



The Drink Tank

ISSUE NUMBER FIFTEEN (AND I LIKE IT TOO)



Schmaltzy, but True Stories...

□ My Dad has not been terribly lucky. In fact, he's been rather extremely unlucky. He's the one who brought me into fandom at an age where I could barely hold my head up. He, like me for much of my post-familial fannish career, collected fanzines from around the world. He loved some most of all: his totally up-to-date (for 1984) collections of Niekas, his Granfalloon, Schred (if anyone has an issue of Schred, I'll pay you what you want for it) and others. In 1984, he and my Mom broke up, thankfully. Mom, taking it as well as I could have expected, tossed out his collection of smutty paperbacks (save for the ones I'd hidden in my room), his 8-tracks, and most brutal to me, his fanzine collection, save for one box that even she couldn't throw away at that stage of her anger. A single box remained to be handed back to Dad when he came to pick me up to take me to see *The Neverending Story*. That one box had Dad's Niekas run and a few others.

□ Pops headed out and had his one box. A few months later, he was hit by a car. He had to relearn how to read, and used his few remaining zines to relearn, much as he had used them to teach me to read. Dad has spent much of the time since the accident either unemployed and without regular housing or as a carnny. While on the road, a guy who had something of a substance problem, his friend Nicho, wandered off with much of his stuff, including the box of Niekas and the like mixed in with a mini-TV and other assorted items. Dad never found him, this was 1992 or so, so his stuff was long gone.

□ Dad has had a few trouble spots since then, including coming down with colon cancer the same day as I found out I was up for a local Emmy award. At one point, he was told that he had about six weeks to live. He beat the odds and he's clear of cancer now, or so they say. The last time Dad came by the museum, I showed him to my desk and we looked up efanzines and Earl Kemp's eI. I showed him the issue with the Robert Bonfils covers story and the look at the smutty paperback covers. Dad loved it, told me the stories that lurked under each cover, apparently not remembering yelling at me most fiercely when I had been caught smuggling his copy of *Flesh* out to my room when I was 11. Dad enjoyed it, and went through a few of the other fanzines that were up. He's claimed to have only written 3 LoCs in all his life, but he's seriously considering it for eI. I had given him a little bit of his world back and I felt good that I could show him a touch of what has been happening.

□ Dad Surprised me again, this time in a phone call.

□ The gent who had stolen Dad's stuff had gotten himself clean and found Jesus (he was behind the couch) after more than a decade and a half. He had been making amends and had spent years looking for the people he had wronged. One of them was my Dad. He called and ended up going over and giving Dad back the things he couldn't sell.

□ This included a few copies of Niekas.

□ The following is a rough transcript of the phone message he left me.

□ "Chris...Chris...I just wanted to call and say that Nicho...Nicho brought me a box. Niekas, Chris. I've got some of my Niekas back, Chris. I got it back. Niekas, Chris. It's been so...Chris, I've got some of my Niekas back!"

□ Dad was giddy, but we're Mexicans which make us an emotional group if ever there was one. I called him back and he told me that he had read the six issues he had been given and had reread them. They were exactly what he remembered. Dad hadn't sounded this happy in years.

□ When I'm undoubtedly going to be questioning my purpose in producing fanzines, I'll just think that in thirty or so years, some fifty year old former fan will rediscover my work and yelp like a Sasquatch into the phone message machine of his son. That will make it all worth while.



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So, here's another of the pieces I wrote for the Once Upon A Dime thing. This one deals with the folding of a long-running comics zine. This one is my personal fave as it details the life of a fanzine which I would have loved to create and it gave me the chance to play with more of the characters I created for OnceUponADime.com.

Memories of Comic Shoppe Memories by Christopher J. Garcia



Art by Alan White, fansite1@aol.com

□ It's sad when a comic shop closes its doors forever. The Comic Shoppe, the legendary store that opened on June the 7th, 1967, never reopened after James Kenneil locked up on December 31st, 1986. And though The Comic Shoppe has been closed for more than 15 years, it was only this last year that the most influential product of The Comic Shoppe, the fanzine Comic Shoppe Memories, stopped publishing.

