done about a cruise he and his second wife Elaine Yampolsky Pelz had

just returned from; when I complimented him on it, he was surprised and tried to make nothing of his extraordinary skill with words. Again, I didn't bother arguing with him.)

Bruce knew how to turn a phrase to good effect. One of his more memorable lines, when someone got carried away with something, was "Nothing exceeds like excess." And when someone asks me how I am, I use a line he once used of the LASFS: "Subnormal, as usual." (At my age, that's pretty good!) Another was "Power is delightful — and *absolute* power is *absolutely* delightful!" And when Stan Lee took a detour from grinding out super-hero comics to invent *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos*, Bruce insisted "Stan Lee has used every cliché in the book, along with some that aren't in the book, plus a few he made up himself".³⁷ Of course he wasn't beyond the occasional pun: "Interesting bit about your use of epigrams — do you have a trite one?"

I certainly wasn't the best OC APA-L has ever had. Somehow I just never got around to arranging with artists for cover illustrations, and more than once we didn't have a cover. But then one week, and I don't know how this happened, *three* people brought covers — each complete with the number of that week's distribution on them, so it would have been too much trouble — well, for me, whether or not for the artist — to use one of them, replacing the issue numbers of the others on every copy, whether or not in the artists' styles. So that week we had three "covers": a front cover, a back cover, and a "middle cover." I don't suppose that's anything to be particularly proud of, at least because of the way it happened, but it is a distinction, and I'll take what I can get.

It must have been after I found a sucker replacement to take over APA-L that Ed Buchman and Dan Alderson began publishing *Kylix*, because I don't remember dealing with the challenge of their issue numbering.

Dan was a genius and Ed, at this writing, still is. When you combine genius with the silliness all but required of LASFS members, you occasionally get some odd results. For example the last issue of *Kylix* carried an issue number less than fifteen — but there had been more than forty of them.

Well, Dan had invented a new set of numbers, consisting of all the numbers you can make with 1 and ? by adding and multiplying. Adding 1s gives you all the whole numbers and adding ?s then gives you numbers like $3+?7$. And multiplying means you can make $4?3+9^2+?2+?13$. So, putting them in order of increasing size, he got 1, 2, 3, , 4?, +1?, 5, ?+2, 6, ?+3, 2?, 7, ... 9, ?+6, 2?+3, 3?, ?², 10, And that's the way the issues of *Kylix* were numbered. I don't remember how the numbers were typed on the table of contents, but I've never heard of a typewriter with a ? key — well, a Greek one of course, but none of us would have gone to the time, trouble, and expense of getting one. Nowadays, of course, even Microsoft Word can do the Greek alphabet!

But Dan didn't stop there. These numbers he called "Kylix numbers", but then he extended them to "hyperKylix numbers" by including exponentiation. Of course repeated multiplication will produce some of that: $4=2\times 2=2^2$; $8=2\times 2\times 2=2^3$; $16=2\times 2\times 2\times 2=2^4$; etc., but mathematicians have defined numbers whose exponents aren't whole numbers — like $2^? = 2^{3.14159\dots}$, which equals 8.8249778..., a little larger than 2^3 (8), but much less than 2^4 (16). Then Dan *really* got carried away with bihyperKylix numbers, which include the number *e*, approximately 2.718281828459. There are so many combinations of these numbers that there are 59 of them just from 1 to 10, 1947 of them up to 25, 106,488 up to 50, and 31,962,910 up to 100.

But Dan sometimes put his brilliance to good use. He'd graduated from Cal Tech with a degree in astronomy. This is the university that one friend of mine dropped out of after three years and got a job requiring a bachelor's degree — his employer figured three years at Cal Tech was at least as good. But Dan did so well that, on graduating, he was immediately accepted on a doctoral program.

But his mother had come down with a catastrophic disease that took all the family's money, and he had to quit and find a job. Cal Tech hired him at their Jet Propulsion Laboratories, and he learned how to use a new tool they'd acquired — a huge (in physical size if not in capacity) computer. He ended up writing programs for it. He was in charge of producing TRAM, the guidance program which, 'till recently, was used by all the rockets sent beyond the moon.

He was asked to prepare an ephemeris program, giving the positions of some of the satellites of Jupiter and Saturn at any given time, so that rocket-borne cameras could be pointed in the right directions to take pictures of them. "Are you sure these are all the satellites you'll want pictures of?" "That's all we'll need." "Are you positive?!" "Oh, yes!"

Of course, several years later when they finally got the funding to actually have use for the program, he was asked to include a few more. The way the program was written, he didn't have to start from scratch, but could just add to it. But the program had been preserved on punched tape, not made of the highest qual-

ity paper; he put the reel in the machine to read it, and the tape turned into very expensive confetti. But, being Dan Alderson, he hadn't thrown out the original IBM punched cards, and I was with him when he found them in his garage and uttered a deep sigh of relief. Of course the program worked perfectly.

Alas, alack, and oh shit, however; not quite everything that happens in the LASFS or much of anywhere else we know about is fun, funny, or even easily tolerable. No one has ever confused this planet with heaven, whatever anyone has believed that place to be like. We'd already lost Ron Ellik in an automobile accident, and while I never got the chance to get to know him, I've never heard a hint of anything about him that wasn't complimentary, usually highly so.

