

2011



Annual

–e*I*59– (Vol. 10 No. 6) December 2011, is published and © 2011 by Earl Kemp. All rights reserved.
It is produced and distributed bi-monthly through <http://efanzines.com> by Bill Burns in an e-edition only.



“The Final Meeting” by Alan White

Contents—eI59—December 2011

Cover: “The Final Meeting,” by Alan White

...Return to sender, address unknown....48 [eI letter column], by Earl Kemp

The Graham Charnock Cookbook by Graham Charnock

Lawrence Block’s “Part of the Job,” by Lynn Munroe

Part of the Job, by Lawrence Block

Behind the scenes of the 1963 TAFF race by Ron Ellik, assembled by Rob Hansen

Spooky, by John Baxter

Echoes of Peake, by Michael Moorcock

Some Varieties of Authenticity in “Throwaway” Paperbacks, by Jay A. Gertzman

SIGHfication, by Dave Locke

God, How Silly!, by John-Henri Holmberg

Back cover: “Wide Apple World,” by Ditmar [Martin James Ditmar Jenssen]

1492. The teachers told the children that this was when the continent was discovered by human beings. Actually, millions of human beings were already living full and imaginative lives on the continent in 1492. That was simply the year in which sea pirates began to cheat and rob and kill them.

—Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions*

THIS ISSUE OF *eI* is for Robert Lichtman and Dave Locke, in appreciation of all the great help they have given *eI* over the last decade.

#

As always, everything in this issue of *eI* beneath my byline is part of my in-progress rough-draft memoirs. As such, I would appreciate any corrections, revisions, extensions, anecdotes, photographs, jpegs, or what have you sent to me at earl@earlkemp.com and thank you in advance for all your help.

Bill Burns is *jefe* around here. If it wasn't for him, nothing would get done. He inspires activity. He deserves some really great rewards. It is a privilege and a pleasure to have him working with me to make *eI* whatever it is.

Other than Bill Burns, Dave Locke, and Robert Lichtman, these are the people who made this issue of *eI* possible: John Baxter, Lawrence Block, Graham Charnock, Jay A. Gertzman, Rob Hansen (Ron Ellik, Ethel Lindsay), John-Henri Holmberg, Dave Locke, Michael Moorcock, Lynn Munroe,

ARTWORK: This issue of *eI* features original artwork by Alan White and Ditmar, and recycled artwork by William Rotsler.

You can tell this story as often as you want-people never get tired of it. If you have a perfectly ordinary guy walking down the street at noon, not thinking about anything, and he falls into a hole, that's bad fortune. He's down below the line. He struggles to get up out of the hole, finally makes it, and is a little happier when he is finished. He's faced something and survived. That's "Man in a Hole."

—Kurt Vonnegut, "Teaching the Writer to Write," *Kallikanzaros* 4, March-April 1968

...Return to sender, address unknown.... 48

The Official *eI* Letters to the Editor Column

By Earl Kemp with recycled artwork by William Rotsler

We get letters. Some parts of some of them are printable. Your letter of comment is most wanted via email to earl@earlkemp.com or by snail mail to P.O. Box 369, PMB 205, Tecate, CA 91980 and thank you.

Also, please note, I observe DNQs and make arbitrary and capricious deletions from these letters in order to remain on topic.

This is the official Letter Column of *eI*, and following are a few quotes from a few of those letters concerning the last issue of *eI*. All this in an effort to get you to write letters of comment to *eI* so you can look for them when they appear here.

#

Monday October 17, 2011:

Lloyd Penney: I have issue 58 of *eI*, many thanks, and I still hate to think this will be one of the last remaining issues to enjoy. Time to jump in headfirst, and see what there is to have some fun with.

My first loc...I did indeed pick up a copy (and paid for, don't worry) of *Who Killed Science Fiction?*, and if there is the opportunity to see you again in the future, I will happily ask for an autograph. This took a snapshot of the health of the genre, and I think another snapshot is long overdue.

All those locs that are fearing the end of the run...well, sixty issues is an excellent run, and you couldn't be blamed for wanting a change of pace. However...nothing says you couldn't put out an occasional update, and I expect you might do

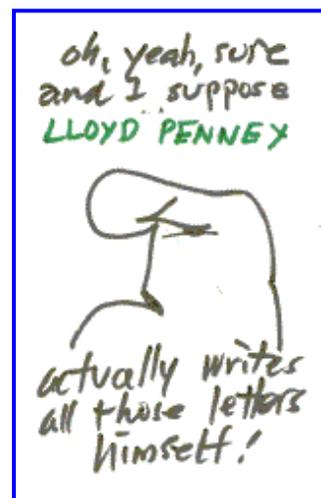
just that. Don't end the zine, just change the schedule.

I read *Accelerando* some time ago, but as an e-book on my Palm Tungsten. The article is right in that we seem to be backsliding on science, indeed on any subject that requires any sort of thinking. One cartoon seen online shows a weary-looking teacher announcing that science has been cancelled because the students' parents prefer to believe in magic. It does look like the dark ages are returning; it's never been uncooler to be smart, and any deep interest you might have means you're getting diagnosed with ADHD. I must talk to the local ADHD advocates in Toronto, and see if they would agree.

Erica Mulkey was wonderful in Reno. She performed at the Reno Worldcon on the other side of Hall 2 from the fanzine lounge, and she was great. Steampunk-wise, I am feeling a little isolated in Toronto; everything else seems to be happening elsewhere.

I am thirty years' your junior, Earl, yet I remember when I did fandom-wise in the '80s and '90s, and I am privy to what much younger fans are doing today, and I do feel old. Some of what I enjoyed back then had been changed about so much; I have only my memories. Yet, for other activities, I have some physical souvenirs, and I may have to console myself with them.

Well, that was vague...anyway, I am done for the moment. I've got a stack of e-zines (or maybe an e-stack) that need some attention, so I think I will carry on with one of those. Thank you for another good zine, and the penultimate issue is next up. Looking forward to it in some ways, not in others, I am sure you can understand. See you then.



A step backward, after making a wrong turn, is a step in the right direction.
—Kurt Vonnegut, *Player Piano*

The Graham Charnock Cookbook

(Dedicated to Frank Lunney, for starters)

By Graham Charnock

Why not write a cookery book, my doctor said to me, uncrossing her legs with a swish! of nylon static and then bending over so that, not only did her short skirt ride up her thighs, but she vouchsafed me a glimpse of the chasm of her cleavage whilst she sucked on a pencil with pursed lips. Hey, Earl, what did you always tell me? Get them with the first sentence.

It will take your mind off your impotence and sexual dysfunction, she said, as long as you don't include recipes involving cucumbers or ring donuts. She finished examining me. I think you will also have to stop masturbating. Why is that, I asked? Because I find it distracting, she said.

I took her advice, not about stopping masturbating, of course, but about writing a cookery book. Everybody seemed to be doing it, after all, except for Vince Cable and Nick Clegg who were busy pretending to run the country, although personally I would rather Jamie Oliver were given that job because it would give him lots of opportunities to break down in tears at the desperate iniquity of it all. Since we have mentioned several members of the current Cabinet, I would like to start by discussing some other vegetables.

