E-DITTO

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E-DITTO #2, January 2011 a perszine from Eric Mayer
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E-DITTORIAL
I had no idea I’d get such an raft of interesting letters so quickly. What the ultimate frequency of E-Ditto might be, I have yet to decide. But I may as well publish if I find myself on the verge of going over my self-imposed page limit.

I did trim your letters a bit in another bow to the old ways of doing things. Still, I am afraid I may end up with more than the six sheets that I used to be able to mail with a single stamp. Do you suppose these electronic sheets weigh less than the duplicator paper I used to use? Maybe I can get away with mailing a few extras for my stamp. What do you think?

ESMALLED IS BEAUTIFUL
Remember fanzines that were "ensmallled"? I like the term, even if it is an awfully big word for small. With the Internet, no faned who is willing to publish electronically needs to ensmall a zine for economic reasons so the species is all but extinct.

And there are reasons to like short fanzines, aside from the fact that they were cheaper to print and mail. For one thing, short zines (whether ensmalled or personal) are easier to LoC For me at any rate. When faced with a huge, lavish, all singing, all dancing production, I tend to be too intimidated to LoC. I feel I can’t do the zine justice, can’t give sufficient egoboo to every one of the numerous deserving contributors. (Think eI from Earl Kemp or STEAM ENGINE TIME from Bruce Gillespie & Janine Stinson) So, often as not, I put off the task until I feel up to it -- which turns out to be never. Or at least until the next issue arrives and I breathe a sigh of relief and begin to fail to LoC all over again.

As bad or worse to LoC (because they also tend to be large) are annual fanzines. They seem to be common. ARGENTUS, from Steven Silver, CHALLENGER from Guy Lillian, TRAPDOOR from Robert Lichtman, IT GOES ON THE SHELF from Ned Brooks come to mind. Not only can they be difficult to LoC due to their usually
large size, but the reader knows there's a whole year to get to it. And a year from now is more or less real soon now. I just started reading the latest e-version of CHUNGA. Randy Byers admits that that zine appears to have gone to an annual schedule. The issue is jam packed with material, naturally. Well, never fear, I have got right down to procrastinating.

However, since writing the above, I have noticed at least two ensmalled e-zines thus far in 2011. Arnie Katz and the Vegrants put out the humorous 2 page New Year's one-shot NEON and Doug Bell published AN FLEGHES HAGER-NA YU CANJEONS (a long name for an 8 page zine) which, among other things contains an entertaining report about his vacation in Cornwall.

SOUNDS FROM AN OLD VICTROLA
"I'm just a kid again, doing what I did again, singing a song, When the red, red robin comes bob, bob, bobbin' along"

I didn't long to be a kid again when I listened to that song over and over on my grandparents' hand-cranked Victrola. I was a kid. Who didn't care much about lyrics, I guess. I suppose I liked the tune, or maybe the old fashioned crooning, warbling vocal style amused me. Was the singer Al Jolson? He did record the song but I can't picture the label on the heavy shellac '78 anymore.

My own past has served me well as a source for writing material, partly because my memory is so blurry. I am rather in the position of James Thurber in his essay The Admiral At the Wheel, in which the myopic writer sees all sorts of wonders and strange goings-on after he breaks his eye glasses. No doubt the most interesting events in my life have taken place mostly in my imagination.

Unfortunately, as you get older, it becomes harder to write about childhood without sounding like a sentimental old coot wallowing in nostalgia. At least to my ears.

Still, it is interesting to look back and try to piece things together, to try to fathom what exactly I could have been thinking while listening to another favorite '78, Listen to the Mockingbird. The mockingbird, you might recall, was singing o'er Sweet Hally's grave. There's a cheery thing to picture when you're still in grade school.

A lot of the appeal of those tunes was the antique Victrola I
played them on. It was from another age, like something out of the Flintstones. Using the crank you could speed the records up until the singers sounded like the Chipmunks (or even more like the Chipmunks than they already did with their, to me, unnaturally high pitched voices) or slow the sound down to an unintelligible rumble.

