

Hard Science Tales

Hard Science Tales #2 comes to you from Joyce Worley Katz, PMB 152, 330 South Decatur, Las Vegas, NV 89107, on January 14, 2005. This is specifically for SNAFFU members and other Vegas fan friends, but is also posted to www.efanzines.com for the amusement of the rest of fandom. Thanks to **Arnie Katz** for production help.

We Were Talking about how long I've been in fandom. Actually, it was a long hard hunt after Ray Fisher told me there was a fandom, until I found the way in. It's one of my biggest regrets that I wasn't quicker on the uptake.

I was a friend of Ray's sister Carol, and in the Fall of 1952, while visiting the Fisher home, Ray showed me his fanzine **Odd**. He explained a little bit about fandom, and invited me to submit something. I was intrigued; I'd heard of societies of the literati, and wanted to participate. But I was 14 and the introduction just didn't take. It wasn't until 1956, after we were married that July, that I actually started to learn about it.

After that day in the attic (see issue #1) when he'd introduced me to science fiction as a genre of literature, he started telling me more about fandom. Four years earlier he had been hot and heavy into fanzine publishing, along with three or four other local fans involved in the hobby. Like Ray, they'd all drifted out of fandom when they graduated from high school. And, like Ray, they all spoke of fandom with an air of wistfulness. They'd obviously loved it, and had great memories, but they'd moved on.

Ray and his good friend **Max Keasler** showed me stacks of fanzines they'd collected while they were active, and I poured over them like the Dead Sea Scrolls. It was like opening a window, like finding the ruins of Pompey – I could see the people, hear echoes of their voices, almost reach out and touch them. The fanzines were so varied, from cruddy carbon-paper copies (Ray described to me how the carbon paper fans would type 89 copies, and how they'd played a joke on one guy, sending in a flurry of requests, 'til they had him typing 24-7 to fill his orders) to beautifully letter-set hand-printed masterpieces. Most of them were filled with discussions of science fiction, science, and fairly serious material. Some of them (like a crappy little zine by some guy named **Silverberg**) had fiction, though it wasn't very good. Most published a little bit of poetry – that's what I wrote back then. As I went through them, I noticed a repetition of names, how there'd be a letter in this one, or an article in that one, by the same person. I noticed that the fan who published Constructive Discussion in one zine, might have a funny article in another. And, I particularly hunted for the ones who wrote light and fluffy banter. I noted the fabulous **Quandry** by a charming girl named **Lee Hoffman**; and letters there from the humorous **Bob Tucker** and **Bob Bloch**. Then I discovered these same people sent letters and material to Max Keasler's zines, and found all kinds of references and stories by and about these funny people in other zines. I began to feel acquainted with them, even though they were coming to me out of the past.

I urged Ray to go back into fandom, and he always said, "Well, someday, maybe." I even got him to write to one or two people he'd known in the past, but the letters came back.

Later, I spent time in Los Angeles, and haunted the science fiction shelves of numerous bookstores along Hollywood Boulevard. One day, a store owner said, "I've got a bunch of other customers who are into that stuff; would you like to meet them?" I was ecstatic; I was eager. Turned out to be a group of would-be psychics, into past life readings and other metaphysical subjects. Once again, fandom eluded me.

Years later, after Ray and I moved to St. Louis, we were browsing a bookstore down on Olive, and I noticed a dapper middle-aged guy intently studying the SF titles. "I'm going to ask if he knows how to find fandom," I said to Ray. So I walked up to Jim Hall, and I said, "This may sound silly to you, but I wonder: do you happen to know where to find Science Fiction Fandom?"

And Jim Hall said, "No, but my son does – he's a science fiction fan."

Stars tumbled, the sun went nova, the earth shook, and angels sang "Hosanna!" (There isn't actually any law against exaggeration, is there?)

That very evening the teenaged Dave Hall telephoned to invite us to his house the next Saturday. When we got there, he'd managed to round up a handful of other science fiction aficionados and a couple of other actual fanzine-publishing fans, and we formed the Ozark Science Fiction Association (OSFA) right on the spot.

Rocks Cry Out It seems like supreme egotism to me, for us to talk in terms of the end of Humankind being the end of the world, or (even more grandiosely) the end of the universe. We're such newbies on the block, and so much happened on earth before we came around, it seems likely more will happen after we're gone.

I'm not buying into the idea that the world will be inherited by cockroaches, or giant spiders. In fact, I think the world has always been, and will continue to be, for the same group.

It seems to me that the rocks have it. They've been here since the first, and they'll be here 'til the end, if in fact there ever is an end. All the rest of us are just parasites, lichen on the stones.

Having such age, and such grand potential for more, we've just got to assume the rocks are the possessors of the wisdom of the universe, or at least the wisdom of earth. But we have a shot at finding out some of what they know. When we make glass, there's some rocky truth in the sparkle on the lip of the cup. When we design silicon chips, it is, after all, the rocks that make them work. I've already passed on the fact that the flashing of glassy lights contains messages.

I believe we should probably all go out into the world, find the biggest rock we can, and lay down naked on top of it, with our ear pressed against the stone. (You may wonder what being naked has to do with it. I only said it for the romance readers among us, who like sex with their science fiction.) Then we should listen to hear what the rock has to tell us.

I am only unclear on one minor point, and that is the size of the rock needed to impart knowledge to us. Do you think the biggest rocks are the rulers, or do you think every rock chip is a part of the whole, so that even the tiniest morsel of stone contains the wisdom of the world? Is every grain of sand screaming out the entire Truth, or only their tiny bit of knowledge?

Do we all need to go to Yosemite and lay down on El Capitan? Or will a trip to the beach do as well?

Bheer Cans to the Moon If we crazy-glye all the empty bheer cans together, to build that tower to the moon we're always talking about, would the moon-mice be able to climb down the tower and come here? Having traveled through space in this manner, would the moon-mice be able to easily take control of our lowly earth mice? Would they knock them out of their nests in our attics, basements and walls, and become inhabitants in our houses? How would they react to our (relataive) stability, after being accustomed to the constant changes inherent in living on a planetoid that waxes, wanes, and sometimes slivers down to nothing?

What do you suppose the moon mice stand on, when their orb shrinks away to a crescent? Are they all crowded together on one point? Do they push and shove until they start tumbling off? Is this in fact their method of population control? And what happens when the moon disappears altogether? Do they, serpent like, lay their eggs in the sand (here's some more sex for the romance writers among us) and pass into the ether, hoping the new generation will rise again? Is this in fact the reason moon mice never seem to get much smarter, since they pass no knowledge down to their offspring?

Enough Science I've imparted enough scientific knowledge for one day; now we should try for a little fiction, such as Australia and platypuses, and komodo dragons, and a few highly unlikely congressional reports. I'm not really all that certain about spinach or cracker-jacks, either.

But there is one piece of fantasy I'm fairly certain can come true: You can publish a fanzine, too! Obviously, you don't have to know a lot about anything to do it, and it may even be better if you don't. And I promise you'll have fun. Why not type one up for the next west-side meeting of SNAFFU? I'd really like that! (end)