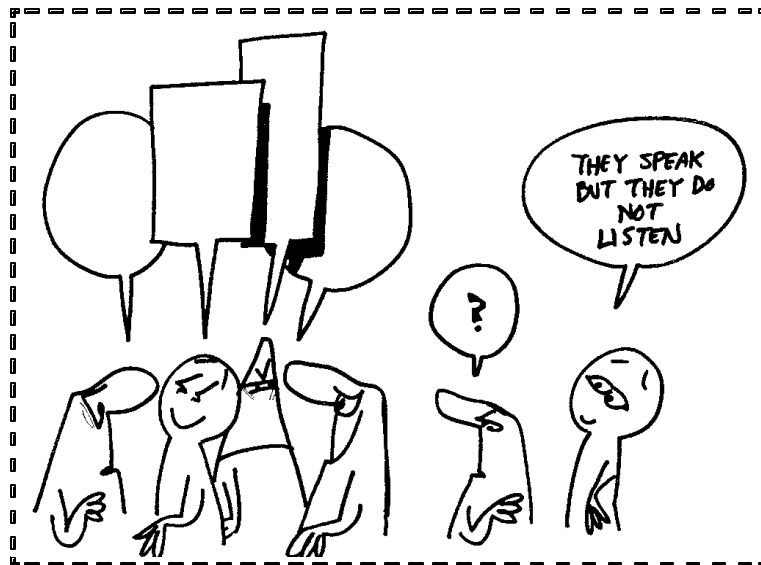
But I did know Ed Baker well, having lived in the Booby Hatch with him more than a year as well as seeing him, years before and after, weekly at the club and, usually, afterwards. So I was shocked and dismayed — if I may indulge in traditional British understatement — when I found out he'd been found in his car one night, shot to death by those ubiquitous "person or persons unknown". Yes, I'm awfully glad to have known him for nine years, but still...

Years before I joined, the LASFS had made a change in membership charges. In 1962, it cost a dollar to join; membership was for life, but 35¢ dues (later appropriately increased), the price of a science fiction magazine, were charged only for every meeting actually attended. A less-than-serious legend had grown up that "Death does not release you, even if you die."

There may be a couple of people who now take that seriously. At the meeting the night after Ed's murder, his death was announced as soon as the meeting was called to order, surprising several people a lot more than the rest of us — they'd have sworn they'd seen him a few minutes earlier at the other end of the room.

One more thing I recall from the Palms Playground days, rather lighter than the preceding, was an occasion when I had the opportunity to say something *very* silly that was, in fact, the precise truth, thanks to my quickness with simple arithmetic and an unusually large amount of luck.

Bruce had decided to unload a set of cheap metal shelves at a time when I needed that sort of thing. Unsure he'd be able to find a buyer, he'd brought only two of the eleven pieces, one of the seven shelves and one of the four corner uprights. I won the bidding for \$5.50. Later, I took the two pieces off to my car — Bruce would bring the rest next week — and was careful to hold the upright piece upright so as not to hit someone or something accidentally with the end of it behind me — it was six feet long. Someone noticed the way I was holding it and asked, "Is that your quarterstaff?" Without appreciable hesitation, I replied, "No, it's my half-a-dollar one." I'd do little less than kill to get straight lines like that on a regular basis!



8:

I will this one time deliberately and consciously brag, which, considering what I've said so far, probably tells you much more about my ego than it would like you to know. Many years earlier, probably when the Fan Hilton closed down, a place had had to be found for the club library. Ed Baker was able to house a lot of books in his home and would bring some paperback books to the meeting every week — this material had been moved to the Hill, which had had plenty of space, and then been stored by Dwain Kaiser when we moved out. But something like half had gone to Santa Monica; Al Lewis arranged for this part (including a lot of old pulp magazines, some of them beginning to sharply increase in value to collectors) to be stored in the rafters of his mother's garage.

Now she'd decided to move, and didn't want to bother with all those boxes of books and magazines for which she had absolutely no use. When this was mentioned at a meeting, I didn't wait quite long enough for anyone else to volunteer and was given the location of the house and a suitable time to go out there. So one afternoon, probably the following Saturday, I emptied the trunk of my car — that big, old Chevy — praying I wouldn't need the spare tire and jack, and removed the rear seat. In Santa Monica, a good twenty miles west, Mrs. Lewis was very pleasant, but it wasn't any of her stuff and she let me do all the work myself, climbing up the ladder and bringing down the boxes, though she kindly offered me a cold drink before I was done.

I knew the trunk was huge, but I was able to stuff half again as many boxes into it as I'd expected. I moved the front seat forward until I could drive with only slight discomfort, packing the rear compartment tight, to the roof, and managed to get the three or four remaining boxes to my right in the front. I'm glad I didn't look at the tires; I'd probably have been too frightened to drive. Back home, I had an unusually deep closet and put nearly everything in it.

A couple of years later, we'd finally moved into our own building on Ventura Blvd. and Walt Daugherty had built us bookshelves. In the meantime, my mother had died, leaving me a little money, and I'd taken over the payments on my brother's '72 Olds Cutlass. This was an appreciably smaller car, but hardly a compact. But this time I had some help in the person of Alan "Mac" MacCaughan (who later took a job in the Bay Area and has not been seen or heard of since — well, not by us, anyway), and on two consecutive Saturdays he and I filled up the back seat and the trunk and moved all the club's books and magazines I had and a few of my own that I figured I'd never get around to rereading and got them to the clubhouse and into the library; on the following Sundays I arranged them on the shelves.

I'm just glad the portion of the library I moved was nothing like Fred Patten's. A few years earlier, I'd visited him and found that he had thousands of paperback books shelved in the living room. In his den, I noticed a small bookcase like the ones that come with the larger encyclopedias; the top was covered with very low stacks of books. Fred saw me looking at them and said resignedly "I've about given up my ambition to read all the science fiction ever written." At the clubhouse one evening a few years later, not long after we'd moved to Ventura Blvd., I was telling someone this and Fred, who'd come up behind me, added, with a sigh in his voice, "Those piles are a little higher, now."