The phonograph "needles" were little more than sharp steel nails. I swear that if you scraped along a groove with a nail it made a thin, ghostly noise that was not quite music but something more than the squeak of metal against shellac. Or maybe that is only in my imagination.

**TIME IS (NOT) ON MY SIDE**

"Time is on my side," the Rolling Stones once sang. I might have agreed with them in those days, but that was forty-six years ago and the Stones and I were both much younger then. Once you get to sixty (or sixty-one depending on when this is finished and uploaded) you know very well that time isn't on your side. If it was it wouldn't have dragged you along to the verge of old age so quickly.

Okay, I can hear you saying "Verge? What do you mean verge?" What I mean is that old age, like someday, never comes.

Even when I was young time wasn't on my side when it came to creative endeavors. There's never been enough time for writing or art, which is to say I've never been able to devote every waking minute to such pursuits. I begrudged the endless hours I had to spend in grade school when I could have been doing something useful like finishing my breathtaking epic (in CinemaScope and CrayonColor) history of space exploration or putting together another issue of Elmo the Talking Fish comics.

I habitually drew King Cotton versus Boll Weevil cartoons in the back of the classroom during arithmetic lessons, which is why I still don't know my multiplication tables for twelve. I have to actually figure out multiples of twelve. I don't know them by rote. (But I do know that in every "weevil" you can find "evil")

If only that were the worst fallout from my creative preoccupation. Unfortunately I have probably spent far too much time writing or drawing when I should have been doing something else. (Should I really have been publishing GROGGY on a hectograph when I was trying to pass law school exams while working 25 hours a week
in the school library?) Too much time playing when I would have been better served by working. Maybe if I hadn't I would a lot better off now, in some way or other.

But it's more than a bit late to worry about that. I'm still scuffling to find time for writing and still failing miserably to manage my schedule shrewdly. The process of writing my part of the mystery novels Mary and I do is, for me, a process of putting off work. To make time. I've never been able to squeeze my creative efforts into the interstices of life like some writers seem to.

My latest brilliant idea to find more writing time is to just write more, of everything, and hope the writing will make time for itself. More fanzine writing will result in more fiction.

Maybe this is magical thinking, or maybe -- who knows -- my muse will come running back to me.

WHAT WE'RE USED TO
Winter has moved in on us. Temperatures are falling to the single digits at night, ensuring that the half foot of snow we had last week won't be going anywhere soon. The car is ice-locked so Mary and I have begun to dine on our winter stores. I suppose the squirrels outside must be doing the same, not that I've seen any. It's too cold even for squirrels to be out. How would you like to try racing out through bare, wind blown tree limbs when it's twelve degrees?

I'm not particularly fond of the countryside in winter but I'm used to it. I never did become acclimated to New York City when I went to school there back in the stone tablet days. (Or what seems like that long ago) We all cope best with what's familiar to us. The hayseeds touring New York City appear foolish to the locals but so do the city slickers visiting the scenic sticks.

Years ago I was hiking in a Pennsylvania state park on a trail with gorgeous views, seven miles along a series of waterfalls. It's a strenuous walk, mostly uphill on narrow paths, little more than muddy ruts, made treacherous by mossy stones and slick roots. One of the waterfalls is higher than Niagara, albeit a mere ribbon of water. The landscape remains wild. I saw several red spotted newts on the wet rocks at the side of the path.
About two thirds of the way to the end I passed a woman who was obviously out of her element. She was dressed more for a stroll down Fifth Avenue than a hiking trail. She was wearing some sort of dress shoes instead of hiking boots, not quite high heels but close. She was limping along wearily and as I went by she asked, "How far to the end?"

"Oh," I said probably less than two miles."

She looked at me uncomprehendingly for a moment then asked in a petulant tone, "Yes. But I mean, how many blocks?"

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PURPLE PEOPLE

THE READERS SPEAK

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Editorial comments are in red. By the way, I love egoboo. Keep it coming. I try to remove as much as possible from each loc and store it in a safe place for my private enjoyment.

