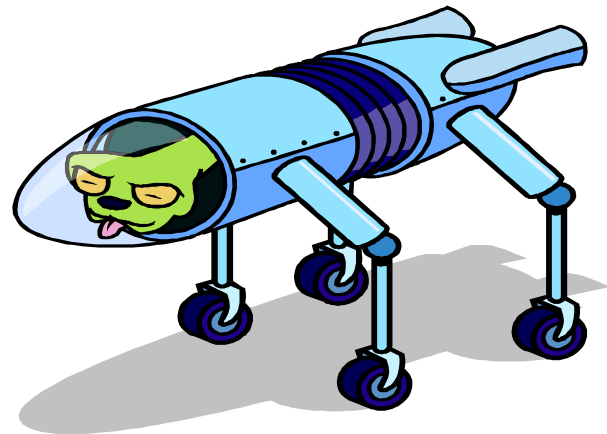


In a Prior Lifetime

a return to fanpubbing by

John Purcell



Summer, 2003

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Yeah, for those of you who remember me from those science fiction fandom days of yore – namely, the 70’s and 80’s – it’s me again. I’ve been getting the urge to rekindle contacts with fandom again, and the internet seems to be like the best way to accomplish this. Therefore, I’m going to try putting an on-line fanzine together and see how it works.

History and Rationale

The reason for this e-zine is personal, which I believe a lot of fanzines are at heart. Lately I’ve been contacting a few old fan friends whose names I’ve encountered via the web – Minn-stf, my old stomping grounds, among them – and corresponded with them. I have also been surfing various websites that fans and clubs have set up, and the result of this searching has rekindled my affection for receiving fannish type stuff in the mail. It has also brought forward the downside of being a fan who’s been away for many years: obituaries of friends that I have known both personally and only in print – Terry Hughes, Harry Warner, Jr., George “Lan” Laskowski, Scott Imes, Lee Pelton, Walt Willis, and many, many others. In truth, I learned of Scott’s and Lee’s deaths shortly after they happened; the loss of those two was something that affected me deeply, especially Lee. (The story my friendship with Lee Pelton is one I should write out someday; it’s too long to set down in this little zine.)

At any rate, my surfing brought me to a website that was kind of like a “Who’s Who in Fandom” deal. It is a photo gallery of fen that also lists a brief fannish resume of the pictured personages. I thought the fanac resume idea was interesting, so I wrote out mine.

The results were illuminating, I think, because it kinda showed how active a fan I was and for how long. So with that in mind, here it is.

A Fanac Resume

Years of fanac: 1973-1992

Primary Interests: Fan writing/publishing; conventions; musician

Club membership: Minn-stf (Minnesota Science Fiction Society, Inc.)
No offices held

Fanzines Published: *This House* (1976-1989: 15 issues);
Yenta Monad Memorial Journal (1977-78: 2 issues)
Ennui (1982-1985: 3 issues)
Bangweulu (1983-1989: 6 issues)

Fanzines written for: *Rune*, *Universal Transmitter*, *Holier Than Thou*, *Nymphs in the Woods*, *Nebulousfan*,
Random Sort.

APA Memberships: Minneapa, Lasfapa, Azapa, Fapa

Letterhack to a whole bunch of fanzines during the 70's and 80's

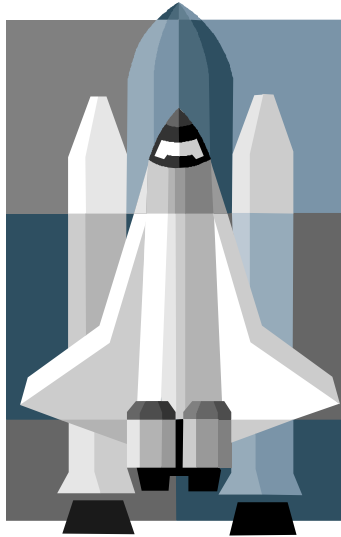
Concommittees: Minicon film committee (1978-1980); Operations Sub-department head, Minicon 26.

Conventions attended: Minicons, Byobcons, Wiscons, Windycons, Anokons, Not-Anokons, Relaxicon, MidAmeriCon, IguanaCon, Corflu,
North Country Fantasy Cons.

Printer: *Private Heat*, *Secret Traffic* (Lee Pelton's perzines)
Idea #1 Geri Sullivan's genzine)

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Like I said, it turned out to be quite a listing, and I'm sure that some of it is mis-remembered because it all happened so many years ago. But, that's the way it goes.



One of the recurrent features that I ran in *This House* and *Bangweulu* was this thing called “Dust From the Attic” in which I attempted to recall my personal fannish history. It was good exercise, but unfortunately my own stash of old zines only goes as far back as May, 1981, *This House* #11. If anybody out there has some of the first 10 issues of that zine (I may have to work with Denny Lien up in Minn-stf on this), I would love to get my hands on those babies for personal reference. At any rate, that column recorded a lot of my favorite memories of yesteryear. In that spirit, I offer here a new – yet old – installment which I am calling

Dust From the Attic Redux

One of my all-time favorite fannish memories requires a bit of explanation. But once you have the background, it is so well worth the effort.