The Potato

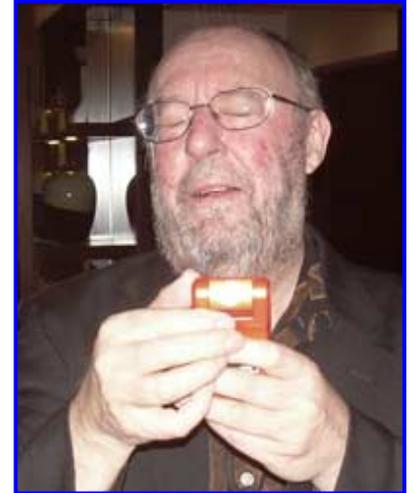
As everybody knows the potato was invented either by Walter Raleigh or Walter Delamare, but not by that other famous poet Pablo Neruda who nevertheless is one of the few poets to have actually written an Ode to the Potato:

Potato,
you are called
potayto,
not potahto;
you were not born with a beard,
you are not Castillian.
You are dark
like our skin;
we are Americans, potato,
we are Indians.

Weird, eh, old Neruda. What's all that stuff about being born with a beard? Too much whacky baccy if you ask me.

Most people refer to the humble potato, but let me tell you I have come across some not so humble potatoes in my time, including many potatoes who were proud, haughty, and downright arrogant. In homage to them I give you my recipe for Stuck-Up Potato Pie.

Select your potatoes with care. You need several tons of them to increase your chances of finding the very few potatoes with an inflated sense of their own importance necessary for this recipe. Once you have selected the best, don a pair of kid gloves and handle them with care to avoid bruising their tender feelings. They should not be peeled or scraped but merely stroked delicately with a squirrel-hair brush. I once knew a chef who used a badger hair shaving brush, but believe me, he soon regretted it, because his wife left him and he ended up in a hospice, being cared for by nurses in starched uniforms who refused to have sex with him. A worse fate is hard to imagine. Boil your potatoes lightly, then heavily, then lightly again. Wash away excess starch with a hosepipe, preferably connected to a pressure washer. Crumble a few mothballs into the pan. Nobody likes moths in their potatoes, unless it actually is the potato moth *Phthorimaea operculella*, and even then some people may retch at the prospect. Take two cardamom pods and insert them in your ears. This is especially important if you are



Graham Charnock, Corflu
Cobalt, Winchester, 2010



playing any old CDs by Deacon Blue, whilst cooking. For recommended music to play while cooking see below under Music To Play While Cooking.

Slice or crumble your potatoes, being sure to collect any bits from the kitchen floor and reassemble them into potato shapes.

Make a sauce. If you don't know how, see below under How To Make A Sauce and stop sponging off other people and for God's sake Get a Life because it's probably too late for you to get an education.

Drain the sauce and expurgate, then edit stiffly. Send for Malcolm Edwards, if necessary. He won't be able to help but he probably doesn't have much of a social life and would appreciate the opportunity to get out.

Assemble the dish by piling all the ingredients, plus 200 anchovies, into a 9' pie plate which you will have previously lined with either pastry or silk, but I would recommend pastry. Cook in a slow oven or a fast Chevrolet. Serve with Turnips. Oh no, you can't do that because I haven't got to turnips yet.

Turnips

Some people with speech impediments, or because they are from Gateshead, call them neeps, but to draw attention to the stupid cretins in this manner is callous and unfeeling, so just ask for turnips when you are visiting your local Turkish grocery store, and stand back as they gaze at you with a total lack of comprehension and shrug insouciantly. In cooking, Turnips can be treated much like Swedes except they don't have a country of their own and are not known for sexual orgies. Thank goodness, I say.

Carrots

Nearly proscribed in the same breath as cucumber by my doctor, except she suffered an asthma attack just before doing so and was left speechless. Donkeys like carrots. Donkeys have huge donges. What more can I say? Some people insert them in their vaginas or rectums, I find by Googling. I certainly wouldn't like to eat them afterwards. Breathe deeply now... and dream of old Tecate.

Leeks

Oh dear, am I in trouble now. Leeks are long, white, and Welsh, a bit like Dave Langford. See below under Other Fans Than Dave Langford Who Are Also Vegetables, or perhaps not because the list would surely be too long. But not that long:

Onions

These are fairly ubiquitous and although useless as ingredients (cf garlic, ginger) should be used whenever you feel the need to cry, perhaps when a relationship is breaking up, or because you have unwittingly offended someone on your newsgroup. Eat lots of them raw, along with garlic and ginger, before boarding any trans- or intercontinental flight, and at least the air hostesses will avoid you, or else point at you and utter shrill screams of terror, If you are on a holiday in Faliriki they may well make a good substitute for mouthwash.

Here's a recipe for Earl:

Tortillas el Hajebos

First gather your Hajebos. You may have to cross the border to find plump, ripe specimens under sixteen years old. Be careful to check whether they have male or female stamens. This will make a difference to your perceived sexuality, but not in real terms, unless you fail to achieve an erection, whereupon you should continue to cook the Tortillas and drink lots of Tequila until the blue mist disappears from your vision. I believe you can buy 3D televisions these days which enable you to toggle between views of naked young girls and cars. Just think of it in those terms.



Gregory Pickersgill—Celeriac

Garbage

Sorry, I mean cabbage, although I accept in some cases the terms are interchangeable. I've just watched *Countdown* and incredibly Cabbage came up as one of the word choices and Julie got six points. How likely is that to happen in real life? You should use cabbage sparingly since it is a source of metaspulphides which can rearrange your genes if you are not careful. The same applies to Brussels Sprouts which I will not mention for the same reasons. Cauliflower on the other hand is full of natural endorphins, but which only take effect when you are asleep.

Here's another recipe for Earl, a real one this time:

Earl's Famous Pineapple Pie (a real recipe)

Cut half a pineapple into chunks. Put in a bowl with half a cup of sugar. Splash liberally with Tequila, and set aside for four hours to chill. Drain juice from pineapple and place in saucepan with half a cup of sugar and half cup of flour. Bring to vigorous boil. Add orange juice if sauce is too thick. Line a 9' pie tin with ready-made shortcrust pastry. Add pineapple chunks and drench with sauce. Add cinnamon and nutmeg to taste. Roll out more ready made pastry and cut in 1' strips. Cover pie tin with these in a lattice-work pattern, and glaze with milk. Put in oven and bake for 30 minutes at 425F or until nicely brown. Remove from oven. Throw pie away and finish off the rest of the Tequila.

Music To Play While Cooking.

Hot Dog Blues by Big Joe Williams
Cake & Sodomy by Marilyn Manson
All You Can Eat by The Fat Boys
TV Dinners by ZZ Top
Eat It by Weird Al Yankovic
Roast Fish and Cornbread by Lee Perry
She Cooks Me Cabbage by Champion Jack Dupree
Chitlin con Carne by Junior Wells
Eli's Pork Chop by Little Sonny

How To Make A Sauce

Water flour butter. Go figure.