BRUCE BURN
What different worlds we inhabit. Here I'm languishing in constant warm weather as we wind down from the hectic Christmas season. This year, all our chickens came back to roost: our six children and thirteen of the grandchildren. Fortunately, we had to house only nine of them and the rest actually live not too far away. Christmas from breakfast to supper was spent on the back porch, with trips to daughter Mary for afternoon tea and daughter Patricia for a bbq-dinner. Now all the visitors have gone back to their homes, and the place feels empty.

For someone living in the northeast part of North America where our traditional Christmas is white, it is very strange to think of the holiday as a summer one, as it is in Australia. On the other hand, I heartily dislike the song "White Christmas" and I find Bing Crosby one of the most irritating singers ever!

Your description of life during the winter where-ever it is you live was fascinating to me. Grandma doing all those preserves - and someone must have grown the veggies and fruit she stewed and canned and bottled. My wife (who, after all, is a Grandma too)
gave away most of the bottling and preserving, but still makes a jar of jam or bottles the odd bit of fruit. And we all devour it! Not that we have a hard winter such as you live through each year. Don’t get snow on the ground here, but we do see snow on the hills far to the south when we have a cold snap in the winter. So the preserves are more a luxury than a necessity. We have more of a problem with wasps when fallen fruit hits the ground, but even that’s a minor thing. Funnily enough, we’re having more of a problem with fallen branches over the last few days, caused by the strong and gusty winds that have decided to herald an early end to the heat of summer. And even that problem was caused more by me than anything: I missed getting our shelter belt (the protective hedges of trees we grow round an orchard here to protect the fruit trees from wind damage) trimmed last winter, deciding to do it in the autumn this year. Which means there’s a lot of green growth with long spindly limbs on the trees, just ready to fall when the wind blows.

My grandparents owned a huge double lot with an enormous garden in which they grew all varieties of vegetables. By the time I lived there (my parents' house was next door) the suburbs had crept in all around but originally it had been the outskirts of town. They had apple and pear trees and I remember well how, during the late summer, the corner of the yard where many of them grew was an area of terror to be avoided, alive as it was with wasps, yellow jackets and hornets feasting on fallen fruit.

A few weeks ago the winds here blew the top out of a dead pine tree in our neighbor’s yard. We were fortunate in that it landed about three feet from our house and not on it.

Reading your fanzine brought back memories of one-shot sessions and apa-zines for me, and having it all produced with purple text was a bit of a hoot. I never went through the hekto swamps, apart from some mucking about at school with a Banda spirit duplicator, but I can remember getting and reading many a blurry fanzine from the fifties and sixties. I think you’ve produced something all us old fans can enjoy: a nostalgic whiff of a fanzine, rambling along like a modern blog on the internet.

I hope to keep this thing informal and fun. Let’s face it, with the instant electronic communication available to us these days it makes no sense at all!
DAVE LOCKE
1972 was when you became active in fandom. January, to be precise, was when I came out with Awry #1, my second solo-edited genzine title and probably the zine which first brought me some serious attention (as in, "seriously, who is this asshole?"). I did do a perszine, though, four issues of The Works which ran from 4/78 to 10/81 and which I adulterated with a Lon Atkins article in the final issue because I was running out of things to write about. But you'll remember that perszine, as I still have the mailing list for it and your name is there. Plus you had LoCs in the 2nd and 3rd issues. A magnificent 50-copy distribution. Well, at least if I look back over what I've written in fandom, The Works seems to have had my best writing. Obviously it was good that I cut my standard mailing list at least in half for such writings.

I was actually in fandom as early as January of that year? I would have guessed later. I left my fanzine collection in the basement of the house I rented in Rochester, New York back in 1989, just before the place was demolished to make room for a mall. I'll never write a faanish memoir because my memory is dreadful and I can't check my own facts.

I read so little new SF that basically I don't read the stuff, though SF still pops up among the books that I reread. Mysteries have been my genre of choice for a long long long time, and "fannishly" I can recall being a contributor to Len & June Moffatt's JDM Bibliophile back in the 70s. But it was SF Fandom that got me into fanzines, and Arthur Hlavaty explained it all when he asked "If a science-fiction fan is someone who used to read science fiction and likes to hang out with others who used to read science fiction, what's a fanzine fan?"

