

Hard Science Tales

Hard Science Tales #3 comes to you from Joyce Worley Katz, PMB 152, 330 South Decatur, Las Vegas, NV 89107, on March 11, 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.

I Was Explaining about how I found out about fandom. Even after Ray Fisher had told me about it, it took years to actually find fandom. But once I spoke to Jim Hall in that bookstore on a Saturday afternoon in the mid-1960s, things started to happen. His son, Dave Hall telephoned us that very evening, to invite us to his house the next weekend.

The Halls lived down in Crystal City, about an hour's drive from our St. Louis apartment, and I was keenly excited by the time we reached their home. There was a roomful of people waiting to meet us; David had spent the week rounding up all the science fiction readers he knew. There was Dave, his dad Jim, Harold Steele and his son, Paul Gilster, Hank Luttrell, and maybe one or two others.

We formed the Ozark Science Fiction Association (OSFA) that afternoon, talked late into the evening about books and magazines, our favorite authors, and fanzine publishing. Dave, Hank and Paul were publishing several titles each, since each belonged to multiple apas (amateur press associations) and each of them were also already publishing, or getting ready to publish a genzine (general subject fanzine.)

Although the subject didn't appeal to me, the group also started talking about hosting a convention that very weekend. It seemed to me that it was premature to discuss it; after all, we were only just forming the club. But Dave, in particular, was wildly enthusiastic about the idea. He and Jim had attended a convention the year before, and really enjoyed the glitz.

Dave even had someone in mind to invite as Guest of Honor. "We'll ask Ted White," he shouted in his enthusiasm. "He's traveling around the country now, bidding for the worldcon." Personally, I'd never heard his name before, but I was going to hear a lot more of it in the months (and years) to follow.

Before Ray and I left that day, Dave loaned me a stack of fanzines. I recall that all of them were apazines, and a great many came from southern fans. The Apa-45 zines (an apa for fans born after 1945) were very unpolished, very juvenile (as to be expected from members all under 20). The ones from the southern group were much more approachable, with at least a little bit more meat.

Everybody left that day filled with excitement, even joy. We'd founded a new club, set a date for the next meeting, and talked about science fiction and fandom all afternoon. We'd began discussing a convention. And, best of all, we'd started the steps toward friendships.

Well, I guess you can imagine how I devoured the borrowed fanzines in the following week. I read them all, cover to cover, and even the most juvenile of them seemed wonderful to me. And, I wrote letters to all the editors, asking to be included on their mailing list. I sent quarters and nickels and dimes to those who'd take money, then leaned back to wait for the replies.

It's a hard and lonely thing to be a fan, at least when you're just starting out. Every afternoon, I'd rush home from work to check the mail. It took a long time, or at least it seemed so to me. But eventually I got the first one: a wrinkled up, crushed and torn fanzine that looked like it'd been rolled through a mud puddle. I grabbed onto it like it was gold.

I don't actually remember who sent me that first zine. I think it was one of the southern guys...Lon Atkins, Al Andrews, or Dave Hulan seem likeliest; they were among my first contacts. I do recall that there wasn't much to it, but it seemed wonderful to me.

Eventually I got one with a fanzine review column, and then I sent quarters, or wrote letters, to every address in that list. And gradually, very slowly, there built to be a trickle of apazines plopping into the mailbox, and even an occasional letter from someone I'd written.

I believe it was probably Dave Hall who brought me my first real genzine. He came to visit, with a copy of Yandro. This was definitely the most sophisticated fanzine I'd seen since making contact, and I was overjoyed. I felt like I was finally getting somewhere. I wasn't quite yet an insider, but at least I was near the door.

The Polar Express It's very convenient for a planet to have a Polar Star placed precisely correctly to provide a center for the rotation of the Heavens. Not every planet has such guide posts, you know. In fact, as is obvious, our Southern Hemisphere doesn't enjoy such a convenient marker. This, in fact, is why navigating the southern oceans is so much more dangerous than staying in northern waters.

It's probably no coincidence. At one point in the distant past, the stars were undoubtedly equally distributed around the sky. But seeing the preponderance of intelligent life in the northern hemisphere, the stars all rushed to that side to watch the development of civilization. This did make the northern skies a bit top heavy, and that made the earth tilt over on its axis a little. But Polaris secured the planet by placing itself right over the North Pole as an anchor, so Earth would tip no further.

There were, of course, lesser stars that stuck to their posts over the somewhat undeveloped Southern skies, they formed themselves up, as best they could, into constellations, but it didn't do them much good, since the spaces between each of these scanty images looked even more barren. Ever since that Time, they've been trying to convince a few of the run-aways to return. But it doesn't seem to be working, obviously because the Northern Hemisphere and its peoples are much more interesting to watch.

Letters

Lloyd Penney tells us how he found fandom:

I found fandom mentioned in a book on Star Trek in 1975, but didn't get involved until I found real, live fans, meeting together in December of 1977. There was mention of a Trek club forming in a notice on the local community channel, and I decided to go. A few of the people in that club are still friends of mine to this day. I had decided long before this that I wanted to be a writer, and I was in journalism school in Toronto. Once I met local fandom here, and found out about fanzines, I thought this was something that could combine my desire to write with my enjoyment of SF. However, money has always been a problem, and I saw that the letter column might be something for me. I wanted to write, and I wanted to do something I could afford, and I wanted to do something people appreciated. And, I'm still in the local.

Could all that silicon/silicone assist in an explosion that might break California off the coast, and create an island? It would be a service to fandom to gather up all the books and fanzines available within that state, and deposit in a warm, dry place...Nevada comes to mind for some reason. Once California becomes an island, the humidity and sea breezes that will come from all angles may be harmful to all the valuable printed materials held within places like the LASFS clubhouse, or any other depository of valuable SFnal and fannish materials. Grab the goods now! Don't wait for California to explode and break away! The future of fandom and its written heritage depends on you!

Don Fitch has a question:

You wrote: "We'd returned from the honeymoon and were sitting in his parents' home, when he asked "Do you like Science Fiction?" [...] it was with total lack of guile that I replied, "No, what's Science Fiction?"

This totally flabberghasted me. Granted, you must've been extremely young in 1956, but I have difficulty imagining that you were unaware of the existence of this genre (even though it was still pretty much "stuff for boys" in the mid-'50s). That, however, isn't so much what had that effect on me as the fact that -- whirlwind courtship or no -- any couple could get married without knowing -- or revealing -- something that was obviously a major part of the life of one of them.

I think I simply distracted Ray Fisher so much that he hadn't thought of it to that point.

Lloyd Penney writes again:

Happy thoughts, happy thoughts...your mention of Bob Bloch reminds me that just today, I received a copy of his *The Eighth Stage of Fandom* in the mail. I won one of Jan Stinson's contests through Peregrine Nations, and I'm looking forward to reading it.

And that brings us to the end of this two-page wonder. I hope you all enjoy it, and if you do, feel free to drop me a line. (END)