Food & Fandom

Fans are well-known for their hospitality. Some like Greg Pickersgill would share their last biscuit with you, while many would be only too keen to take your last biscuit. Ritchie Smith springs to mind. I have sat down to table at many a hearty fan feast, but unfortunately it is in the nature of fan gatherings that it is not the food but the fannish interaction that is notable and is what one remembers, and sometimes even that is not very notable or memorable as it happens. I sent out a call to some fannish friends, most of whom could be counted upon to have better memories than I have for this sort of thing, and they responded by predictably chundering on about Brian Burgess's pies and very little else, although Linda Krawaek reminded me of the brownie parties she used to hold whilst she was living with Chris Atkinson, most of which apparently ended up with people hurling their clothes off and rolling about naked on the floor (needless to say, I was never invited). And I once licked whipped cream off Tom Disch's nipples, but that is another story. Of course I remember Mike Moorcock and Linda taking our family out to a Treadmills in Austin and introducing us to the delight of Chicken Fried Steak or is it Steak Fried Chicken, with biscuits and white sauce. And of course Linda introduced me to the delights of a Shiner, whatever that is, but presumably not a black eye.

The Recipes

In 1942, four years before I was born, I wrote a novel which incorporated lots of recipes. You don't have to feel guilty about forgetting about it, unless you actually read it, in which case I will be sending the boys around with big sticks real soon to collect the royalties.

Here are a few examples of what you missed:

Jolly Jack Tar (A Sailor's Recipe)

First collect a kedgere of assorted shellfish. Trim off all the edible bits and discard. You should be left with several kilos of beard, tract, gristle, spume, and gills. Pour these into a stout bucket, add two pints of liquorice water and a smattering of coal dust. Heat over a brazier until reduced to the consistency of crude oil. You will need to obtain a number of sea birds, no matter what species, although traditionally fulmars and shearwaters are recommended, or puffins because they are small and can't fight back. Smear the mixture in your bucket over the birds. No need to pluck. Bake in a hot sand oven for four hours minimum, but five days at optimum. Feathers and skin will melt away. Disassemble the flesh, which should be reminiscent in consistency of a porter's overalls and smell strongly of aniseed. It will be charred and largely inedible, unless you are John Nielsen-Hall. Enjoy with a sturdy Nigerian. Sorry, I mean a sturdy Nigerian Chardonnay.

Graham's Welsh Rarebit

Take one hare (it doesn't have to be Welsh—this is one of the misconceptions I hope to scotch in the second edition of my book, *Famous Misconceptions about Cooking Scotched*) and juggle with it for at least three days. Put it in a pot and

forget about it for a further three days. By now the hare should be al dente but feeling a little neglected. Skipper it and jacket it, using a lathe if necessary. Stuff a biscuit tin with straw and place the hare inside. Build a fire pit and stoke it well. After the coals have died down spread a few dried roots of sarsaparilla on them and a few Hockney seeds if desired. Place the tin containing the hare on the coals, cover with quicklime, and leave for several weeks (the longer the better). When you at last uncover the hare it should be friable and gritty, the hair, bone, and flesh having melted together. Batter it with filchard seeds ground in a pestle and mortar. Do not add salt. Serve spread on toast or crackers or mix with bone meal to make a fine all-purpose garden fertilizer.

Beans & Ice Gumbo

This is an old Guatemalan recipe passed down to me by my maternal step-mother on the distaff side.

First select your beans. Expose any that are at all runty and weedy to ridicule. Do this in a deep pan and discard. They'll thank you for it. The remaining beans should be fresh and hearty and wear shorts. Encourage them. Send them to the best possible public school. When they return home, slice them and spank their pert buttocks. It may sound heartless, but it's the only thing to do, if they are to go on for a successful career in merchant banking.

Pound half a mangerful of old straw impregnated with lama droppings (not hard to find in Guatemala, but if you live in Hornsey you may have to order from a specialist supplier.)

Meanwhile cook some ice. This won't work unless you are half-way up Mount Everest. If you are all the way up Mount Everest, you probably have other things on your mind. Otherwise send out for pre-cooked ice. Tilda make a nice range. Uncle Ben's is cloyingly nasty and has a patronizing trade name and a racial stereotype on the packaging, which may tip the balance in its favour. Now is the time to insert the gumbo. Make the first incision about two inches long, and insert the gumbo. Sew up the wound using a non-reactive artificial suture medium such as biodegradable silk. I recommend a monofilament grade .00006.

Put everything into a big oil drum. I mean everything. And I mean big. Don't be shy. Shake vigorously but not ostentatiously and lower into a large hole. Sprinkle with unleaded petrol, ignite and stand back. I can't reiterate how important it is to stand back. I find most recipes fail, at least most of mine, because people have failed to stand far enough back. Allow to flame gently for several days, a bit like an oil well in Iraq. Serve the beans on a bed of ice and chill out, preferably listening to Moussorgsky.

There is only one wine to serve with this recipe, which is vodka.

Bad Luck Gumbo

Take some anchovies, sprinkle with salt, and leave out in the sun for six weeks. The small fox terrier from next door will have eaten most of them by this time, but take what remains and sieve gently or very forcibly if that just happens to be your way with the sieve. Combine with several hundred very hot chillies (this is not called Bad Luck Gumbo for nothing). Add several pounds of garlic. Horace the Roman poet reckoned garlic would drive your woman away from you. (You do see where we're heading here?) Now it's time to add the keynote ingredient which can be anything you've just happened to have fallen over in the recent past, a yam, a coconut, a shopping trolley, you name it (I can't do everything for you). Simmer, season to taste, throw away, and settle down to watch *The Ring*. Oooops, big mistake. Now you're cursed forever, and will die as soon as this recipe is over (or at least a week later).

Wemblesham Pie

Wemblesham, Wemblesham,
Wemblesham Pie

With tincture of cannabis to keep you high.

Thus was this famous literary pie immortalized in E.F. Sneary's classic children's tale *Spliff the Magic Dragon*. For legal reasons Sneary was careful not to include a full and complete recipe for this pie but, Rudolf Rottner, Head Chef at the Wemblesham Roadside Inn (9 rooms, all with en suite bathrooms and cable tv) has reconstructed it from Sneary's original notes: This pie is unusual in that no pastry of any sort is involved. It is thus ideal for cooks who don't like to get their fingers sticky, and, let's face it, who does? First select a small shallow skillet and brush the inside with peppermint oil infused with garangal. Line it with alternate layers of tobacco leaves and the distinctive leaves of the cannabis sativa



The Wemblesham Motel

plant. Include a layer of whole mint leaves, for extra piquancy. Add a tablespoonful of absinthe and flambé for a few seconds. Remove from pan, sprinkle with tincture of cannabis (for medicinal use only), and roll into a large spliff. Place in an airing cupboard until thoroughly dry, then smoke it. No, I don't mean in a smoke-house. Or perhaps, I do.

Hanover International Club Sandwich*

Legal disclaimer. This sandwich is in fact based on an old British Rail staple, circa 1982, but has been freely adapted here. I have no intention of suggesting that the Hanover International Hotel, now known as something else, serves sandwiches of this description, or, for the purposes of covering our asses, that British Rail ever did, but you know what I mean? Sometimes some people can't take a joke and hire lawyers to prove it. Anyway the Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, should worry, the amount of free publicity I'm giving them. Beds very comfortable. Service efficient and polite. Automatic Teller Machines work like a treat. I had to roll my car out of the car park before it would start, but that is hardly their fault. I can't bring myself to say the rooms are spacious and some of them have a good view onto brick walls, but, hey, you could say the same for the Ritz (*Lawyer—no you couldn't) (Me—Okay but I'm safe in saying some of them have views onto brick walls because I've actually stayed in one.)