Maybe that's best unanswered.

Obviously we were fans of some of the same fanzines. Bill Bowers' Outworlds, Ed Cagle's Kwalhioqua, Jackie Causgrove's Dilemma, and even Denis Quane's Notes From The Chemistry Department. Bill and I wound up living in the same city and became very good friends who were very frequently bumbling around together. Ed and I were the very best of friends and had a great deal of fun co-editing the perszine verging on genzine called Shambles, and twice I drove out to visit with Ed and Sue in Oklahoma when I lived in SoCal. Jackie and I lived together for 22 years (longer than my two formal marriages added together).
Denis Quane I couldn't tell you anything about if it wasn't published in his fanzine...

Recalling all those zines fondly, I realized with a shock that the editors are all gone now and every one prematurely. No wonder fandom isn't what it used to be.

I'd add a few other zines to a list of the fondly remembered, but I'll just mention two. David Hulan's Early English was a zine I particularly miss. David and I joined fandom at about the same time, 50 years ago in 4/61, and we have a long history together. Worse, we did 14 issues of a fanzine called Pelf, a sometime apazine, sometime perszine, and sometime genzine. Grant Canfield's Waste Paper was perhaps my favorite perszine of the time. Grant and I even collaborated on a full-page raunchy cartoon for some professional skin mag. Although the point of the jest in the cartoon is now long lost to history, at least we got paid for it.

I am not familiar with those ecept I know the names. I do recall Grant Canfield's excellent illos.

I would imagine it might be easy getting out in the winter when you live on the side of a mountain, but getting back sounds like it might be difficult. How much trouble would it be for you to fashion some manner of ski-lift to ease transportation problems? I can recall one time, back when I lived in upstate New York, that I had a winter transportation problem. I got up in the morning, put on several tons of winter clothing, and opened the front door to head out to where I was working. I was immediately stopped upon being confronted with a white wall just outside the door. We'd had a lot of snow, you see, and it had drifted above door height. How I solved the transportation problem was obvious if you could have seen the trail of winter clothing on the floor as I made my way back to bed.

That's really bad weather. Because of our peculiar position here, which necessitates driving up a hill both coming and going, it only takes a few inches for us to be snowed in.

"By now we are stocked up for the winter, our storeroom crammed with tins and boxes." I know what you mean, but it will be interesting to see how many non-Brit readers of E-Ditto write to ask what these "tins" are all about. Sure, it's in the dictionary, but over here we commonly call these things "cans".
Now watch, I'll be the only one to mention it. It's okay to forget I said anything.

This is what comes of spending the last nineteen years with a British expat. On the other hand, the other day Mary mentioned "mail" and then immediately grew very pale.

"Like Kurt Vonnegut's Billy Christian in Slaughterhouse Five, we are all unstuck in time." I don't know what religion he was, but his name was Billy Pilgrim. What? Yeah, it's a real pain to make corrections on ditto masters.

How did I do that? Typo. Yeah. I've told you how bad a typist I am. I won't annoy Bill Burns with a correction. Let my stupidity be immortalized for ever.

Christmas trees. My son got an artificial one back in 2009, or more likely it was given to him, and it remains pristine in its box because neither of us can think of any reason to set it up. Real Christmas trees, I've always believed, should be left in the ground where they grew up.

My dad's first Christmas tree retained its roots and was planted in back of the house where I eventually grew up. The house is out of the family but last I knew the tree was still there, a towering pine now.

NED BROOKS
No problem reading purple. I read once that white-on-green was easiest on the eyes. The worst I ever saw was fuzzy red on white, perpetrated by a Neffer with red carbon paper.

I experimented with various colors of ditto on green and yellow paper, to excruciating effect.

You could do Groggy-style color art with the Windows utility Paint - as far as I know every Windows has it under Accessories.

I've never been able to get a feel for drawing with a mouse. I can't even emulate a ditto master tracing. Someday maybe I'll get an electronic pen.