□ The Comic Shoppe hired two young men just before Christmas 1975. The elder, Steve Hanlea (called S Han in CSM), had just dropped out of UCLA, and the younger, James Sileros, had just graduated Hollywood High School. They both worked Monday through Friday, with Steve taking the 9am to 5pm shift while James worked from 1pm to closing at 9. They found that during the period where they both worked, they had few customers. This led to the pair trying to figure out new ways of killing time. One afternoon, James scribbled away on a notepad, drawing a picture of himself and Steve looked in battle reminiscent of the fight between Spock and Kirk on Star Trek. Steve thought this was hilarious and started to write a story around it on the back of the page.

□ "We always called that issue 0." Remembers Sileros.

□ The following day, they did the same thing as they waited for the Wednesday new comics customer rush to arrive. They said that the two of them could probably write a fairly good magazine together if they tried.

□ "The Comic Shoppe used to carry a rack of science fiction fanzines." Noted former owner of The Comic Shoppe Larry Misteria. "They thought they could do a great one about comics, use it as a sort of newsletter for the store. I can't believe I fell for that."

□ Misteria gave Steve and James access to the Selectric Typewriter the store owned, allowing them to bring it to the counter area as long as they put it back by end of business. Steve would type full stories on the machine and often he'd leave the pages for James to work on after he'd left for the day. James would do the art on the back side of each page, one of the few design ideas that survived the complete run of CSM.

□ "You knew right away if you were reading Comic Shoppe Memories because there was always a full-page piece of art staring at you." Said Once Upon a Dime editor Donald Swan. "They had the best artwork in CSM. I always wished they would have done more for us."



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For the first five issues, Sileros and Hanlea did all the art and writing. Putting out an issue every month, they two of them started to gain a reputation among the comics fans that would pick up the issues at the store.

□ "I read the first few issues and fell in love," said Comic Collection curator and historian James 'Wizard' Reel, "they wrote such great pieces. I was getting my PhD at the time and writing insane amounts about the amateur press for my thesis. I started dropping off articles for them every time I'd come in to buy my comics."

□ With Reel's articles, Comic Shoppe Memories went from a fifteen page count to a fifty-plus page publication. Reel, who would write up to twenty pages in a week, would quickly find favor among the readers. It was through his regular column, The History of... that he was first approached to start working on the Smithsonian's Oral History Project. For the first three years, Reel was the star of the zine. In May of 1978, Reel left LA and his contributions became less and less frequent, though the last article in the history of Comic Shoppe Memories, The History of Comic Shoppe Memories, was written by Reel to celebrate the passing of the fanzine that made him 'famous'.

□ The first several years of CSM were pretty regular. They would make between two and three hundred copies on the Shoppe's photocopier, leaving more than seventy-five percent on the counter for customers to pick up and mailing another quarter off to readers elsewhere. Their letter column, which averaged some twenty letters of comment an issue, became famous for some of the well-known names that popped up.

□ "We had Stan Lee, Hugh Hefner, Howard Chaykin, Will Eisner, Kelly Freas, Julie Schwartz, Jack Kirby, Joe Kubert, you name it. All of the names sent us letters." Added Sileros.

□ CSM never missed the monthly issue. In May of 1977, much of the issue was drawn by Sileros while he was in the hospital recovering from an automobile accident. The birth of Hanlea's first child, Huntress (called Tress), led the lead article to be written in the waiting room of the hospital in August of 1982.

□ The first real hint that Comic Shoppe Memories was a significant news source happened in 1977. An envelope from DC Comics had arrived. Written on DC letterhead, the letter talked openly about the need to reinvent the Batman franchise and talked about ways in which a darker Batman might revive the title. This set off a wave of letters and an investigation by Warner Bros. into who had written the letter. It is obvious to see that the letter was a warning shot for the Batman that would emerge in the 1980s.

□ CSM was no stranger to controversy either. The battle between Ray Aldren and Michael Handrower over who had created The Bottler was one of the most talked about battles of the late 1970s and early 80s. Started by an article and a series of letters, the battle raged until Aldren's death in the pages of CSM and other fanzines. Many other smaller battles took place in the pages of CSM as well, with noted figures like Timmy Garrison, George Perez, and Ricky Limhous all being battered in various issues.

□ The closing of the Comic Shoppe in 1986 took its toll. Comic Shoppe Memories was left without a single distribution source. The pair split, with Sileros going to USC and Hanlea starting work at the Hollywood Script and Memorabilia Store on Hollywood Blvd. The two continued producing issues, with Sileros coming by the store to pick up and drop off pages with Hanlea every Monday and Thursday. The two used the shop on Hollywood Blvd's counter to distribute roughly a quarter of their issues, relying on mailing the rest. Without the use of a free photocopier, many of the issues of CSM only had print runs of fifty to one hundred.