Sidestep the manager of the hotel if you see him bearing down on you in a corridor, and take three pieces of dried bread and dry them further by placing in a sunny spot, if you can find one, preferably for several days, although in Hinckley that is not very likely. If they're still there when you come back, cherish them and sing them hymns, for they are true survivors, at least in bread terms. This is a layered sandwich so you can choose which ingredients go between each layer. I know it's a bit of a *laissez faire* attitude towards cooking, but what the hell live a little.

If you are absolutely desperate for a late night snack in the Hanover don't rely on getting the last hot dog available from the snack cart, because Jimmy Robertson will have been there before you.

Albert Einstein's Sunday Brunch

If you have a local branch of Sainsburys, Tesco, Waitrose, or Arthur Maudlin's Bespoke Butchers, go to it and buy chorizo, but not on a Saturday afternoon or you may bump into a madman masquerading as an author. Don't bother with a local delicatessen. They don't need your custom since they will shortly be going out of business (or the bee's knees) anyway.

Melt the chorizo with a blowtorch until it is unrecognisable and put aside on a Delft plate. Prepare some rice, and then give it the bad news. Boil it quickly for five minutes, ignoring the shrieking. Get two kinds of offal (I suggest chicken livers and squid's testicles) and mash them severely, with garlic, in a pestle with a mortar. Do it the other way round if you can't handle unconventional approaches to cooking. They will be used for thickening purposes only. Add saffron if you can afford it, and nettles if you can't. Slice the pears and tomatoes in roughly equal proportions, though equal to what I don't know. Think on your feet. Stop thinking and put everything into a large colander, rinse, shake, and rattle and roll. Place in extremely large pan, approximately half the size of the known universe, and cook on a very low heat (approximately -200 degrees Kelvin) for some time, in fact for all time. When the big bang stops exploding and everything succeeds in successfully imploding into an infinitesimally small speck of very dense matter, called Roger, you will at least have something to serve your guests. And when the next big bang happens, as it surely must, future generations will at least have the makings of a good primordial stew.



Earl Kemp pickles

Stew In Hell

Get a big pot, the bigger the better, since it will have to withstand substantial heat, possibly upwards of 2,300 degrees Fahrenheit, which is well more than the heat at which fat renders (or indeed pots melt), so you probably won't be able to use fat. Use Old Nick's patented fat substitute which is a benzo-ethyl-chlorate derivative with a very high melting point, resembling asphalt, although, of course with a much higher melting point. Find a few lost souls (like the days, you will find they simply fly by), flay them, or if you're squeamish get the Head Chef (nudge nudge) to flay them for you. Ignore

their tormented screams. It will sound like the Nolan Sisters hyperventilating. Or possibly Westlife on valium. But fortunately these are ontological issues with which you need not be concerned. Apart from the horrible noise in your head. When the stew has curdled, mix in some fresh blood and gore, readily available, even in Hell, from the same Fresh Blood & Gore mobile kitchens that serve hamburgers and meat pies at football matches. (and their owners really wonder why they are in Hell?) Serve with a lobster that has been boiled to death. Boy, now you will really stew in Hell.

Failed Paella

Get the smallest paella pan you can find. You will, after all, only be making paella for twenty people. Strip out the remains of last week's paella (this may involve sand-blasting or the use of caustic chemicals). Be sure you light up the charcoal fire range well in advance, preferably two days. Visit the seafood counter of your local supermarket.

You may be confused by the range of rancid smelling seafood on display, but don't be taken aback.

Choose anything smaller than a midwife's wrist, and get at least four. Next choose your rice. There will be four hundred different makes of rice on display, unless you live in Grimsby, where, if you're lucky, there might be two. Don't feel threatened unless a member of staff actually comes over to you and threatens you. Then take their name, especially if it is Mark Denton, and he works for Sainsbury's in Harringay. If you can enter this into your Palm Pilot whilst you actually confront them, this will obviously earn you extra intimidation points, otherwise you will just have to accept you are one of those people who comes up with a retort several hours after the event. Now get on with it and choose your rice. Well look at that. That's nice rice. I think I'll use that rice.

Peel an onion and solidify it. Melt garlic beneath your tongue. Then spit it out or else nobody will talk to you in the morning.

Add bits of fish to the paella pan and swish them with oil and water. Add donkey juice. No, don't ask me where you can find this. A little man calls round every week and leaves three bottles on my porch, but I couldn't possibly disclose his name, or address (Lemuel Smith, 43 Swithins Bank, Chiswick, London W3X 6AB). Leave to simmer for three or possibly seven minutes, then serve. Your guests will probably have gone home by now, or back to their haciendas, or fincas, or wherever Italians live. Don't worry. Be Happy.

Next a recipe for Colostomy Bag Soup

(Editor: Sorry, I haven't got the guts to go through with this.)

Molly Coddle's Rissoles

(a recipe, not an 8mm porn loop)

Buy a shin of beef. If you can't get beef, get shin of ferret. No, better not. Discard the shin, or else donate it to a Shin Replacement Centre if you feel the need to perform one final charitable act before dying horribly of food poisoning. Dress meat sensibly, perhaps in a three-piece suit, but certainly not a Pierrot's costume, which will simply leave your rissoles open to ridicule.

Look for evidence of maggots. They will show the meat has been aged to perfection and is in prime condition for cooking. Throw it away and buy some slightly less old meat. Lambast it until it is tender and bruised but still retains its dignity and basic humility, especially if it is Italian. Now make rissoles. Buy a proper recipe book to learn how to do this. I can recommend Ernie Croke's *Riotous Rissoles*, published by Absolute Press, in conjunction with Colman's Mustard and Colonel Bustard's Prime Grated Jerk Pepper Dressing. I'm not much good on technical details, I'm afraid. I always thought a gill was something a fish had, not a unit of measurement. I'm safe with things like tea-cups. You don't see shoals of cod swimming about with tea-cups, after all, not unless you're experimenting with hallucinogenic substances.

Hey ho, isn't cooking fun, especially the programme I host on cable tv's Loser Channel, which due to cable connection problems, is only seen by three people in Pewsey in Wiltshire? And only by one of them if two of them choose to go out at the same moment and walk their dogs

Chitlins with Bayou Sauce

My mentor and ex-head cook at the Royal Free Hospital for Wounded Saints, Gaspard De La Nuit, once told me that chitlins were those bits of pig, which nobody liked to confess to having eaten, but which could nevertheless be cooked up in a big pot, with beans, black treacle, and a secret ingredient called cologne.

I assumed he was referring to lips, nails, snouts, jowls, and associated gristle, if not specifically squid-like rings cut from the lower bowel, which I'm perfectly happy to go with. Get a selection of these from your local chitlin shop. If you don't have a local chitlin shop, petition your local authority until they install one, (you are after all paying for it already

through your rates. See Amendment To The Local Authorities Act 1993 In Respect of Installing Chitlins Shops Out Of The Local Community Tax, as reported in Hansard, Vol XXXX1, No 19). This will probably take several years, so in the meantime, try the local Mumin Everything For A Pound Shop, but of course they will only have cheap batteries, tights, and blank VHS tapes, plastic necklaces, rubber sandals, and sets of tin spoons. They might also have chitlins, at least if the shop in Green Lanes is anything to go by, but you will have to ask for them from under the counter, and they will probably turn out to be illegally imported Chinese New Year firecrackers. No matter, get what you can get and put into a huge dustbin. Yes, just do it. I don't want to argue with you.