We were still meeting at the Hill when we began playing cards regularly every Friday night. Of

course, there was always someone home at the Hill, but now the clubhouse was opened Friday nights, too, for card-playing and general socializing. And we Oh, Hell! players, both “sharks” and “fish” (as Bruce called the best and worst players), weren’t the only ones who came, though I never bothered to inquire what the others were doing at the other end of the room — whatever it was seems to have been harmless, at least. A bunch of players, though, mostly fish, would come, even when they couldn’t afford to risk a penny a point — worth a few times more than it is, today, of course, thanks to inflation.

One Friday evening, Bruce, usually one of the first to arrive, had been slightly delayed. Given the good news that tonight everyone had money to lose play with, he turned and called “Here, fish! Here, fish!” — and they all came running! I fell off my chair laughing. Beverly Kanter came over from the far end of the room to find out what was so funny, and Jack Harness “explained” that “It seems there was this guy named Pat and Mike — ” and Bruce fell apart. Beverly looked at us critically, decided she wasn’t going to get any sense out of *these* clowns tonight, and returned to the others as far from us as possible.

A decade or two later, I broke up again reading the comic strip “Calvin and Hobbes” the day Bill Watterson drew Calvin at the edge of a lake holding out a bucket and saying “Here, fish! Here, fish!” rather less successfully, then giving up in disgust saying, “They must know that one.” I’ve wondered ever since if Watterson knew someone who knew someone who....

Though Bruce seems to have been more than competent at everything he turned his hand — or mind — to, his ego was certainly a little closer to under- than over-developed — except, of course, for humorous purposes. Before I managed to squander all of my rather modest inheritance after my mother’s death, I asked Bruce once about the possibility of paying dues not just a month or a year in advance, as we’d already made possible, but for a lifetime. He said he’d been thinking about it, but he’d been working so hard at raising money for the club he was afraid people would feel he was overdoing it, get annoyed, and end up contributing less; though in fact we were highly appreciative of his invaluable help in getting us our own building. He suggested I be the one to bring up the subject. So it’s Bruce’s fault and not to my credit that I became the first member to pay lifetime dues in advance, since we had a number of members (including Bruce) who could have afforded it better than I could even then. Still another distinction I can’t really brag about.

My inheritance also enabled me to attend Torcon II in Toronto in, I believe, 1972. Dan Alderson and I flew there on a Canadian plane (the actual craft was a little smaller than the ones mostly used — or at least mostly advertised — by U.S. airlines, but it wasn’t uncomfortable.)

I can’t tell you much about the convention, because too little happens at conventions that I’m really interested in. So I’m a fake-fan — so sue me. But I remember the Royal York Hotel, and I’m not alone. First of all, there were enough elevators! Well, there’s always once or twice, like when everyone goes off to the banquet at the same time, but everyone was marveling about not having to wait five minutes or more most times.

And the staff were much more friendly and co-operative than I understand was usually the case at conventions.

And every floor had a vending machine or two tucked away in a corner where you could find it but it didn’t stick out like the proverbial sore thumb. And every one of them sold America Dry Ginger Ale (made by the Orange Crush company).

And no one wanted to leave the hotel, though many of us preferred eating at a restaurant nearby — it was a lot less expensive and never closed. Very late, one of the waiters, brought up as a French speaker, would serve us with just the right amount of exaggeration of stereotypical Gallic flair to be entertaining.

But during the day it wasn’t as comfortable outside as many of us, especially from the Southwest, were used to. At that time of year (Canadians celebrate Labour Day the same day we celebrate Labor Day), the average high temperature is 65 degrees Fahrenheit — this year it was 85F, with the high humidity characteristic of the Great Lakes area. While my fellow Angelenos like to die, I just felt nostalgic.

Dan flew back late Sunday to be at work Monday morning, but I’d arranged a week or two off work, planning to visit some friends and relatives. Monday, Fred Patten dragged me off to a performance of a Gilbert & Sullivan production at a local theatre — my first G&S experience. Yeah, I enjoyed it, but not enough to do it again, so far.

Next I flew to Washington, D.C. to see my sister; her husband, a Navy officer, was stationed there. I stayed very briefly.

Then I took a bus to Philadelphia and found Dave and Joyce McDaniel’s home some distance out in the suburbs, very close to a suburb which rejoices in the name King of Prussia. (Pennsylvania seems to have a slightly higher proportion of oddly-named towns than any other state. Three hundred miles west, about

sixty miles north of Pittsburgh, is the town of Mars. Fifteen or twenty miles south of Pittsburgh is the town of Eighty-Four.) Joyce had taken a job in the area; and, as for Dave, of course a writer can live anywhere with mail service to his publisher.

Barry and Lee Gold were also visiting them, and the next afternoon Dave rented a full-sized sedan for me to drive us all into town for a meeting of PSFS, the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society. I was underwhelmed by the meeting; it wasn't nearly as silly as LASFS meetings, which probably explains why they were only meeting monthly instead of weekly.

After that, I flew to Pittsburgh to see my brother who lived fifty miles west in Claysville, stayed a day or two, and drove back to Los Angeles in his '72 Oldsmobile Cutlass. I took over the payments — he was still single and loved buying new cars.

Not much later, Ed Buchman was elected Procedural Director and appointed his close friend Dan Alderson as a committee to arrange programs. You must understand that Dan suffered severely from lack of self-esteem, to the point that when he put himself down, Ed would do something similar but sillier to try to show him he was over-reacting. It seemed to have done Dan some good, though it never quite stopped him — but he'd gotten to the point of being able to do it humorously. I was driving Dan home to Tujunga after the meeting that night when he confessed he didn't know what sort of programs to try to produce. "We could have a self-denigration contest," he finally said — then with mixed (and almost credible) disappointment and resignation added, "Of course, I'd lose!"

If we'd been parked, I'd have slowly slid under the steering wheel onto the floor in hysterical laughter — partly at the line, and partly at his delivery — but that didn't seem the ideal course of action in the left lane of the freeway doing sixty miles per hour in all but bumper-to-bumper traffic. I managed to stop my reaction almost immediately, though it was momentarily painful in some way I can't describe.