My favorite zine was Donn Brazier's TITLE - I think I responded to every issue.

My favorite zine too. It wasn't a personalzine but Donn imbued it
with his own personality.

**TARAL WAYNE**
Amusing idea, to create a "ditto zine" using purple type. Now all you need to do is figure out how to make the file fade over time.

I could always email progressively more faded copies to Bill Burns and those who wanted a more authenticate experience could periodically download replacements.

I remember "Notes" and some of those other zines. At the time I thought pretty highly of them, though they didn't remain in my collection after the Big Sale to Murray Moore some years ago. (I had to be cruel if I was to be serious about saving space.) What such zines had going for them was their openness to anyone, their timely arrival three or four times a year, and an eclectic nature. You might find anything in them. Maybe that's why I never thought of "Notes From the Chemistry Department" or "Kwalhioqua" as personalzines, really. Personalzines were usually about families, emotional difficulties, depression and other touchy-feely stuff, told dead-pan, without any leavening of humour that might have made reading bearable.

You're right. The zines I was talking about were (or I recall them as being) largely the single-handed efforts of the editor (writing-wise) but were not devoted much to navel gazing or angst. They reflected the editors' personalities, but were a little more creative and detached than the personalzines you describe.

I also like the stamp. Cute. If I ever decide to do a plain and frequent fanzine (and I have been toying with the idea), I might steal this. I have enough curious stamps to make it an interesting touch.

I'm always game for weird stamps. I at first thought to stick to stamps from the nineteen seventies but the ones I found were pretty boring and unattractive.

**DAVID BURTON**
The first zines I can remember getting back in the late 60s were all done ditto, and while I never had the opportunity to use that particular medium, I did admire how easily you could do color with it. Hopefully you'll incorporate a bit of that in the future. I'm pretty sure Neil Young was thinking of dittoed fanzines in 1969 when he penned those immortal words in his song, "Cowgirl In
The Sand" - "Purple words on a gray background." You don't think so?

I don't know if he did but I hope so. I once saw Neal Young live, at an outdoor concert venue. From where I sat he was about the size of an insect, but the music was great.

I haven't figured out how to actually draw on a computer and I haven't tried to draw for nearly twenty years. But who knows. I never thought I'd do another fanzine either.

You did use those special electrons that make the whole zine fade after a few months, right? If not, I'll send you a case of them for the next issue.

Well that would be better than sending Bill Burns progressively more faded copies, thanks.

You threw me for just a bit when you described Sabrina the cat as "entering her fourth decade." Even though I knew better, my first thought was, "A forty year old cat?" But of course, you're right, just as you're right in saying you're entering your seventh (as am I - thanks for depressing me, man).

I confused everyone! Mary warned me it was confusing but, hey, I'm the editor! Sabrina is twenty-one. Born in 1989 (decade one) lived through the nineteen-nineties and twenty-oughts (decades two and three) and in 2011 is seeing her fourth decade.

I don't know why, but lately the thought has crossed my mind more than once how sad it must be for pets when the people they live with die. I mean, you can't explain to them what's happened if their owner passes away. My cat Abby, except for the first six months of her life, has never lived with anyone else. Hell, she makes a bee-line for a hiding spot if someone comes over for a visit, and doesn't come out until she's sure they're gone. I can't imagine how miserable she'd be with someone who isn't familiar with our little routines of (you should pardon the pun) pet names, treat times, and so on. Thankfully, should I go before Abby there are people that will at least give her a good home. How sad for those pets who aren't that lucky. With luck, she'll be around another 10 years or so. By that time I'll be 67, and I'll have to think pretty hard about getting another cat at that age.

I recall E.B. White began an essay wistfully by noting that for the
first time he had got a Scottish Terrier (I think it was) that was likely to outlive him. My grandmother was very concerned for her last cat Tommy and was relieved when my brother and his wife assured her they would take care of him if she should go first. Since Tommy was already approaching ten in didn’t seem like it would be much of a commitment but in fact he outlived my grandmother by a lot, to the ripe old age of twenty-two. Yes, if you want to live a long time arrange to be a Mayer cat.