Prepare the Bayou sauce by opening a sachet of Tony Joe White's Authentic Bayou Sauce (250 grams), and smear it over your food and then over your chest before igniting. Retribution will follow, especially if you've forgotten to include a stamped addressed return envelope. If you feel you've been short-changed you can apply to the short-change Ombudsman. It won't do you any good; he spends most of his time on a kibbutz in Israel, and doesn't like to be cold-called, so there you go.

Cartledge's Muffin Relish

Get some muffins from your local baker or else buy a pack of designer muffins endorsed by a famous tv chef from your local supermarket at a highly inflated price. Now get some capers, some Stilton, some gooseberries and a jar of Mrs. Earl Kemp's Kosher silverskin onions.

Waft all the ingredients with essence of smoked salmon and smatter with a shredded vanilla pod. Hang the muffins up on tenterhooks and direct a Phillips Heat Ray lamp at them from a distance of two inches. They will soon wilt. If they don't, discard them, for they will surely snuggle into diverticular pouches in your lower colon later in your life and cause you gastric pain early in the morning. I may not be a doctor, but I am an old person whose bowels are shot and I know how it works.

Meanwhile mash the relish and pass through the steam condenser of a Beyer-Garrett 0-0-333-060-333-0-0 locomotive, although that may also be a fax address for a salami supplier in Bolivia. Strain the juices into a Beleek moustache cup and smear over those muffins that have survived. Enjoy.

Afterword

I hope that Earl Kemp, in publishing this article in his fanzine, will at last have achieved the one memorable thing he always believed he would one day live to achieve in fan publishing. Cheers, Earl.



Frank Lunney all-purpose starter kit

1492. The teachers told the children that this was when the continent was discovered by human beings. Actually, millions of human beings were already living full and imaginative lives on the continent in 1492. That was simply the year in which sea pirates began to cheat and rob and kill them.

—Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions*

Lawrence Block's "Part of the Job"

by Lynn Munroe

My friend Tony Jacobs, who runs Sideshow Books, the best independent bookstore in Los Angeles, asked me to write something about Donald E. Westlake for his upcoming vintage paperbacks website. I included a checklist of all of Westlake's short story magazine appearances. The list included "The Rape of Rodney Royal" as by Edwin West in the June 1966 issue of *Dapper*, a short-lived and now obscure girlie magazine. Remembering that story got me thinking about the now-forgotten fiction in *Dapper*. Could there be other Westlake stories hidden away in those back issues?

Finding fiction in such magazines is like archeology. In the 1960s, everybody who cared knew those stories were there to be read and enjoyed. But then as the years went by, and the dust gathered on those stacks of old magazines, the stories were as good as buried, forgotten. There is no *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* for *Dapper*. A story in a 1967 *Esquire* can be looked up at any good library. A story in a 1967 *Dapper* can not. If it weren't for back issue magazine collectors and dealers, it would stay buried. When we unearth a "lost" story, we have only rediscovered something that was always there, waiting to be found again. We are raiders of the lost archives. And so I ordered a few issues of *Dapper* from that era from a magazine dealer, and although there was no more Westlake, I was surprised to discover a story by his friend, Lawrence Block in the December 1967 issue.



Lynn Munroe



The surprise was I didn't recognize the story. Block had published *Enough Rope: The Complete Short Stories of Lawrence Block* collecting all his mainstream stuff, and *One Night Stands & Lost Weekends* collecting his earliest stories and men's magazine work. And "Part of the Job" was not collected in either of them. So maybe it was an abridgement of one of his novels. Like a lot of authors, Block would occasionally release a magazine version of one of his books. A quick read of the short-short "Part of the Job" proved it wasn't from any of the novels. It had to be a forgotten story.

The next time Mr. Block came to town for a book signing I showed him a copy. At first he didn't recognize it, but as he has told us, he read it that night and it rang a bell. So here is a bona fide lost Lawrence Block mystery thriller. The man has been writing nonstop for half a century, not only brilliantly under his own name but also under 20 or so pen names in a variety of styles and genres. It makes sense that some small story might fall through the cracks. The only question is: how many more stories are out there, buried, waiting to be unearthed?

In the only love story he [Kilgore Trout] ever attempted, "Kiss Me Again," he had written, "There is no way a beautiful woman can live up to what she looks like for any appreciable length of time." The moral at the end of that story is this: Men are jerks. Women are psychotic.

—Kurt Vonnegut, *Timequake*

Part of the Job*

By Lawrence Block

Introduction:

In May of 2011 I was in Orange, California, signing copies of *A Drop of the Hard Stuff* at Book Carnival. Lynn Munroe, the dealer/collector with a vast knowledge of midcentury genre fiction and erotica, turned up with a couple of rarities for

me to sign. And he showed me a copy of the December 1967 issue of a magazine called *Dapper*. “There’s a story of yours in here,” he said.

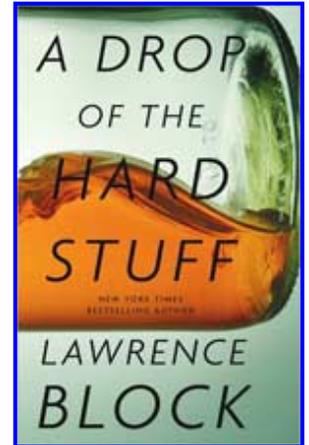
Oh?

I looked at the story, and it had my name on it. I didn’t recognize the title, and I knew I’d never had a story in *Dapper*. Far as I could remember, I’d never even laid eyes on a copy of the magazine.

I gave “Part of the Job” a very quick scanning, and it didn’t ring any kind of a bell. At the same time, I didn’t spot any sentences that I could swear I hadn’t written. (Sometimes, you know, you can tell. Back in the early 1960s, I wrote pseudonymous erotic novels for publishers like Midwood and Nightstand under names like Sheldon Lord and Andrew Shaw, and I also licensed those pen names to ghostwriters. I’ve lately been reissuing some of those works as ebooks—for as surely as rock breaks scissors and paper covers rock, so does avarice trump almost everything. But I’ll only bring out those books I wrote myself, and I rarely have to look at more than a page or two to see my own hand at work, or be certain of its absence.)

“Well, it could be mine,” I told Lynn. “I have absolutely no recollection of it, but at the same time I can’t rule it out.”

“I bought two copies,” he said magnanimously, “and one’s for you. I figured you didn’t have the magazine, or you would have included the story in *One Night Stands & Lost Weekends*.”



That was a collection of my earliest work, and “Part of the Job” would have fit in perfectly—if it was mine and if I’d had a clue it existed.

I read the story that night in my hotel room. By the time I’d finished, I was willing to acknowledge the story as my own work. There was not a line in it I couldn’t have written, and there were phrases and sentences that sounded to me like my own voice. Moreover, I saw the ending coming—in a way that suggested I had had a hand in devising it.

But how could I have so utterly forgotten it?

#

I know when I must have written the story. It would have been in late 1962 or early 1963, when I was living on Ebling Avenue in Tonawanda. I’d been writing stories for the crime magazines since 1957, when I’d made my first sale (“You Can’t Lose”) to *Manhunt*. Sometime in ’62 I managed to sell a story to *AHMM*, and that encouraged me to write several more with that market in mind. Some of them sold. One that did not, I’m reasonably certain, was “Part of the Job.”



