

The Drink Tank issue 261
garcia@computerhistory.org

That there is a Brianna SpaceKat-Wu cover! I believe it's called Lesbian Assassin. I like it!

I'm trying to teach myself Documentary filmmaking.

After I was sure that I'd get to keep the FlipCam from Cinequest, I started thinking that I'd like to learn how to be a filmmaker, at least to some degree of comfort. I started thinking about what I could do to teach myself the ways of a documentary filmmaker. I listed a series of things I need to learn: interview techniques, editing, camerawork, music preparations and so forth. I figured it all out and I realised that I had an idea that I could work with and it came from that first doc I did for Zer01.

It opened up with 'Hi, my name is Ariane Wolfe and I'm a Steampunk' and I realised that I could do a series of these with people I know. I could interview folks I know from Fandom and focus on one section or another of what folks do. It made good sense, and it would give me a reason to hang out with folks I seldom see and get to know those that I do see all the time. I think it's a good way, and I started out part one, interviewing techniques, last weekend. I went and interviewed Anders, a buddy of mine who does re-enactments and costuming stuff. We met at his workplace, which does a lot of graphics stuff, and that was great. I went in with little specific knowledge and as we went, I caught on things and delved deeper. Preparation is important, but being able to suss out what's already there and make it more ready for the piece is an important skill.

I followed that up with Doug Berry, one of the most interesting guys I've ever met. He's a

BArea fannish legend, so sitting down and doing a 10 minute interview about gaming was great. The only problem? I didn't have nearly enough footage to cut over his interview. I wish I had more, but alas, I can finish it later.

I also did a brief little video called The Drink Tank Review of Books. I'll be doing more of them, they're basically little two or three minute videos of me talking about a book. Of course, they're reviews of books that don't really tell you anything about the book. That's my gimmick!

So, I'm making my own movies, which should be fun, and I've got a date to make a music video on the 24th which will be awesome because we're shooting at the Babbage Engine. That'll be cool and I'm hoping to have it ready to show at SteamCon.

In other filmmaking news, I tried my hand at acting again. My buddy JBWhaley (Hell is Other People, Cinequest 2010) asked if I would play a role for him, I said 'sure', and I ended up playing an 'Affable Prick', which was the perfect role for me. JB likes to do things organically, so



he gives you a character and a situation and you come up with the words. I think I did really well, and there's the possibility that we'll be in Cinequest next year. I hope so!

I think I was pretty good, I've done improv before, but this was the first time I've done film improv, and so I was very happy to do it. I got to play a boss who was a jerk and who was an absolute fussy bastard. I took along a few of the things that I've had bosses say to me and others.

OK, this is one of those issues that'll be regular-ish! There's Taral in here too!

**Letter Graded Mail
sent to garcia@computerhistory.org
by my gentle readers**

Let us start with the inimitable Bob Hole!

Chris,

I'd just like to point out something to your readers that you, at least, and I strongly suspect Taral, are already aware of. Anyone who doesn't like the definitions of the categories for the Hugo Awards can try to get them changed.

Bitching about them in a fanzine (even a widely read one like DT) and in blogs and podcasts and on streetcorners may make the bitchers feel better and it may spread the word that some people feel something needs changing, but actually showing up at the business meetings, offering a change in the rules, and getting that change through the vote of the Business Meeting (twice) is the only way it's going to change.

If you or someone else feels they can do a better job of defining "fan" or "fanzine" and get that definition passed, more power to you. So far, even in following the current discussion I've not seen anything but "the rules are wrong". How about trying to write new wording? HOW are they wrong - not in a vague sense, but how would they actually be written to incorporate what you (Chris/Taral/Anyone) believe a fan and fan writing are?

Put that together and let others poke holes in it to make sure it actually means what you want it to mean (an important step in reducing unintended consequences). Then take it



to Reno and beyond. Otherwise, it's just a bunch of "sound and fury, signifying nothing" (to steal a phrase). Another bunch of "get off my lawn but I'm not willing to put up a fence" crabbers so typical of all kinds of fandoms.

Cheers,
Bob

You make some good points, though your belief that *The Drink Tank* is widely-read is not actually true. I will point out that there is no Period for Public Comment for the Hugo rules, which means these things have to be brought up ahead of time, discussed outside of the meetings and, ideally, outside of the con itself. That's what we're doing in the zines and on blogs. Whether or not someone runs with it, that's another story. My greatest contribution will always be column inches, though if the rumblings of a motion for Popular Ratification gain momentum, I might be up for a bit more hands-

on.