I gave up on Christmas trees and decorations a long time ago. I used to put up a tree and decorate the house with pine garlands and twinkly lights, but since it’s just me and I have few visitors, it seemed like a waste. Christmas has long been a religious holiday for me rather than a secular one, and I have a small creche that I put out during the season, although I do also put out a rather pitiful, tiny 6" cardboard Christmas tree as well. Makes decorating and undecorating for the holidays a 2 minute task, half of which is spent trying to remember where I put the stuff the year before.

Which is much more in keeping with what Christmas is supposed to be. The secular aspect are, so far as I can see, exactly opposite to the teachings in the Gospels.

I think by-and-large our grandparents may have been more "industrious" than we are, largely because they had to be. Maybe we have things too easy, I don’t know, but *I’m* not about to dig any basements by hand. It makes me wonder how the kids a couple of generations down the line will view us. "You mean, Grandpa, that you actually had to *type* words on a *keyboard*? Gosh, that was really roughing it."

Yeah. And someday it’ll be, "I can’t believe people once had arms and legs and...you know...bodies...eeeeuuuuuu!!")

ERIC LINDSAY

Your house sounds remarkably remote. Or perhaps conditions far worse than here, to expect to be isolated for so long. The flooding through Queensland (over an area larger than Germany and France combined) this wet season has taken out the main highway. Several reasonable sized towns are totally isolated by flood waters, and thousands have been evacuated. Around 70% of our mines have declared force majeure due to flooding, and coal supplies for the China trade are dropping off rapidly. It has not affected us much, except you can see that supplies in the supermarkets are remarkably spotty. Luckily it did not affect important supplies, like
Xmas lights.

I saw a flood close hand back in 1972 and the devastation lasted for years. I can’t imagine the destruction such widespread floods as you are having would cause. Hope things begin to improve.

Now that Xmas is over, some folks here began thinking of mischief. One of the folks I eat with has a home just near the entrance to the village. Right where cars would see it as they turn in. Conversation turned to his Xmas lights. Ray protested he did not have any. That can be fixed, we declared. Especially since the other person doing the challenging was John, who has a really extensive range of lights strung around his home at Xmas. John even said he would put up the lights, if I helped. However I did not find any lights at the local shopping centre during the week. So at the bar on Friday, John said he knew where to get Xmas lights. I could not understand where he was talking about. I challenged him to do so, and produced the money. John got three packets of lights, totalling 805 lights, and dropped them in on Sunday. This time he was able to explain where the shop was. Armed with this, I bought another 1200 lights on Monday. We will explain how well we are going with lights to Ray on Tuesday, at lunch, where he can not scream too loud.

2,000 lights!! That’s a great story. But how many lights are you going to need when Christmas actually rolls around?

I want to add, few readers will know this but you, and Ned Brooks of course who also passed your ditto masters on to me, are responsible for a lot of the color in my old GROGGIES. In the United States I could only get purple, black, red, green and a blue that being non-water soluble wouldn’t work for my hecto efforts. You supplied, from Australia, a usable blue, yellow, orange and I’m not so sure your greens and other colors weren't slightly different shades. They were certainly fresher and worked better. You doubled my palette. Honestly, those colored ditto masters were about the neatest thing I’d seen since I sent away my cereal box-tops for a 3-D Mighty Mouse comic!

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Thanks for all the great letters. No, this is not going to be a weekly publication or anything like it, but I decided to rush another issue out just to prove (partly to myself) that I intend to keep producing them.
So I end this issue as I began it, tapping away at my keyboard, gently, unavoidably, jostling Sabrina who insists on occupying my lap during every hour of the day when the weather is cold. The sun porch roof beyond the office window is covered with snow. The space heater is humming. It’s pretty much like every other evening during the winter.

Meanwhile, Mary and I race ever nearer to the end of our current mystery novel. Various residents of Constantinople are being knocked off or menaced. Who knows what horrors lurk in the dark and twisty alleys? It is all much more exciting than here. These days the most exciting things that happen to me are what goes on inside my head.

--Eric

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