9:

The Ventura Boulevard clubhouse was too small. After we paid off the money we'd borrowed from Larry, we started looking around for something larger and found a piece of property two or three miles further north and about a half mile west, at 11513 Burbank Boulevard (across from Phil's Liquor Store), maybe a half mile east of the Hollywood Freeway exit. It's fifty feet wide, but fairly deep with three parking spaces in front of a small building with room behind for a couple more cars if necessary and a rear building at the end of the lot about as deep as wide. We paid \$58,500 for it; property values had gone up and we got about two thirds of that from the Ventura property, borrowing the balance from Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle.

But we were getting more than a hundred members attending nearly every week and it was still crowded! For various reasons, attendance has dropped off since then, but the much larger rear building is still often pretty full.

Dan Alderson had come down with diabetes when he was about 25. Apparently it was Type I. Type I doesn't often strike at that age, but he wasn't much overweight at the time, and he'd just had a case of flu, which always precedes it. But it devastated him emotionally; while he took his insulin as prescribed, he paid no attention to his diet and got essentially no exercise. He figured he'd just do as he pleased till the end. No good idea! — his life was shortened, but within that time the part with all the weakness and misery lasted much longer than he'd expected.

But JPL wanted his services as long as possible, and continued to employ him, even after he lost his sight, as long as he was able to do anything.

In 1980, I moved in with him. Late in the afternoon I'd drive him to work, then type into the computer what he'd tell me, and tell him what showed up on the screen — though most of the time, of course, he knew.

One of his smaller projects was to write a program that would convert documents produced by the word processing program used by the Navy into one of the two programs JPL was using — one was FORTRAN; I forget what the other was. He had a six-page document to use as a test.

Dan's program consisted of a number of statements, each ending with a colon (which of course could not be used within a statement), which told the computer that that was the end of that statement. I inadvertently left off the colon on the next-to-last one, so it construed the next one as part of this one.

Following Dan's directions, I started the test. On screen, the first four and a half or five pages translated perfectly — each line thereafter consisted of eighty characters (the width of the screen) of garbage. Random upper and lower case letters and assorted symbols, line after line after line after.... I hit the END key, and the screen showed the last twenty or so lines — of garbage — followed by a summary, including "1127 lines" — about 45 pages worth!

We hurried across the hall to the room with the printers. The man in there at another printer said that the bell had rung, indicating there would be more than a hundred pages, so he'd turned off our printer — they used that accordion-folded paper with the holes down both sides — so that arrangement could be made to deal with a possible break in the paper at the end of a box.

And it wasn't printing as it had displayed on the computer screen. Only six or eight of the two thousand characters shown on each screenful were printing on each sheet of paper. The Jolly Green Giant wouldn't have had a stapler big enough for the whole thing!

We went back; of course Dan figured what had happened and we found my error and fixed it. It then worked perfectly, of course.

But I couldn't stand the strain; my nervous system has never been what it should be, and I only stayed three months — Joe Zeff took my place and stayed with Dan till he had to go to a nursing home.

I guess those of us who knew him should be glad we did, but that's hard to remember when we suffer such a loss. And he certainly deserved a much longer healthy life! Just another reason no one calls this planet "Heaven."

10:

June Moffatt once did something very nasty to me — though, being the kind of person she is, it can't possibly have been intentional on her part. In 1996 I was elected to a term as Scribe. My minutes were generally well enough received — the members didn't laugh in *all* the right places when I'd read them the following week — but they never laughed in the wrong ones! And one Thursday I must have done something very right, because when I finished I actually got applause — no, nothing like a standing ovation, but enough I could throw them the ancient vaudeville line “Don't applaud — just throw money!” June opened her purse, pulled out a quarter, and tossed it up on the dais — so, since I've never sold anything, I guess that makes me a two-bit writer. (Hmmm — maybe I should cool it with some of these distinctions.)

We hadn't been in North Hollywood a long time when Randall Garrett, a very good and very prolific science fiction writer, happened to be in town and dropped by our clubhouse one Friday evening and favored us with one of, I'm sure, very many amusing incidents in his all-too-brief life; shortly afterward, he'd contract a fatal case of cerebral meningitis.

He began by mentioning his habit at conventions of going around addressing attractive young women with “Hi! I'm Randall Garrett. Let's fuck!” He'd get more than a few rejections, and not always very polite of course, but he never went to bed alone.

Not many people know he was an ordained Episcopalian minister! At some point, I've been told, he was stripped of his religious functions and privileges, but before that occurred a friend of his, who was a Catholic priest, once called Garrett to ask him to co-officiate at a mixed marriage. The ceremony was to be fancy but small and quiet; a number of people had been invited, but it not intended as a public ceremony. The day before, his friend introduced him to the bride and groom. Garrett extended his hand to the bride saying only “Hi! I'm Randall Garrett,” but scaring his friend for a moment.

The next day, the ceremony was quite solemn. At one point the Catholic priest, traditionally robed, was waving a censer full of burning (and smoking) incense first at the crucifix on the altar, then at his colleague; then he started down the aisle to honor the guests in like manner. Suddenly someone in the back, likely of neither faith, yelled out “Y' look great in drag, sweetie, but your purse is on fire!” The priest managed to get back to the communion rail and lean on it to keep from falling on the floor laughing, along with, I'm sure, more than one or two others.

I'll leave it you to decide whether this is more like bragging or confessing, but one Thursday night I submitted a motion to name the restrooms. For the one in the meeting room I suggested “Disposed,” and for the one in the front building I proposed “Communicado”. Yes, the motion passed. (The large storage shed outside has been named “Perpetuity”.) Until we were forced to get rid of them because of details in local zoning laws, we also had a couple of large portable sheds named (in my absence) “Babylon Four” and “Deep Space Eight.” No, we have no hope of ever cornering the market on silliness, but that's never even slowed us down, never mind stopped us.