I, for one, am not willing to give up my WorldCon to play the politics required to get something passed. It's the one chance I get to see a fair percentage of my friends, so I'm always reluctant. Anyone who thinks that it's easy to get something passed has never talked to anyone who's done it. It's a long process and a hard one (and Chris Barkley has a piece coming that talks about that very thing). There is a lot more than just showing up at the meeting. There is a Secret in SMOFing, backroom wheeling-dealing and horse-trading that is purposely kept from the light of day.

As for a definition, I use a thought that comes from fishing: if you're not losing terminal tackle, you're not fishing low enough. In other words, if you're not making exclusions, you don't have a real definition. My thought, at least say that no one who is nominated for a Hugo in the Pro categories (in this case the Top Four and maybe Related Work) should be eligible the same year at a bare minimum. While I'd love it if the rules stated 'works must appear in fanzines', I understand that's never going to pass and most folks are against it. As for Fanzine, I'd simply say that Fanzines are written periodical publications, either electronic or paper-based, neither paying contributors in any but issues or donuts nor primarily charging for access, that primarily publishes the writings of a fannish nature (or something along those lines). We could specifically exclude fiction (something I'm not comfortable with as I'd love to see a Fan Fiction zine up for it some-

time) or blogs (I'm certainly for that, though they are certainly somewhat related). The key is to define it as writing to avoid Apples vs. Race Cars ballots.

To deal with what would be excluded, PodCasts, VidCasts, etc., as well as other kinds of presentations that are not traditionally considered such as factual presentations at conventions, lectures, filk songs, YouTube Videos (such as *Chris Eats The Cake*) and so on, a Best Fannish Presentation award should be created. Even if we don't redefine the Fanzine award, we should create that Hugo because while it covers a lot of ground, it does realistically answer the problem of what we do with all all these presentations that aren't 'dramatic' in approach. If I had to create a ballot for 2009 in Best Fannish Presentation, it would be the Post-WorldCon SSS episode, the Stross-Krugman discussion at WorldCon, the Hugos ceremony, Mike Perschon's Nemo presentation at SteamCon, and the Voices of Fandom podcast "The Very Vegrants Very Musical Holiday Special" (I think it's number 17 on <http://thevoicesoffandom.com/podcast-archive.html>). That's the kind of ballot I could get behind and it's like vs. like.

That's the thing. THIS is where we discuss it. Sure, we bitch, some of us because we have no actual voice in the WorldCon as we can seldom attend (which is one reason I so heavily support Popular Ratification) and others, like me, who have other priorities. This is where we can talk, and maybe get some people thinking.

Thanks, Bob!

And Now, Lloyd Penney!

Dear Chris (it is you back, right, Chris?):

Oooo, ta for the very steampunky-looking The Drink Tank 259. Always good to see it again. Okay, okay, I'll loc this zine, just don't hurt the cute, fuzzy faneditor! (And 260 has come in, too. I'll get right on it...)

I love that cover! I've got more of Keri's stuff in Exhibition Hall in the next few months.

259...Yup, the Hugos happened, didn't they? And from I'm reading the Hugos are still happening. As many said to me, too bad you lost the Hugo, but if you have to lose it, there's none better to lose it to than Fred Pohl. And, there is always next year, and really, that should be the end of the conversation. It's not as if they're going to do a recount, or redefine the category. At least, not right now. I would like to see a paper fanzine win Best Fanzine again, but I will lose no sleep over it. I am finding out every day how much fandom is changing around me, and I can't change it, no more than I could stop a glacier by standing in front of it.

I'd much rather have lost to Claire Brialey. The problem may be that we COULD change it, but it's not at all likely...

The Web always allows opinions of all



kinds, especially to those who would tear down others, like the guy who decided he didn't like LGBT writers. We simply can't leave others alone, can we? We have to interfere, and feel almost forced to tell someone else we don't like you for some or no reason. My greetings and appreciations to groups like the Outer Alliance. Everyday people who would simply like to be who they are need protection, unfortunately, in this repressive and homophobic time.

And somehow I had never heard anything about that when it happened. I'm really glad that I got to run the piece, especially since It's always great to have Cheryl in the pages.

