

Askew #17

December 2016



The mostly paper-only fanzine from the undersigned:

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THIS ISSUE IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE LETTER V.

Well, I'm at it again.

Only this time I'm heading in the other direction.

I refer to the TAFF 2017 race: sending a North American fan to Europe – specifically, the 75th World Science Fiction Convention in Helsinki, Finland. Seven years ago I ran in the 2010 DUFF – Down Under Fan Fund – race to go the WorldCon in Australia, which would have been grand, and came in second to John Hertz, someone I have long considered a friend. So why run for TAFF in 2017? Well, shortly after current North American TAFF administrator, Curt Phillips, posted the announcement that nominations were open until the end of November, 2016, I again began thinking seriously about running, and went to my wife Valerie to see if she would support this endeavour, and she gave it a rousing “Yes!” Thereupon I dutifully rounded up the necessary nominators, sent in my bond money – a minor detail, these – and wrote out my TAFF statement. Here is that:

TAFF 2017 Platform Statement

John Purcell (College Station, Texas), an active fan since 1973, discovered fandom at the tender age of 19 in Minneapolis, Minnesota via Minicon 7. Fannish karma, that. Since then he has published multiple fanzines, apazines, attended and worked on assorted conventions (most recently the LoneStarCon III fanzine lounge coordinator in 2013), finished second to John Hertz in the 2010 DUFF race, currently produces the online fanzine *Askance* (www.efanzines.com), the paper-only personalzine *Askew*, and most recently edited/published the one-shot *Shitgibbon: the Rant-thology*. John and his artist/crafter wife Valerie share passions for Steampunk, Whoviana, gawd-awful skiffy movies, grandchildren, grilling, and dark lager.

North American nominators: Jacqueline Monahan, Lloyd & Yvonne Penney, David Thayer

European nominators: Jim Mowatt, Ro Nagey

Oh, it's a long way to Tipperary.... Even further to Helsinki!

SPECIAL TAFF 2017 ISSUE!

To further spread the word, for the first time *Askew* is going online – posted to efanzines.com, that is – and will be sent as an attachment to all the fanzine folks in my gmail address file. The fanzine will still be printed and mailed – gotta keep the tradition alive – to everyone on the paperzine mailing list, along with the official TAFF 2017 ballot. Some folks might be getting both paper and electronic copies. Oh, well. At some point, when I have the time, I shall cull the lists appropriately.

So why run for the 2017 edition of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund? Well, it's not too hard to figure out. After a respectable showing in the 2010 DUFF race – like I said, coming in second behind my friend John Hertz - and what I consider a solid seven years of fanzine activity, being involved with LoneStarCon III in 2013 (besides the fanzine lounge, I was on a panel discussion of Mark Twain's Science Fiction stories, hosted the Fan Funds Delegates Reception, gave a sparsely attended concert, and enjoyed the company of many friends both old and new), and other fan-related stuff, I figured the time was right. Additionally, meeting the 2013 Fan Fund delegates, Jim Mowatt (TAFF) and Bill Wright (DUFF; I was one of Bill's nominators), was likewise delightful. Thus, should I win the 2017 TAFF race, my goal is to follow their shining examples of being open-minded, friendly, and kind-hearted – besides asking them for advice on traveling abroad.

I am proud to say that my current nominators are taking this in stride, too. Ro Nagey's email to the administrators noted that it would be a good idea to get me out of Texas while the getting was good (I am paraphrasing here, but Ro does make a good point), and David Thayer (a.k.a., Teddy Harvia, a.k.a., Miranda Thomson) wrote, "Given that Russia may well invade Finland during the Helsinki WorldCon, I wish to nominate John Purcell to be the TAFF representative at the convention to give him some real life-and-death experiences to write about in his fanzines, if he survives. I have known John since the late 70s and vouch that he is a character." Well said, David. I think.

So the deed is done. I am officially in the hunt to be the TAFF Delegate to the 2017 WorldCon in Helsinki, Finland. Until final results are announced, Valerie and I have begun planning out a tentative three-week (most likely four week) itinerary that will take us to London to spend something like 4 or 5 days in the UK, then with a 30-day Euro Rail Pass we will trot on over to Europe on a swing that will include stops in Copenhagen (Valerie is persuasively pushing for that city), France, and then over to Prague (her ancestry is Czech) on the way up to Helsinki; if time permits, we might duck down to Italy between our Copenhagen/Paris and Prague stops, too. Maybe after the WorldCon – again, time and fundage permitting – we just might take the bullet train over to St. Petersburg, Russia (Я говорю на русском, вроде), before flying back to London and then finally returning to Houston, Texas. *Whew* Sounds busy, but it would be so worth the journey. One of the questions we need to answer is if I should – or can afford to do so – bring my guitar along.



Imagine the trip report. My fingers are already cramping at the thought.

Support your local Fan Funds! Send a deserving soul somewhere else.