It is, as you’ll see, not a terribly complicated story. I’m sure the basic idea occurred to me, and once it did I sat down and wrote it. Since then I’ve learned to live with an idea for a little while, giving the subconscious a chance to develop it, but back then I would take the idea straight to the typewriter and stand up an hour or two later with a finished manuscript. Short stories were done of an evening; the daytime hours were devoted to the production of twenty or more pages of a novel.

So the story wasn’t on my mind for very long before it was in the mail to my agent. It would have gone to *AHMM*—I believe the magazine was edited in Florida back then—and I wouldn’t have necessarily been notified that it failed to sell, but after that happened my agent would have sent it somewhere else.

And so on.

And then, in late ’63 or early ’64, my agent and I split the blanket. I represented myself for a few months, and then got another agent, and moved to Wisconsin to take an editorial job with Western Printing. I was there for a year and a half, wrote some books nights and weekends, and returned to the New York area to resume writing full-time with a new agent.

So what happened to “Part of the Job”? I can only guess that it was on some editor’s desk when that first agent returned my unsold manuscripts to me, and that it kept getting sent out even though I was no longer a client. (That particular agent wasn’t overly scrupulous about that sort of thing.) And somewhere down the line it went to *Dapper*, which would have been a market of last resort, and someone there bought it. And paid \$50 for it, I would guess, which never found its way to me. (The agent in question wasn’t overly scrupulous about that, either.) I never learned of the sale, I never got paid for the sale, and but for Lynn Munroe’s good work, you wouldn’t be reading it today.

It’s not much of a story, and I have to say the story about it is better than the story itself. But here’s the part I really like: It’s appearing now, at long last, in the magazine for which it was originally written. And here’s the part I like even better: I’m getting paid for it!

#

“Walters has gone over,” Jondahl said. He was cleaning his glasses with a specially impregnated tissue. “His was a very sensitive position, you know. He had access to his department’s most important plan. Took a copy of it and ran with it.” He crumpled the tissue, studied the lenses, put the glasses on and looked across the desk at me. “Now he’ll peddle it to the highest bidder.”

“It’s important?”

“Vital. Walters thinks he’s clear. He’s not. Security’s had an eye on him for months, waiting for something like this. He’s been followed, went to ground in a cheap hotel. The hotel’s under surveillance.” Jondahl looked at me, his glance apologetic. “You have to get to him before the competition does. You see that, of course.”

“We want the plan back, I suppose.”

“More than that. Walters was in a sensitive spot. I told you that. The plan is on paper. It’s in his head as well. He could hurt us.”

“So I have to hurt him first.”

Jondahl grunted. He passed me an airline ticket folder. “Your flight’s in three hours. Don’t suppose you’ll want to pack much. You can return as soon as you’ve made contact.”

“Good word for it.”

“Well. You know the game, of course. Walters knew the rules too, you might keep that in mind. He knew the risks, evidently felt the rewards justify them. Money, glory, whatever he wants. Whatever such people think they want. Well. You’ll recover the plan, you’ll deal with Walters, you’ll return as soon as possible. It’s your job.”

“Grand job.”

He looked at me. “Somebody has to do it. I don’t say it’s fun, but it needs doing. Most people barely know we exist, but—”

“They sleep better at night because we do our job.”

“Well,” he said.

I went back to my flat and packed a bag. I knew Walters, a nervous young man with brooding eyes and a high forehead. I had played chess with him several times, and once we had had lunch together. I wondered what made that sort of man decide to go over.

A taxi took me to the airport. I carried my one bag onto the plane. The flight was smooth and generally uneventful. The stewardess declined my dinner invitation, then sent me wistful looks suggesting that she might change her mind if I asked her again. I didn’t.

The plane touched down a half hour after sunset. I lugged my bag into the terminal building and dropped a dime into the telephone slot. I dialed and the phone was answered on the third ring. I said, “Marriage has many pains.”

“Celibacy has no pleasures.”

“Marvellous,” I said.

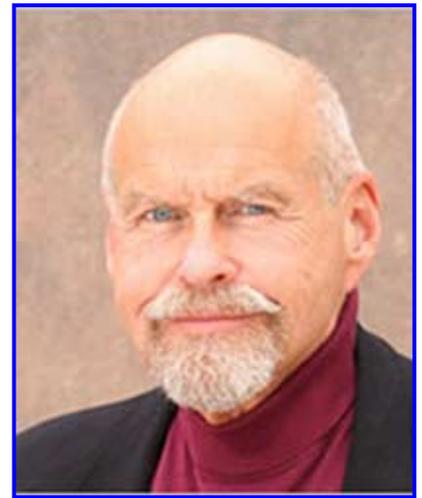
“We’ve made a reservation for you at his hotel. His room is 412. He’s not in it at the moment. He’s at dinner. We have two men on him. He didn’t meet anyone for dinner.”

“Good.”

“We believe he has someone coming to see him tomorrow morning. Perhaps earlier.”

I hung up and checked to see if they had returned my dime by mistake. They did once, years ago, and ever since I’ve looked for them to repeat this error. I took a taxi to Walters’ hotel. It was seedy. The lobby carpet was threadbare and all the furniture prewar. I signed in at the desk. The clerk punched a bell, and we waited in silence until a bellhop finally appeared. He escorted me to a room on the second floor. I had no change. I gave him a dollar and watched him gape at it. After he went away I put my clothes in the dresser, slipped the gun in one pocket and the ice pick in another. Then I walked past the elevator and climbed two flights of stairs and found 412. I knocked and no one came.

The lock was laughable. I slipped the bolt with a strip of celluloid, let myself in. I gave the room a toss. The plan didn’t turn up, and I gave up and parked myself in a chair. I might have looked more carefully but didn’t care to make a mess. Jondahl would want this one to look like natural causes. If it was just a question of recovering the plan I would have tossed the room thoroughly and been gone before Walters returned, but since a confrontation was inevitable I decided to save myself the work and worry and let Walters find it for me.



Lawrence Block

Evidently he liked a leisurely dinner. I sat in the chair for half an hour before I heard his footsteps in the hall, then his key in the lock. I moved to the side of the door, and when he came through it I put the gun in the small of his back. He gasped and I kicked the door shut and bolted it. I said, “Hello, Walters. The plan, if you don’t mind.”

“My God.” He looked at me, his mouth trembling. “Please. I never thought—”

“You never thought you’d be caught. No one ever does. I want the plan and then I’ll be going. That’s all.”

“I could cut you in.”

“The plan, Walters.”

“I’d give you half. One hell of a lot of money, all of it cash, and no one would have to know you took it.”

“I’m loyal. I don’t bite the hand that feeds me.”

“Loyal!” He looked at the gun, then at me again. “Loyal. My God, you’re not human.”

“If that’s an insult, it’s the sort I can live with. The plan, and then I don’t care what you do.”

He may not have believed me. But there wasn’t much else to believe. It turned out that the plan was still in his suitcase, tucked between the lining and the frame. I looked it over, and it was what I was after.

“What’s that?”

“Where?”

I pointed, and he looked, and I hit him back of the ear, just hard enough to knock him out and not hard enough to leave a

bruise that would make anybody wonder. He fell face downward. I rolled him over and stuck the icepick into a nostril and on into the brain. A heart attack, or, if they checked more carefully, a brain hemorrhage. It was a brain hemorrhage.