Now, I can read ahead to 260 and see the discussion generated by the article on Fred

Pohl winning a fan Hugo, the illustration, the whole thing. I've stood back from the whole thing. Some had thought that getting Fred on the ballot was a present from friends who knew that he was at an advanced age, and who knows how much longer he'd be with us? James Nicoll proposed the idea, and got on the ballot himself as a reward. Richard and Leah Zeldes Smith kept the blog going, and it was an award-winning effort. Some may look at it as Fred hijacking the Best Fan Writer award as much as StarShipSofa hijacking the Best Fanzine; I must disagree. I will take the high road and congratulate Fred, and still look down on an attempt of a group using their sheer numbers to put themselves on the ballot and win it themselves, too. As said, 2011 is another year; I hope there won't be another group who might step forward, plotting to snaffle another Best Fanzine rocket.

You know, I've never met Richard and Leah. I would have just felt so much better if Fred had at least written one thing for a fanzine. It's not like he hasn't written for them in the past.

And now 260...ah, a Ditmar cover. You rate! Just before leaving the Trufen list, I noticed lots of commentary on Taral's article on the fan Hugos this year, so if nothing else, Chris, you jacked up the number of people who read this zine. I've said all I care to say about this; there's no opinion that won't cause another round of character assassination.

I had no idea that it would blow up like it did. I don't think it was character assassination, at least

that's not how I saw, but I do think it was a serious question that deserves serious thought. File 770 blew up and I was shocked to see that it was the most talked-about post of the month. I was not at all shocked to realize that it didn't seem to lead to any bump in DT readership.

Claire Brialey sat down with a lot of back issues, and crafted a 6600-word loc? Guaranteed this loc won't come anywhere near 6600 words, but I am trying my best. By the way, I got my cocktail shaker gift from Reno, and it came to me via Murray Moore and Hope Leibowitz, so thanks to both of them.

I love that shaker! It's awesome. The sake set from Japan was OK, the combo pen/USB drive from Denver was great too.

A fresh paragraph to comment on Claire's loc...Claire, the only reason right now

that I can write the letters I do is that I am at home in the daytime, job hunting, and writing a loc helps to take my mind off the fact I must find something very soon. I find I'm very goal-oriented, so reaching a certain number of locs through a particular month gives me a sense of accomplishment. I keep records of my locs, or at least I save them by month on my hard drive, and of course, archive them on my LiveJournal. It is also tough for many to treat an e-zine the same way we might treat a paperzine, and anything that comes in through the IN box, or is available for download from eFanzines.com is easy to forget and/or dismiss. For me, I check Bill Burns' site every day, so what I can download, and I keep a folder on my desktop to inventory what's come down. I will also copy those zines onto a USB drive so I can take them to work, and possibly write or at least get started on a

letter in the time I might be waiting for my evening work to arrive.

I am much less organized. I just write LoCs, though these days I tend to less and less of them. I did hit New Toy, Bob Hole's new zine and iKinook Reader, and maybe one other.

I do spot typos and grammatical errors in fanzines, but I figure that in the long run, they don't stop me from reading and understanding them. Besides, I often get paid to find them. No pay, no point them out. I spot, but as you say, Chris, they don't really matter, as long as what's written is still readable.

Hexactly.



The engagement factor of a book or magazine, whether it really attracts you to read it or not, is so subjective. I'm not sure there's any unit of measurement to quantify that kind of interest, unless simply stating what themes appealed to you is sufficient. I usually take the Damon Knight approach, and say that good SF is what I read and like, point to and call good SF. ***I like a quotient that a friend of mine came up with called the Bedtime Measure. it's a measure of how late she's willing to stay up if she starts reading at 11 (30 minutes before her regular bedtime). That's a good measure of how engaging a book is and how hard it is to put down. Dreadnaught sucked me in and I had a 2am night because of it.***

No, you don't get many locs on this zine, which is a mystery, but then, few zines have really comprehensive locols. Yes, I wind up doing them two or three at a time because I have a ton of other zines to respond to. If I didn't get so many, or if there weren't so many to get, you'd get a single-issue loc regularly. You don't wait for letters to come before the next issue sees light, and you shouldn't wait. It's up to your correspondents to catch up.

Yeah, I think LoCers are still evolving to catch with with the new eZines.