In 1990, Sileros graduated and started working for a small software company making video games for the Nintendo Entertainment System. The job was perfect for him as he had requested



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him as he had requested to work overnight most times, and the company agreed. This allowed Sileros to make the required photocopies. Throughout the early 1990s, Sileros made the copies at his work, until quitting in 1995 to work for an internet investment group in San Jose.

□ By that point, Sileros and Hanlea were only writing and drawing a few pages each issue. Hanlea's daughter had become a fine artist by the age of fourteen and her dad had been using many of her illustrations. Sileros's girlfriend, Mary Maori, had also been sending in pictures for use in the zine. They had seven regular contributors and more than a dozen artists that frequently did art for them. By 1997, Hanlea was starting to show signs of fatigue and turned full editorship over to Sileros. Sileros continued editing *Comic Shoppe Memories* while Hanlea dropped out of sight. His daughter continued to do art for CSM, but refused to reveal that her father was very ill from cancer. He underwent radiation therapy and in 1999, he had recovered enough to return to work.

□ In Hanlea's absence, Sileros had started his comics website, *Comical Imbalance*. This site became popular with readers of CSM and many other comic fans from around the world. When Hanlea returned, Sileros gave over full-editorship to him and Tress. Tress did much of the day-to-day work putting out CSM while Steve mostly wrote reviews and did interviews with his long-time friends. Sileros continued to drop the Hanlea's articles, but he was almost full-time working on CI. In July of 2001, Sileros said that he was no longer interested in writing for *Comic Shoppe Memories*. Hanlea said that he understood and that he had so much left-over materials from the twenty-five years producing it that he would keep it running until the articles ran out, peppering it with art from various filios and the occasional piece by Tress. The opening tirade, as Steve had taken to calling it, was the only new piece of writing created for each issue.

□ The last story ran out with the August 2003 issue. Hanlea asked all of his most important long-time contributors to send in final stories. Sileros wrote a short piece saying goodbye. Paul Edmund, who had done at least one piece of art in every issue stretching from 1979 to 1997, sent in a final piece, and Reel's story was the capstone. Tress Hanlea, who had learned to read from the pages of *Comic Shoppe Memories*, instantly joined Sileros' site as the Independent scene reviewer and con-going editor. Her father, Steve, was hospitalized just two days after the final issue was mailed to the list, and died three days later. He was surrounded by his three children, his wife, Wizard Reel, Sileros and at the time of his death, he had just finished reading the last issue of *Comic Shoppe Memories*, noting that "it was just about as good as issue 0, Jim. Damn near as good."

The View from Higher Up

WE'LL MAKE GREAT PETS by Michael Swanwick

□ I gave a presentation at a computer-human interface conference not long ago. The audience all loved it, in large part because none of them understood what I was saying. I told them that everything they were working for was going to be achieved. That machines would take over all the drudgery of manufacturing, finance, and politics, freeing up people to devote themselves to leisure and the arts. I said that because those aspects of being human we most value are those which are most difficult for machines to emulate, they were going to develop symbiosis with us, in order to share in our emotional lives. Machines don't have family reunions, but they'd be mad not to want them. I said that they'd be competing with each other to offer attractive financial packages to those of us who are especially gifted athletes or artists.

They thought I was promising them heaven on earth.

Nobody noticed that what I was really saying was that they were selling the human race into slavery.



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Standard Fandom Complaint

That's right, it's back. I haven't really had much to complain about since I basically said 'Play nice' and got some grief for it. While I was at Norwescon, I had a little exchange with some folks and it didn't really hit me until I was in Sonoma how much it annoyed me.

While manning the fan table I sat at, a couple of fans came along and were talking to the Chicago bid for the WorldCon. They said that they were going to support Chicago because they were a US bid and that they were 'tired of all of these bids out of the country.'

You see, due to my hatred of flying, I'm not likely to go to any out of the country WorldCon (unless I'm ever elected as a TAFF or DUFF guy, then I'd suck it up and take the flight). While I'm not going to attend them, I've pre-supported many foreign bids, like Glasgow's and Japan's. I'm not going to attend either, but it's WORLDcon, it should be held everywhere there happen to be fans. In fact, I'll pre-support any country that hasn't held a WorldCon before and I'll become a friend of any bid for South Africa or Israel or Russia or Finland. To me, it's important that we make WorldCon a truly representative convention and hold it around the world.