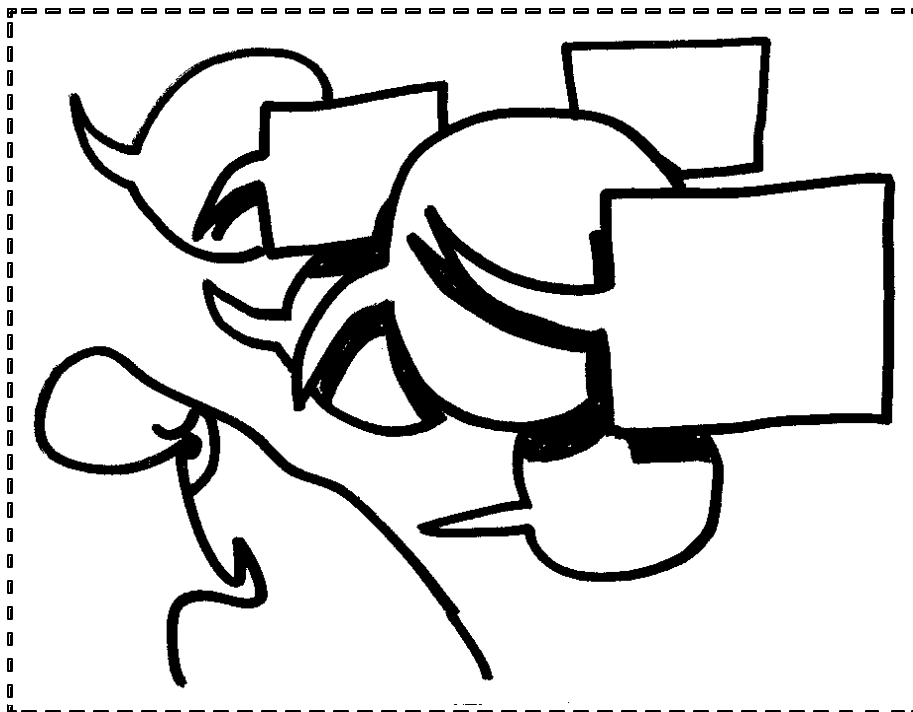
-- Phil Castora, 2004

ENDNOTES

- 1) A white-collar worker, he didn't have a union to fix his time at five eight-hour days a week, and had to work a half-day on Saturdays into the early or middle 1940s. (He was not happy about this!)
- 2) I have no idea why the edition that comes out the night before is called the "bulldog" edition. Neither does my dictionary.
- 3) Preferably an edition complete with those great Edd Cartier illustrations.
And I later found that *Other Worlds* had been the only magazine willing to publish Ray Bradbury's "Way in de Middle ob de Air", one of what would be soon collected as the Martian Chronicles — the one about African-Americans; and this story didn't make it into all editions of the book.
- 4) For some inscrutable Mid-Western reason, the fans who organized ChiCon II preferred to refer to it as TASFiC — Tenth Annual Science Fiction Convention, not very specific as there was now at least one, if not two or three, other annual regional conventions.
- 5) Name inspired by the Elves', Leprechauns', Gnomes', and Little Men's Chowder and Marching Society often referred to (usually with misplaced or missing apostrophes) by Mr. O'Malley, fairy godfather to the title character of the comic strip *Barnaby*. And no, I don't know why they dropped the leprechauns.
- 6) From three very popular, original, and more or less thought-provoking novels: Alfred Bester's "The Demolished Man", A. E. van Vogt's "The World of Null-A", and Isaac Asimov's "...And Now You Don't", the last of course a sequel to the author's earlier story "Now You See It...."
- 7) Between the rivers, hills, and ravines, the terrain of Pittsburgh is so irregular that I've heard Venice, Italy is the only city on this planet that has more bridges than Pittsburgh's 337 (yes, many of them are pretty small). (Pittsburgh also has two automobile tunnels under ridges, each more than a mile long, and a third not much shorter!) All this in forty-five square miles. Oh, and only two dozen streets are more than twenty blocks long!
- 8) Sorry, I have no idea of the purpose of that rule, but it was *very* rarely broken, and only for a very special cause.
- 9) That went on for a while; by the 1970s, someone had organized an apa for the fans on the FAPA waiting list — and I've recently found that *that* apa had its own waiting list! Unfortunately — unless you're hot to join — today FA PA has no waiting list and membership is well below its limit of sixty-five.
- 10) My thanks to Fred Patten for most of the content of the last two paragraphs.
- 11) Beginning in 1930, Superman's creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, still in high school, began publishing a fanzine with the title *Science Fiction* — the first use of that phrase in the title of any zine, fan or pro.
- 12) Around 1870, Esperanto was unleashed on the world as a neutral universal second language for everyone, so that you wouldn't need a third, fourth, etc., no matter where you went. It's simple and perfectly regular; its creator, Dr. Ludwig L. Zamenhof, did a very good job. He was a Polish optometrist who had to know Polish, Russian (most of Poland was part of Russia at the time, so Russian was the official language), German (the language of most travelers in central Europe at the time — many of his customers were travelers), and Yiddish (being Jewish he was required by law to live in the Ghetto where that was the common language); I've read that he also knew ten others.
- 13) Traditionally, weekly dues are the price of a science fiction magazine.
- 14) Then the title of the presiding member of the club; we wouldn't incorporate for a few more years.