I got some sympathetic remarks here and there, including from a couple of people who thought I might have won the rocket, but since, there's been lots of encouragement to keep writing, and some have promised nominations for Reno. I am still optimistic and hopeful, but always mindful that these are just pieces of wood, stone and metal, and the positive feedback and request for more writing are the true

awards. Even so, I stand by my recommendations to nominate Bruce Gillespie and Dick Jenssen for a Hugo next year, and I would remind all Australians who were members of Aussiecon that they can nominate for the Reno Hugos.

I'm all over putting Bruce Gillespie on my ballot for next year again, and Ditmar's been on there for ages. I've got to get my membership to Reno too.

The Aurora committee will be giving out two kinds of pins, one to anyone who has been nominated in any of the previous 30 years of Aurora Awards, and another to whoever is nominated for an Aurora, starting in 2011. Both Yvonne and I will receive our Aurora Award pins, plus a large number of past winners and nominees, including one Robert J. Sawyer, at SF-Contario this coming November. Robert and I will have that rare combination of both Aurora and Hugo pins by that time, I hope. I believe all nominees are to get pins and certificates; mine is probably in transit somewhere on this globe.

My dream is to have a Nova award. I'd love to have an award I am not technically eligible. Journey Planet managed to come in second last year, which was awesome.

Chris, if you are pulling back on Drink Tank production, it doesn't show. You have other zines like Exhibition Hall to fill the Drink Tank gaps. I am not sure how one might go about with any static defi-

nition say who is and who isn't a fan writer. How would you determine who is? Formal membership in fwa? Perhaps we should take exams so we could put the letters CFW (Certified Fan Writer) after our names? I understand the desire to standardize something, but I don't think it can be done here.

As I said earlier, I think it can, but it's not easy.

Anyway, I will wind this up before I write anything else that will make them angry with me. I had no idea some fan had such thin skins. I have to get ready to go to the evening job at the Globe, so here you are, at 1,431 words, per MS Word's count. Many thanks, take care, see you with the next issue.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Hey, I'm happy just to have your words in the issue!

That's Lloyd!



Sometimes the Magic Taral Wayne

Now and then, I get a phone call from Marc Schirmeister. It used to be that Pasadena wasn't so far away, and I'd drop in on Schirm now and then. About once a year, I'd fly into LAX. Schirm would pick me up, and I'd spend a couple of weeks in the rustic flat over the garage where he lives. Then I'd attend the local furry convention, sell a lot of smut, and go home with a wad of cash.

But that was before the war on terrorism turned air travel into hell on wings; before aviation grade fuel grew to be more expensive than the same volume of uncut cocaine; and before the airlines decided that no-one really needed to be fed unless they were more than six hours in the air.

So I learned to live without travel, and to wait for phone calls.

Schirm called just the other day, in fact. We follow a well established routine in these calls. Certain topics have to be covered in a familiar order, and we gossip maliciously like two old ladies about the same handful of losers we both know. But, every once in a while, one of us would introduce something new to the ritual. It was always unexpected when it happened... but not unwelcome.

It happened *this* time because we got onto the subject of Harlan Ellison. It was Schirm's turn to say that Harlan had been in the habit, throughout his career, of alienating his audiences and readers. Then, it was my turn to claim that Harlan's fiction was unreadable, except for a few universally acclaimed stories



forty years ago. I admit that might be *a bit* of an overstatement, but that's how our conversations generally go. That was when Schirm accidentally introduced a completely new trope.

"Harlan says he's dying."

"He does? He is? I guess he must be 80 or 90 by now, if that's what he means," I said. "At that age, practically every second is borrowed time." Actually, Harlan should be *only* 76.

"Well, he didn't say. He's the Guest of Honour at Madcon in another week or so, and he's told people that it will be his last science fiction convention, because he's dying.

"You'd think he'd satisfy our morbid curiosity by naming his poison. Cancer. Stroke. Mad Cow Disease. If he won't say, we're only going to *imagine* a horrible diseases anyway."

"I suppose so," Schirm conceded. "Remember Iggy, in '78?"

"How could I forget. We met there."

"Harlan did the same damn thing then! He put on a big show about how he couldn't go to Iguacon because Arizona hadn't passed the ERA. Then he said he *would* go, but the con had to rent him a trailer, so he wouldn't have to pay a hotel for his stay. I think they had to bring him food from

out of state, too."