Seamonsters #2

I can remember the era when most fanzines were like Seamonsters, that is, the era when Seamonsters was originally published. There is something special about Simone Walsh's fanzine, something that makes me smile. In my recent move, I only lost one thing, issue #1 of this fine fanzine. The other two that I bought at Corflu will have to do.

I really don't know enough about English Fandom save for the fact that Greg Pickersgill has always amused me in print and Peter Weston is a genius of a writer. Seamonsters is great, especially for the work of D. West. Victor Gonzalez took the time to hand me a copy of issue #3 and have me read the D. West article there. It was brilliant and I couldn't wait to get back to my place and give the entire thing a once-over.

Simone Walsh's tale of a visit to Calais was very well done, and Greg Pickersgill's long tale that concludes with a fine list of songs.

The cover by Harry Bell was brilliant, as I'd never found myself attracted to a Sea Monster until I saw that cover. I hope I can get another Issue 1 and find #4.

12 point Courier New: A Very Short Story

by

Jay Crasdan

The hands. Professor Alison Bonnet recognized the hands as soon as she grabbed hold of the canvas, exposing the left fingers, brass polished beyond 100 years. On the hand, a simple ring, antique silver against the glow of 1904 technology. Alison pulled the canvas gently, gliding it off, bundling it tightly, as if grasping memories. The canvas tented finally at the head, the perfect hair made of single strands of hard-hammered copper, with the strands of gold she had known since birth. The professor had never seen anything so perfect, so close to live in brass, iron, gold, steel. She ran a finger along the edge of the forearm, feeling the stressed cables of steely muscle, tracing the lines of creation, finding neither seam nor fault in the statue's perfection.

She stared at a living being, her Grandmother now an artifact of the Steam Age.



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COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

SENT TO GARCIA@COMPUTERHISTORY.ORG

BY MY GENTLE READERS

Eric Mayer-
Hi,

Enjoyed DT 14. I realized I was so lazy when I wrote you last time I didn't even bother to look up some web referencs for those comics I mentioned. Here's Dishman author John MacLeod's page.
<http://www.sentex.net/~sardine/small.press.html>.

Plus a couple covers:

http://www.lambiek.net/macleod_john.htm

http://kdishman.home.mindspring.com/Dishman/dishman_links.htm

I forgot that Eclipse issued one Dishman.

That Dishman site is just too cool. Everything I ever wanted to know about the folks with the last name Dishman. There are a few people with the first name Dishman, as one was a kid I had in camp one year. He was a brilliant little runner and chasing the five year old all over camp got to be exhausting. I have a lot of old Eclipse comics, but Dishman is new to me.

Then there's the Quaker Oats guy -- Chuck Bunker. I seem to have misremembered the Quaker Oat Man since it says here he was a villain.

<http://www.inter-fan.org/history/ChuckBunker.htm>

But there are some other great Bunker characters mentioned like Pie Man and Geriatric Man. Chuck is referred to as being "the late" and elsewhere being taken from us. I'm not sure what the writer means. Chuck had a lot of problems and was institutionalized at one point in the late eighties.

I have heard of Geriatric Man, and I think I'd even seen an issue on the Small Press shelf at New England Comics back in the day. I know I've his stuff at the Alternative Press Expo in the past too.

I noticed another thing I forgot - Chuck did a hecto colored cover for one of his minicomics after I revealed the secret of hectography in Small Press Comics Explosion.

A good Hecto cover is a wonderful thing. There are quite a few old super-indies that I've seen that have them. My favourite is a one-shot romance comic called Kisses and Torture, which is more of the latter than the former but still manages to be sweet.

My days as a comics fan were short. It quickly became too expensive to keep up with stuff at 2 or 3 bucks an issue. (Not much individually but it soon mounted up) plus, drawing comics took forever -- it is particularly time consuming when you can't draw!

--

Eric

Blog:<http://www.journalscape.com/ericmayer>

I too am cursed with the inability to draw and it's stopped me from ever attempting comic creation. I've got a lot of friends who do comics for a living (I went to High School with artist/writer C. Scott Morse). My days in active comics fandom were brief indeed, I wrote for a comic fanzine briefly and I do reviews once in a while for FanboyPlanet. If you know anything about Comics fandom, you should watch Comic Book: The Movie. Takes a bit of knowledge to really bite into the film.