- 15) Of course I did. In fact, just thinking of it again as I typed this, I laughed out loud — but managed not to fall out of my chair this time.
- 16) Bill and Jane later divorced and Jane resumed her maiden name Gallion.
- 17) After Al died, his base of operations was sold and became a Chinese restaurant — a *Western* Chinese restaurant, I guess: the Panda Rosa.
- 18) Mostly six paperback novels in Ace Books' *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* series based on the television series. His were by far the best, though one or two others were pretty good, too. He also sold Ace Books *Arsenal Out of Time*; the plot and characters were refugees from *Planet Stories*, but the writing and the characterizations were first-rate. He sold a novel one of a short series based on the British TV series *The Prisoner*. And he sold at least one shorter story to John Campbell for *Analog*.
- 19) Ted and several others involved themselves in *Coventry*, taking alternate identities in a fantasy environment and writing stories about their characters. But apparently there was no rule forbidding anyone from writing snidely or less than complimentarily about the others' characters, and I understand it got ugly before they all quit.
- 20) But according to one of our Standing Rules (adopted at the insistence of Canadian Robbie Bourget, then Treasurer), the title "Treasurer" is now to be pronounced "Chancellor of the Exchequer" — of course, the next Standing Rule reads, "The previous Standing Rule is to be ignored." (The one after that says, "No, it isn't.")
- 21) Their ads always instructed readers to write to Scribe X.Y.Z. or P.D.Q. or Q.E.D. or whatever, no doubt a code designation for that issue of that publication.
- 22) No, I didn't do this every week, or even every month, but after a number of years this activity came to be known as "doing a Castora."
- 23) In the late 1940s, some ass read A. E. van Vogt's short novel *Slan*, about super-human evolutes called "slans", and began proclaiming "Fans are slans!" At least one other fan seems to have taken him seriously. Several fans in Michigan, who didn't, thought it would be mildly humorous to call their shared domicile "The Slan Shack" — eventually this became a generic name for any abode housing at least three fans. (By the way, the story isn't bad, despite being dated.)
- 24) Characters were seen playing a variation of Brag in a very few of the skits on *The Benny Hill Show*.
- 25) "Bourrée" is the name of an old French dance! How the card game got that name is beyond my ability to imagine. It comes from an older word meaning "to stuff," but that seems less than enlightening.
- 26) Also a pseudonym, though he didn't write any books. But he infrequently (and, I'm sure, unintentionally) dropped a hint that at least one could have been written about him.
- 27) Even Hugo Gernsback never predicted the word "pre-owned."
- 28) In *The Lord of the Rings*, "Grishnakh" is an Orkish name.
- 29) About this time, the Cult rejoiced in the sobriquet "The Thirteen Nastiest Bastards in Fandom", bestowed I've been told by Bruce Pelz; when asked how Fred Patten had gotten in, local members would stop, shake their heads, shrug, and guess "He must have lied about something."
- 30) For those of you who don't know, "goy" is a Yiddish (or Hebrew?) word meaning a male non-Jew.
- 31) Cheap shots are left as an exercise for the reader — on the rare occasion when I can resist the temptation myself.

- 32) Or Moebius if you get lost in your Help menus trying to find how to produce the “ö.”
- 33) Technically, it’s been invented very informally many times before, but Karen was the one who made it a full-fledged, popular fannish *genre*!
(On the way home from ChiCon II some of us came up with new verses to a simple song, “The Deacon Went Down”, explaining why one couldn’t get to heaven with the editors of science fiction magazines. Referring to Anthony Boucher and J. Francis McComas, then co-editors of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, I explained
 (“Oh, you can’t get to heaven with Boucher and McComas,
 (“Cause heaven ain’t where their eternal home is!”
(Hey, it was a lot better than someone else’s attempt to rhyme “Campbell” with “hell”!)
 Oh, and while Karen has been best known as the wife of now-deceased Poul Anderson, author of a whole lot of fine science fiction novels, she’s written (all too few) fine stories and poems herself.
- 34) Thanks for the name, Janice Morningstar!
- 35) One of the other characters was “The Gay Ghost,” but that was back in the old days when “gay” still meant nothing more than “happy and carefree”.
- 36) Bruce once admitted to me he didn’t know whether “Nyet”, which means “no” in the sense of the opposite of “yes”, also means “no” in the sense of “not any” – but, since it wasn’t likely to be read by anyone familiar with Russian....
- 37) Underlined quote marks are a fannish invention called “quasi-quotes” used to give realistic representations of actual conversations or writings when the precise actual wording is unavailable.



GLOSSARY

APA:

Amateur press association. The earliest of these, dating from the nineteenth century, consisted of people with access to printing presses who wanted to show off their skills to each other. Most fan-nish apas (the Cult being an exception) have been modeled on these — and are no longer confined to science fiction fandom; there have been more than one for comics fans, dating back to the early 1960s, and I've seen a fanzine from an apa for Tarot card fans. (Much of the content of contributions to fan-nish apas has nothing to do with science fiction or fantasy — though this was not true originally.)

APA-L:

An informal apa collated and distributed at each weekly LASFS meeting. Copies are given to people who contribute, or who contributed the previous week — there is no formal membership, though for a while there was a rule requiring LASFS membership for participation. It was started in the second half of 1964, continued 180 weeks, was suspended for five months, and has been going every week since. Fred Patten has contributed, rarely as little as a single page, every week without missing once.

The CULT:

A fan publishing group of thirteen members who, in turn, publish the official organ of the group every three weeks and must contribute otherwise periodically between their turns as publishers. It dates from the early 1950s.

FANZINE:

An amateur magazine published by a fan (of science fiction originally, and always herein) for fellow fans. The first science fiction fanzines were published in the late 1920s, but the word's first appearance was in Russell Chauvenet's fanzine *Detours*, Vol. I, No. 5, Oct. 1940 (and thank you, Robert Lichtman).