"I don't know what good any of that did," I said. "Somebody *still* had to go down to the street and feed quarters into a parking meter, which went right into the Arizona state coffers. Must have added up to three or four whole dollars every day! That money probably helped put Ronald Reagan in the White House!"

"It didn't do *any* good. It was just a big *act*, to get attention," Schirm said.

"He *is* short, you know. Playing for attention is an occupational hazard for short people. You think he's grandstanding *now*?"

"Wouldn't he have said what he was dying of, if he really was? Like you said, he'd have nothing to hide if he's on the way out."

"He might," I said.

"What?"

"I know it would be hard to believe of



conversation between two bitter old fanartists, insecure and resentful of our betters, and we really didn't mean any disrespect. But what fun is it to speak reverently of the soon-to-be-dead?

In the end, we decided that regardless of his grandstanding, Harlan was genuinely concerned about his growing age, and had issues with his health. Perhaps MadCon really *will* be his last convention. By the time anyone reads this, it may have been his last convention. Then again, I imagine proceedings that might go a little like this:

Did you ever watch Dustin Hoffman in *Little Big Man*? The very last scene is wonderful. You may remember that Chief Dan George played Hoffman's adoptive Grandfather, a Cheyenne tribal elder. By the end of the film, both the adopted white man and his Grandfather had lived a lot of history, and the chief was ready to call it quits.

Together they climb a tall hill overlooking the village of teepees. They survey the plains, so changed since the chief was a young man, and he says "It is a good day to die, my Grandson."

"How do you know, Grandfather?" says Hoffman.

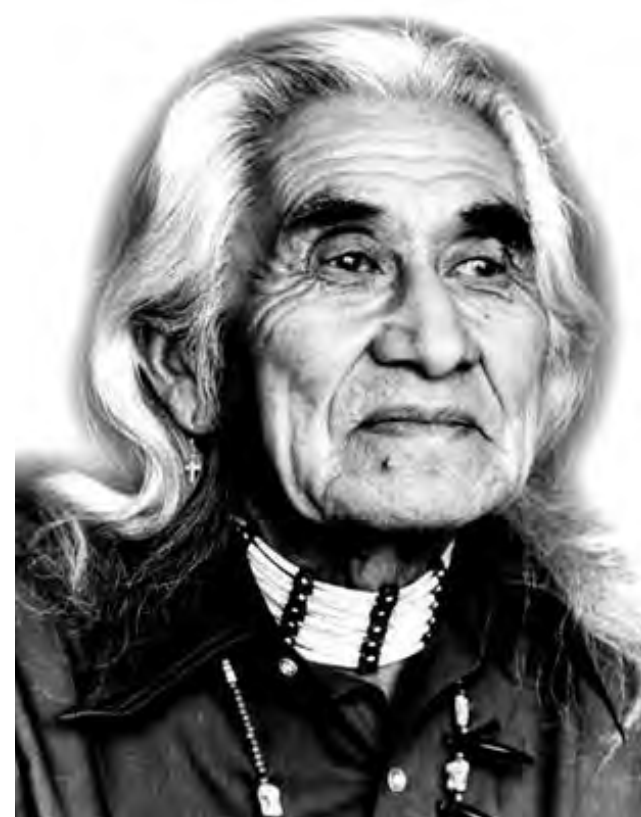
"Magic."

I picture Harlan at Madcon as Chief Dan George. He stands alone on a high stage, looking out over the audience before him, and says, "It is a good day to die, my fans." He lays down, as the Cheyenne elder did, and waits for the end. And

waits... And waits... Perhaps it doesn't actually start to rain in his face. Maybe the con chairman comes over and nudges Harlan with his shoe, and Harlan gets up again.

Then he hobbles off the stage, muttering the immortal line, "Sometimes the magic *doesn't* work."

I suspect it won't.



I have always wanted to do an anthology of Harlan Stories. I've got mine, everyone has their own, it seems. It could easily be down the pipe. Why not now, when he could be around to enjoy it? Well, I've heard that he likes to sue people.

As I understand it, Harlan made it through the weekend without dying.

him, but he could be in the terminal stage of some sexually transmitted disease."

"Harlan? Come on, now!"

"Are you suggesting... you know... that he *hasn't* had any... you know what?"

"Rubbers? Of course he'd have rubbers."

"Yeah, alright, I was being silly. So he's not *actually* dying at all," I said. "He's like in that Devo song, just 'shriveling up'. Even more than already, I mean."

Keep in mind, this was a private