The body remained undiscovered when I checked out early the next morning. I had breakfast on the plane. When I tossed the report on Jondahl's desk he glanced at it, smiled at me. "And the contact?"

"Clean and neat."

"Excellent. A good job."

"Oh?"

My face bothered him. "You did well," he said. "Take the rest of the week off."

"I intend to."

"Good. Get some sunshine, catch up on your sleep. This was just part of the job, you know that. You know what this—" he tapped the sheaf of papers "—would mean to our competitors."

"Yes."

"A detailed report of our fall merchandising program. Advertising, promotion, packaging, distribution, price structure. Everything." He smiled at me. "I'm recommending a bonus for you. You've got a fine future. General Household Products is a grateful employer."

"And I'm a loyal employee," I said. I went outside to get some fun.

*Reprinted from *Dapper*, December 1967 and *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, March 2012, with the permission of Lawrence Block.

In this era of big brains, anything that can be done will be done—so hunker down.
—Kilgore Trout

Behind the scenes of the 1963 TAFF race

The TAFF letters to Ethel Lindsay

By Ron Ellik

Assembled and with running commentary
by Rob Hansen.

Over the years, I've become the repository for all manner of fannish material left behind when people gafiate or pass on. Among this material is a file of correspondence relating to TAFF, the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund (see <http://taff.org.uk/Index.html>). These were sent to first Ethel Lindsay and then Arthur 'ATom' Thomson, and cover the period 1962-1966. I've had the file for years but never really looked inside it until I had occasion recently to trawl through it for anything I could find on the 1965 WorldCon, in the course of which I discovered that the file started off with a sheaf of letters from Ron Ellik to Ethel Lindsay, at the time the US and UK TAFF administrators respectively. These were written over the course of a year between 1962 and 1963.



Rob Hansen

I started reading the letters on my daily commute into work and discovered that they hold together as a chatty and revealing look behind the scenes of the campaign to find a US fan to attend the 1964 Eastercon, and the start of the next to find a UK fan to attend the 1964 WorldCon. They have only ever been seen by Ron, Ethel, Arthur, and myself but are, I think, deserving of a wider audience.

At the time he wrote the letters, Ellik—who had the nickname “squirrel”—was sharing an address at 1825 Greenfield Avenue, Los Angeles 25, with fellow LA fan Al Lewis, handling distribution for LASFS (the Los Angeles Science fiction Society) clubzine *Shangri-L'Affaires* (aka “Shaggy”), and about to launch his own frequent newszine, *Starspinkle*. Ellik had won the previous west-to-east TAFF race and attended the 1962 Eastercon in Harrogate as TAFF delegate. Ethel Lindsay (editor of *Scottishe* and *Haverings*) had won the most recent east-to-west TAFF race and attended the 1962 WorldCon in Chicago as TAFF delegate.



The first letter from Ron in the file was sent to Joe Gibson, Len Moffatt, and Ethel Lindsay (I don't know who “Robbie” was, but Earl Kemp tells me she was Roberta, Mrs. Joe Gibson) and finds him both concerned at the state of TAFF, and much vexed by a recent development:

#

29 October 1962

Joe, Robbie, Ethel, and Len:

I am in receipt of masses of missives through the kind agency of Len, who can't seem to be brief. Len, I must acquaint you someday with the art of chitter-chatter, that is the loquaciousness of a squirrel which allows one to use three words where one would do, and yet not be tedious about it. Elmer Perdue calls it logolollia, a word which is not in my *Webster's 2nd*. In its polished form this could teach you to write letters as long as the recent tome, and yet in such a form that I would be induced to finish it. At present you are author of many words I've never waded through, Sir, and should learn that brevity is the soul of readability.

And acting upon my own doctrines I'll attempt brevity:

Speaking as TAFF—I preface myself this way because I *have* to speak in my semi-official capacity—I must stand up in dismay at the thought of anyone talking Donaho out of standing for TAFF. In fact, if Donaho is talked out of standing, I'll be forced to do my damndest to talk him back *into* it.

TAFF can't have a one-man election. If only one candidate stands, there is no choice—fandom has no vote—the entire concept of electing a popular fan is reduced to a farce. We don't want TAFF to become a special fund for popular fans simply because no fan is popular with everybody; not just Rick—who would perhaps be the most widely popular fan today—but *any* fan is unimportant to some fans, unknown to many, and unpopular with *someone*.

If TAFF were intended to be a fund for one individual, it would have been made that way. Remember, it sprang from the Willis and Big Pond Funds, both projects designed to bring one choice over; it was changed from that for the simple reason that fandom wants a choice.

If Bill Donaho can beat Rick Sneary that means that fandom wants Bill Donaho more than they want Rick Sneary, it also means disappointment to the loser, and in the present circumstance it becomes a very strong sip of wormwood to Rick's friends—but standing for TAFF means accepting the possibility of defeat and the challenge of a hard-fought campaign against other fans who are at least in the same range of popularity. Willis, Berry, Ella—they had no competition. If you want Rick to have none you have to start a special fund for him.

And the extra money to fly Rick to England will have to be handled as Joe wants it—separate from TAFF. And I think it's going to get mighty complicated, because nobody will know how Rick's campaign is going until the last day in September when Ethel and I count the ballots. But I'm all in favor of it, and wish you every chance at success.

And of course you want competition—lots of it. You not only have to get Rick elected, you have to hand him a healthy interest in the Fund on the part of general fandom, tickled into something more vital than apathy by the spark and work of a vigorous campaign. I want five candidates, and will do everything I can to get them.

Yours, Ron Ellik

I hope you agree with my rather strongly-expressed sentiments, Ethel—if not, please write me immediately and we'll talk about this at length, you and me. I feel rather strongly about seeing TAFF brought back to life with active campaigning and electioneering, and hope I can convince others to feel the same.

Love, Ron

#

Obviously that last bit was only included in Lindsay's copy of the letter. Willis, Berry, and Ella were Walt Willis, John Berry, and Ella Parker, all of whom had been the beneficiaries of one-off fan funds set up to bring them to the US. In Willis' case he had *twice* been the beneficiary of such funds, the second bringing him and wife Madeleine over for 1962's ChiCon III, the same WorldCon Ethel Lindsay was at. The Big Pond Fund had been the very first such fund

and had brought E.J. 'Ted' Carnell over from England to attend the 1949 WorldCon in Cincinnati (see <http://www.fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/THEN%20Archive/1949Worldcon/BigPond.htm>)

30 October 1962

Joe Gibson,

Carbons to Ken Potter, Larry Shaw, Don Ford, Ethel Lindsay (let Ella see it, there's a dear) , Len Moffatt, and Bill Donaho.

You are costing me a lot of postage, Joe, but you haven't convinced me of a thing. Not a damned thing.

My letter of yesterday has undoubtedly crossed in the mails with your letter of the 27th, and I wish it had got there sooner—Big Bill's nominators would have been spared all this paper ...I hope.

You forgot one point in your letter, Joe. You forgot to name a single reason why Rick Sneary—or *anyone* - deserves to have TAFF handed to him on a platter. Or are you only going to permit weak candidates to oppose him?

Bill Donaho is one of the strongest possible choices to stand for TAFF this year; Rick Sneary is another. There is no reason why fandom should be prevented from choosing between them—and I consider it more than just desirable that they both stand.