Like I've said before, my fannish career began at Minicon 6 in 1973. At that convention one of the authors I had met was a young, attractive, and married writer named Phyllis Eisenstein, who's Alaric the Minstrel stories had been appearing in the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction for a couple of years. At that Minicon, I asked for and received her autograph in an issue of F&SF that ran her current Alaric story. She told me at that time that I was the first person to ever ask her for an autograph. Kinda neat.

Fast forward to Iguacon, Labor Day Weekend, 1978: the Phoenix, Arizona WorldCon. During the intervening four and a half years Phyllis and I kept in touch via letters and conventions in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Chicago, and Kansas City, in the process becoming good friends. Her husband Alex is also a good writer and likewise became a fannish friend of mine.

Early in 1978 Phyllis's Alaric stories had been published by Arkham House as a novel; she had arranged and linked these stories into a continuous narrative. Needless to say, I bought *Born to Exile* as soon as I could - which meant Minicon of 1978 - and I vowed to get Phyllis to autograph it. I missed her at Minicon, but I knew I could get it at Iggy.

The worldcon committee had set up autograph sessions in the west lobby of the Adams Hotel, four authors at a time, for Friday and Saturday afternoons of the con. I noted in the program book that Phyllis was scheduled for 4PM Saturday; the other authors signing with her were Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle, and Alan Dean Foster - all extremely popular and prolific authors. With that line-up in place, I knew there would be a mob waiting for autographs, so I decided to wait a while before I went down. I also decided to forego getting *The Mote in God's Eye* autographed. That could wait. It was Phyllis's autograph I wanted, so the only book I brought with me was *Born to Exile*.

When I finally got there around 4:20 or so, my fears were confirmed. The line for Alan Dean Foster backed up through the lobby, exited out the side door, and finished on the sidewalk. At least they were in the shade. Jerry Pournelle's line likewise wound through the lobby, only it went out the hotel's main entrance before it took a hard left, leaving eager fans out on the un-shaded sidewalk in 110° heat.

Niven's line was the worst. It not only paralleled Pournelle's, but also went out the main door, took a right and went on down the block! I had never seen anything like it before in my five years of con-going. Undaunted, I looked for the beginning of Phyllis's line. She was sandwiched between Foster and Pournelle, who were gleefully signing and chatting with their adoring denizens of fans, who were babbling excitedly at meeting their author-heroes.

Nobody stood in line for Phyllis's autograph.

Absolutely. No-one.

Her eyes sadly contemplated the massive lines of adoring teenaged and young and old adult fans for the other writers, her hands tightly knotted on her empty table. My heart broke for Phyllis, so I smiled and waved as I approached. Her face lit up when she saw me, especially when I presented my first edition copy of *Born to Exile* for her autograph. "Hello, John," she said, a gleam in her eyes. "Thank you so much for coming," she said as she gleefully grabbed the book, opened it to the inside front cover, and wrote on the dark green paper, "To John, who asked for my very first autograph at a long ago con. Thanks for 'everything! Phyllis Eisenstein." Closing the book and emphatically putting the pen down, she beckoned me forward with her right index finger. "Come here," she said.

As I leaned forward, Phyllis stood up, put her arms around my neck and gave me the biggest kiss I had ever had in my life up to that point. The hubbub of voices around us stopped, and I knew that the eyes of all these kids - male kids, mind you - were watching us, to say nothing of the writers. (I had met Niven and Foster many times before at cons,

so they kind of knew who I was, and Larry had introduced me to Jerry Pournelle at the Meet the Pros party on Thursday night.) The kiss seemed to last for at least a full minute, possibly longer. When she was finally done kissing me, Phyllis sat back down, smiled at me, and simply said, "Thank you." As I turned to my left to leave, my eyes met Larry Niven's, who winked and smiled at me. Pournelle, along with the fannish horde present, sat aghast and stared at me. He then quickly regained his composure, turned to Larry and said, "I think we're in the wrong line!" To this day I have no idea if there was a sudden sales increase of *Born to Exile*. Someday I shall have to ask her about that.



YOU CAN RESPOND, YOU KNOW . . .

There are some other things I could include here, but I shall wait until I see what kind of responses this e-zine generates. Until then, you can reach me at the following address:

e-mail: jpurcell54@earthlink.net

If all goes well, I will be adding to this as I go, since this is probably going to be a constant work-in-progress. It should be interesting. For now, thank you for your time, and in memory of the late Harry Warner, Jr., I am looking forward to your locs. Take care of yourselves.

John Purcell