FAPA:

The Fantasy Amateur Press Association. This was the first science fiction fan publishing group, founded in 1937, modeled on associations of printing fans. Members send their contributions, in sufficient quantity, to the Official Editor, who makes up for each member a bundle of one copy of each contribution. Mailings are quarterly; members must contribute no less than eight pages annually; dues are sufficient to cover the Official Editor's mailing expenses. Membership has long been limited to sixty-five, though there have been numerous vacancies in recent years.

GENZINE:

A fanzine for fans in general, rather than one intended for distribution only among fellow members of a fan publishing group. Copies are available in return for written or drawn contributions, letters of comment, at least one time by simple request, or of course ¢a\$h.

HUGOs:

Annual awards for excellence, usually in the form of stylized spaceships, given at World Science Fiction Conventions since 1957, named for Hugo Gernsback, founder of *Amazing Stories*, this world's first magazine devoted entirely to science fiction. In more recent years, awards have been given for fan-nish achievements as well professional ones and in media other than magazines and books.

OH, HELL!

A card game popular with some members of the LASFS since some time in the middle or late 1960s. For no particularly good reasons, I've appended the rules following this section.

PROZINE:

A professionally published magazine, always herein of science fiction or fantasy. This word is believed to have been coined at about the same time as "fanzine."

PULP:

Short for “pulp magazine”, a magazine roughly the size of the typical comic book, printed on usually 128 pages of cheap “pulp” paper, thicker but no heavier than regular paper, with ragged, untrimmed edges. Most fiction magazines were of this type from well before the first issue of *Amazing Stories*; all had converted to “digest-sized” format by about 1955, some as early as the early 1940s.

SPACE OPERA :

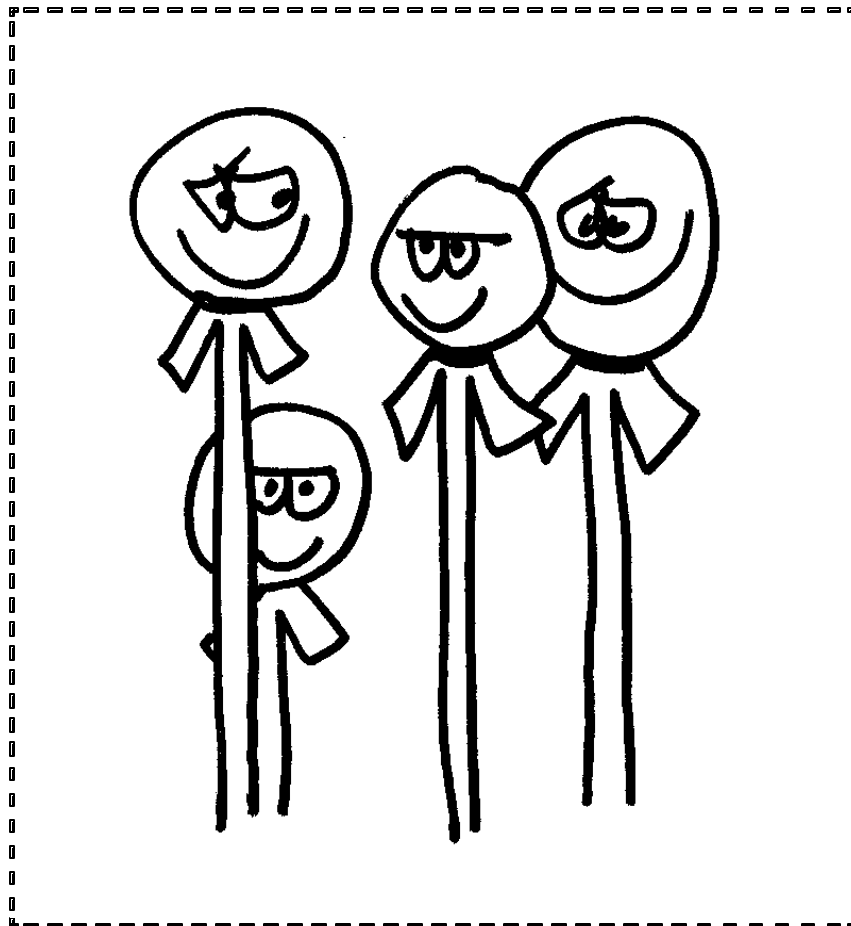
Formed on the analogy of “horse opera”, cheap, formula western movies. Sometimes defined as “Hopalong Cassidy in a spaceship instead of on a horse.” In other words, science fiction adventure stories of the type of, but not always of the quality of, *Star Wars*. The phrase was originated by Wilson “Bob” Tucker.

SAPS:

The Spectator Amateur Press Society, an organization similar to FAPA but about half the size, and with publishing requirement of six pages total in any pair of consecutive quarterly mailings. (The name was chosen for the acronym, intended originally as a joke; but, because so many fans were on the FAPA waiting list at that time, it was actually formed.) I believe it was founded in the late 1940s

ZINE:

Either a fanzine (nearly always) or a prozine (rarely), according to the context.



The Rules of OH, HELL!

as played by LASFS members

WARNING: I have seen this game listed in a book of card game rules as a children's game under a name like "Oh, Heck!" — and, without the restriction on the dealer's bid, and with no money or anything else at stake, it's suitable for all but smaller children. But, especially with that rule and for any *large* amount of money, do not play with strangers (or much of anyone else) without wearing a full suit of armor over at least two layers of Kevlar! (I have also heard it called "Shit on Your Neighbor!")

APOLOGY (to anyone who feels it's due): I haven't used gender-neutral language because it might be awkward in places, and my first concern here is the reader's ease of understanding of these rules, especially among readers who aren't familiar with this type of game or with cards in general. It should be noted that the author is too broke to make meaningful a lawsuit by any Women's Lib group.