Uh, maybe I should rephrase that...

SPECIAL TAFF 2017 ISSUE!

Books read:

This section is going to be sort of shorter than what I usually produce due to the quick turn-around in getting this Special TAFF 2017 issue of *Askew* into the mail.

***Green Mansions*, William Henry Hudson. New York, NY: Overlook Press, 2007, 304 pp. PN**

This is one of those books that has long intrigued me: I have heard of it but never read this book, and know that a movie version of this novel was made in 1959, starring Audrey Hepburn, Anthony Perkins, and Lee J. Cobb (a severely panned adaptation, no less), but the book itself is lushly written and surprisingly moves right along, considering the turn of the 20th century writing style (first published in 1904). The plot is razor-thin: a Venezeulan “traveler” – he’s actually running from rebels who have overtaken Caracas, and these same rebels have killed his father, the government’s Minister of War – is nearly killed by a jaguar in the jungle, saved by natives, and eventually meets the mysterious and alluring Rima, the Bird-Girl, and naturally falls in love with her. You can guess how the story goes from there. The author, William Henry Hudson, was an internationally acclaimed naturalist who wrote travelogues that were massively popular because he wrote them in an easily accessible style. This ability translates well in *Green Mansions*, and a reader can easily pick up on the ecological and conservationist themes that run through the novel. I was surprised how much I enjoyed reading this. I guess I was in the right mindset at the time. The introduction by John Galworthy is an additional benefit of this particular edition.

***Etiquette & Espionage*, Gail Carriger. New York, NY: Hatchette Book Group, 2013. 722 pp. ebook**

As much as I adore owning books – to hold them, lovingly caress the pages with my fingertips, my eyes taking in every word, syllable, every nuance of the writer’s craft... Oh, sorry. Didn’t mean to get carried away like that – I now have a dozen books downloaded to my iPhone and another six to the Nook app on my Samsung tablet, and then there are the couple dozen titles and numerous research articles on the actual Nook I own. **sigh** It was just a matter of time before I caved, I guess. *Etiquette & Espionage* is the first book in Gail Carriger’s Finishing School Series which features children and related characters first encountered in her Parasol Protectorate Series. Not surprisingly, this Steampunk story rattles right along as well as her other books. Carriger has an easy writing style, full of humor and droll observations about society, human nature, and family – especially when it comes to boys and girls. This particular book definitely falls in the Young Adult category, but fully-grown readers well beyond their teenaged years – like me – will enjoy it just as well.

Consider the tagline on Amazon.com: “*It’s one thing to learn to curtsy properly. It’s quite another to learn to curtsy and throw a knife at the same time. Welcome to Finishing School.*” One might think from the title that a young lady attending Mademoiselle Geraldine’s Finishing Academy for Young Ladies of Quality will graduate having learned all of the intricacies of how a proper lady must behave in polite society. Yes, Quite. And they will – besides acquiring, shall we say, more practical skills as well. It is a fun book. If you enjoyed the Parasol Protectorate and other books of Gail Carriger’s, this is another one to read. There are four titles in the Finishing School Series.

REMINDER: the TAFF voting deadline is 4 March 2017.

SPECIAL TAFF 2017 ISSUE!

***Downbelow Station*, C. J. Cherryh. New York, NY: DAW Books, 1981. 432 pp. PB**

This won the Hugo Award for Best Novel in 1982, and I can see why. *Downbelow Station* is a sprawling, character-filled space opera that is much more than a galaxy-spanning shoot-'em-up adventure. There is real political and sociological intrigue, lots of well-developed characterization, and a ton of detail. An incredibly thorough presentation that at times slows down, but Cherryh paces her story extremely well. I am glad I finally got around to reading this one.

In short, the book is set in Cherryh's Alliance-Union universe during the Company Wars period, specifically late 2352 and early 2353. The book details events centering on a space station in orbit around Pell's World (also known as "Downbelow") in the Tau Ceti star system, and the action is concentrated on the final stages of the Company Wars between the Earth Company (that began the colonization of other star systems, becoming huge and powerful in the process) and the Union, a breakaway group of stations and star systems that wants nothing to do with the Earth Company. I know that many readers of this fanzine are quite familiar with the Cyteen novels of C.J. Cherryh, so I won't bother going into greater detail here. *Downbelow Station* stands up very well for a 35 year old science fiction novel. I say we give this one another Hugo Award.

SKEWED RESULTS

This is a much shorter lettercolumn than usual because, again, I want to strike while the iron is hot and get the 2017 TAFF Official Ballot out to everyone on my mailing list. So a couple folks wrote, and here they be. My comments in return/rebuttal are in boldface like this.

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November 26, 2016

In *Askew #16*, you mention missing MidAmeriCon. There was a lot of it to miss. It was spread all over the place. As a result, it never felt like a large convention. I don't usually go to the big crowd events, and that probably influences my perceptions. As you say, there were no room parties. I usually avoid room parties for the same reason I avoid big crowd events. I don't like being squished in the middle of a crowd.