A standard 52-card bridge or poker deck is used. Before play is begun, any player shuffles the cards, any other player cuts, and the cards are spread face down on the table. Each player draws a card and turns it face up. The player with the highest card chooses a seat at the table and will deal the first hand. The player drawing the next highest card sits at the first player's left, and so on, the player with the lowest card ending up at the first player's right. Any number more than two can play; but, if there are many who wish to play, it may be best to break up into two or more tables. (The rank of the cards is, from bottom up, deuce (two) through ten, jack, queen, king, and ace. In case of a tie in denomination, the suits rank as in Bridge, with clubs lowest, then diamonds, hearts, and spades.)

NOTE: The fewer the number of players at any table, the more difficult the game. If only three play, they should be very well matched in ability to prevent boredom for the best player, and serious discouragement for the poorest. If six play, the best player will win more often than not, but luck plays a rather larger role in the game. But some people, like myself, like the game well enough to play with any number at the table, whether better players or worse. (*At one time LASFSians would use a six-suited deck when playing with 5 or 6 players. Suits 5 and 6 were coloured blue and represented paddles and wheels. — ed.*)

The cards are reshuffled by the first dealer and offered to the player on his immediate right to cut. The dealer deals the required number of cards to each player, one at a time to each in turn, beginning with the player to his left. The dealer then places the remaining cards face down between himself and the player on his left, who will be the next dealer, and turns over the top card; every card of that suit is a trump card. If three, or more than five, play, the first dealer deals three cards to each player; the second dealer deals four cards to each player, etc., until a player deals the maximum equal number of cards possible. Then each player in turn once deals that many cards to each player without turning over a card for trump. Then the next dealer deals that many again with trump, the following dealer one less, etc., until one player deals three to each; after the cards of that hand are played, the game is over, and each player draws a card again to determine the first dealer of the next game, if there is to be one.

If four people play, after the hand with twelve cards each, each player deals a hand of thirteen cards each, and there are no cards left over to designate a trump suit. If five play, there is an extra hand dealt at the beginning and the end in which each player is dealt two cards; this is to prevent the same player from dealing the first and last hands, which would not be fair to that player.

Each hand begins with the player to the dealer's left bidding some number of tricks, which may be as few as zero or as many as each player has cards. The remaining players also bid, in order, ending with the dealer. A player may change his mind and his bid only before the next player bids, the dealer (final bidder) only before the first card is played. The scorekeeper records each bid. But — except as a children's game — the total number of tricks bid may **NOT** equal the number of cards in each hand, so that there is usually one bid which the dealer may not make. This is called, by us, DDA — Dealer DisAdvantage, for reasons that will become all too clear after a few hands are played. (Hint: DDA is also construed as short for "Dealer Dies Alone.") Of course, infrequently more tricks than available will have been already bid, and the dealer may in this case make any bid he wants.

Once the bids have been made and recorded, the player to the dealer's left leads a card to the first

trick by placing it in the center of the table. Each other player in turn plays a card to the trick by doing likewise, if possible playing a card of the same suit as that of the card led. If there are no cards of the trump suit in the trick, the player who played the highest card *of the suit led* takes the trick, places it face down in front of him, and leads to the next trick. If there are any cards of the trump suit in the trick, it's taken by the one who played the highest card of that suit.

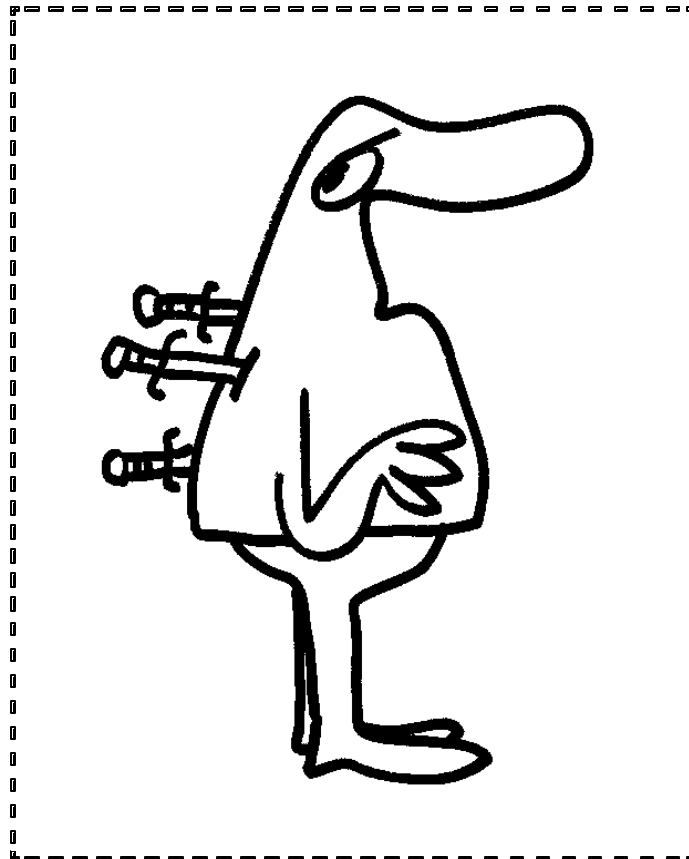
When the last trick of the hand is taken, the scorekeeper records the number of tricks each player took. If a player has taken the exact number of tricks that he bid, he receives ten points plus one point for each of those tricks. If the player has taken fewer tricks than he bid, he receives no score for the hand. If he's taken more tricks than he bid, he receives no score for the hand!

Before playing the game for the first time, you are most strongly advised to consult an experienced player for bidding and playing strategies and then to watch an entire game.

Two Endnotes by the editor:

*In recent years LASFSians usually call this game **HELL!**, not OH HELL!*

At one time LASFSians would use a six-suited deck when playing with 5 or 6 players. Suits 5 and 6 were colored blue and represented paddles and wheels.



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OLD FANS GO TO EMBARRASS
THEMSELVES...