There was also no con suite. I'm sure the matter of con suites and room parties will be brought up at future fannish inquisitions. Even if the situation had been known at the time of the vote, there would have been nothing to do about it. Kansas City was the only bidder. Bidding is an expensive process, and I imagine the voters will have fewer choices in the future. In the two years after San Jose, there are two non-North American bids and nothing else. To date, worldcon has never been out of North America two years in a row. Internationalism is all well and good, but we don't want to shake off the North American audience of people who are used to attending worldcons at least most years.

HEAR YE, HEAR YE! The GUFF voting is now open. Voting ends 1 April 2017.

Go to <http://taff.org.uk/guff.html> for the official ballot.

SPECIAL TAFF 2017 ISSUE!

I think anyone considering doing a fanzine lounge at a WorldCon should establish one simple rule with the committee. No budget, no fanzine lounge. If they want a fanzine lounge at their convention, they have to do something more than gesture vaguely. I suspect they aren't really interested.

I'm doing the program at the next Corflu. Among possible topics for panels, I'm considering "Fandom and Us." I think we know who we are. At least, we have suspicions. I'm not sure who or what fandom may be at the moment. They don't seem to be interested in science fiction. Then again, they don't seem to describe themselves as science fiction fans. They are just fans. They hang out and engage in respiration.

What is currently referred to as fandom is large enough to split into several sections. Each section will become the new true fandom. Splitting along the lines of subject matter is actually reasonable. I fear it may split along the lines of politics. I think cons should be forums with no particular opinions of their own. Not everyone would agree with me.

Yours truly,

Milt Stevens



{I am with you, Milt, in that I am not fond of big, honking crowds either. But it sounds like the spread out nature of MAC II's venue helped the "feel" of the WorldCon seem more manageable and personal. Or something like that. I still can't believe there weren't room parties. Were they prohibited? Was that part of the agreement the concomm made with the venue and primary hotel(s)? It makes me wonder.

(* Well, we shall see if I get the TAFF nod and thus attend the 2017 WorldCon in Helsinki, Finland. At the moment the San Jose WorldCon is on the potential "to attend" convention list, so we shall see. I hope to make it out to Los Angeles for the next Corflu, so once again I must invoke the inevitable "we shall see" clause in my fanac contract.

(* Fans have long been political; you know that as well as I do. Heck, look what happened back in the late thirties with Michelism and Communism feuling the Futurians and the fannish mindset of that time. I think conventions are best served as being a forum of all sorts of ideas mainly because we *are* all Slans, don'tcha know, with our Cosmic Minds. Ghoshwhow!

(* You had to go and mention Fanzine Lounges, didn't you? Oh. I brought up the subject first, didn't I? Well, it is a touchy subject for the fanzine fans who still populate science fiction fandom these days. There should be x-amount of a WorldCon budget allocated for running a proper fanzine lounge, but I guess this is contingent on how committed that particular WorldCon's committee is to fanzines and the general welfare of SF fandom and its varied interests. Sometimes I think that Big Tent Fandom needs to take a step back and think about where and when all this began.

The Fan Funds need your financial support! If you have no preference for any candidate, you can always vote **no preference** or **holdover funds**. Help support the Fan Funds.

SPECIAL TAFF 2017 ISSUE!

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November 30, 2016

John,



I didn't want to appear to be ignoring *Askew 16*, but sadly there wasn't anything in it that pushed my particular buttons. Actually it isn't just *Askew* that's left me feeling this way lately. I just can't seem to get involved with current fanzines these last few weeks, and have even taken to going through boxes of old zines looking for ones I've never read or don't recall having read. This is not as odd as it sounds. 20+ years ago I picked up Mike Meara's collection, merged them with my own, and simply filed them, figuring to get back to them later.



Well, it's now unarguably later. But you must know how this feels. Why, here in Don Fitch's *From Sunday to Saturday* (May 1989), in his Corflu 6 report, Don wrote...

"What I really did was chat a while with John Purcell, one-time MinneAPAN who now seems to be more interested in fishing than in fandom."

If fishing is all I have to look forward to after these old fnz I can only hope something occurs to rekindle my interest in current fanac.

Skel

Whow! It took a few minutes to remember that conversation from the Minneapolis Corflu where it occurred. At one point Don Fitch and I started in on what we had been doing recently, so naturally I started babbling about a fishing trip I had just returned from the previous weekend. Funny how he focused on that when he wrote his Corflu 6 report.

Wahf(alls) for breakfast

Murray Moore sent an e-mail announcing nominations are now open for the 2016 FAAn Awards.

Paul Skelton and did some emailing back and forth after his initial e-loc, and then **Garth Spencer** sent a non-loc email.

John Purcell n kitaran TAFF!

Translation: John Purcell's guitar for TAFF!