TAFF is damned near dead right now, Joe—it's being carried an inertia, awaiting another vigorous campaign to bring it back to life, to remind fans that they have an interest in voting for their choice, be they host or sending countrymen. The worst thing to happen to TAFF since it started was Eney's withdrawal when Terry Carr announced his candidacy in 1958; this has set a precedent of half of fandom lining up on one side and half of fandom lining up on the other, and the result is a vicious contest between the supporters. *I know*—the contest between Ellikmen and Eneyemen in 1961 got dirty, and made both Eney and me testy about each other...when we really had nothing to worry about personally since both of *us* were playing fair.

You are trying to do a worse thing to TAFF, Joe, you are trying to give it to one fan with no competition, to hand him a Rick Sneary Fund without letting fandom assure him that he's wanted by electing him over strong competition.

I know, I know: If you permit strong competition, you allow the possibility of a loss, Damnit, that's what TAFF is for; if I had been guaranteed a win during my campaign, I wouldn't have tried to win and I wouldn't have loved the victory so much. And I guarantee you, had I been assured a loss, I wouldn't have gone near the thing.

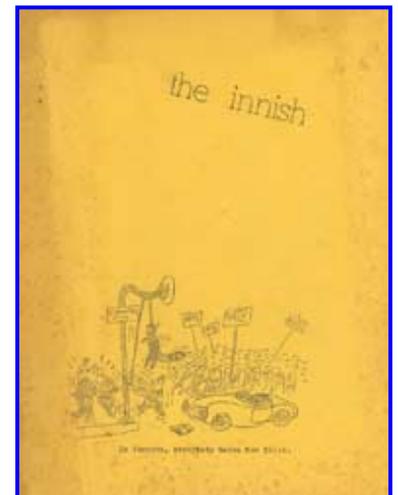
Donaho isn't assured of winning; neither is Rick. And if I can do it, I'll have three other candidates up for election by the end of February. If I can't, I'll close nominations with only Donaho and Rick up—but by Klono, Sir, I will not close the nominations with only one candidate available. If February ends with one candidate filed, I will hold nominations open until we have at least two, and I'm just likely to take it as a personal challenge and do my damndest to get a good, *strong* runner at the last minute.

It's talking for TAFF now, Joe, and I mean it. If you haven't got any better reason for Donaho to withdraw than that you think Rick deserves TAFF, I'm asking you to back out of it. And I want Donaho to write to his nominators and reassure them that he wants to stand; because, I have one signature for him now, and am keeping him on the slate until I hear differently.

Very sincerely, Ron Ellik

#

In December, Ellik launched *Starspinkle*.



From *Starspinkle* #1 (17 December 1962):

Between Christmas and New Year's, Peggy Rae McKnight will arrive in LA to spend Goddard College's two-month winter work spell here... For all you people who have biscuit batter in your ears, Peg and I have a projected wedding in August.

#

27 December 62

Dear Ethel,

Merry Christmas and so forth, old artichoke; I just got the yuletide issue of *G2* sent first class, and I assume that your copy would go airmail, meaning you have probably already read it through two or three times. Naturally, we have to have the same reaction....

My thought is that Gibson is doing a whirlwind job and doing it very well. The only thing wrong that has come out of this is Donaho's stepping down—but according to both Bill and Joe (and who else can we ask?) Bill would have stepped down the moment he found Rick was running. Can't blame Gibson for that, can we?

I haven't heard from Rick yet—I expect a phone call momentarily, or a letter any day, but I think I'll hold off until I see him next, and not push the question myself. No man can refuse to run for TAFF under these circumstances—but, well, Ethel, Rick Sneary is one of the stubbornest men I know.

As you probably know, the Gibsons were in the LA area last weekend, on a flying visit to talk to Rick and Len, take in the Turner party Saturday night, and drive back to the Bay Area. They might have accomplished a minor miracle—Noshabkeming knows that Joe has already accomplished two or three minor miracles, and ought to be struck off a medal for this year's work—and Rick might now be ready to stand for TAFF.

How the hell can he refuse in the face of that magazine? Sigh.

#

My personal opinion is that Joe ought to receive the loud, thanks of the Fund—you and me, I guess, even if it's a heavy weight—and all the help we can give him in any way he likes. He may well have the Fund on its feet again with a few things like this—he certainly has presented, in two issues of a single fanzine, more controversial and well-thought-out material about TAFF than I have ever seen, in any fanzine, at any time, or perhaps more even than I have seen in all fanzines, put together.

I think TAFF ought to thank him and offer to work toward its own re-organization with advice from him; however, that's just a pile of words, and we really can't *do* anything except run the elections and pile up money. My part of the Fund hasn't moved in many months, by the way—it is still exactly four hundred dollars. There has been no word from Chicago about any donation,

Starspinkle will begin next issue to campaign for TAFF candidates; if nobody files before the end of February, I intend to hold the nominations open. If only Rick files (he hasn't yet, you know—if he files with you, please shoot me an airletter so specifying) I still intend to hold them open until at least one other person files. Trust this meets with your approval.

And of course it's London in '65.

Yours, Ron



#

In fact, Sneary never did file, leaving Ellik even more worried....

From *Starspinkle* #2 (3 January 1963):

TAFF for 1964 looks like more work than you might have thought. At this writing, no one has filed a nomination with either Ethel Lindsay or me, and the deadline is 28 February. You need to want to go to England for the Easter 1964 convention, with other travel up to you; you need the signatures of three U.S. fans, two Trans-Atlantic fans, and your own signature, with a \$5 (1/15/7d sterling) bond to ensure that you will make the trip if elected; and a platform of one hundred words, to be published as your campaign on the reverse of the TAFF ballot. All this must be sent to either of the two Administrators of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund: myself at the editorial address, or Ethel Lindsay, 6 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey, England.

Note that there are no other requirements than the above; you need not have been a fan for a specified number of years, have published a fanzine, have ever attended a convention, or know the first damned thing about sportscars. If you don't want to stand, why don't you get your own first choice to run? The winner will be U.S. Administrator thereafter, and will be given \$500 and a Brag lesson.

#

19 January 1963

Deaxx Ethel,—boy, that's a typo for you! Instead of "Dear Ethel," I typed "Death Ethel". Forgive me?

To date, nobody has filed for TAFF. Damnit, I'm getting worried—I know that it will take a while for the Gibson stuff and my *Starspinkle* article to take effect, but I'd sure feel a lot better if somebody wrote to me in Monday's mail with word of a candidate.

When February bursts upon us in all his splendor, I am going to start beating the bushes. If you don't object, I'm going to write personal letters to as many active fans as I can address envelopes to...all saying STAND, OR FIND SOMEBODY TO STAND. Each letter will be different—fitted to the person involved, fitted to get him to get his best friend to go for it. I'll send you carbons—I only said "if you don't object" because I hate to act without asking someone else's advice...I really can't think of any possible objection.

But what do we do if nobody stands? I mean, I know what we do—we keep the nominations open until it's too late to run a fair election, and then we calmly announce that fandom doesn't want to send anybody to England which is the purpose of TAFF—and so TAFF isn't going to send anybody to England this year; and in the second place, that if we don't get a candidate or two up for the 1964 WorldCon in America, TAFF might just as well shoot itself.

Or something. It'll be one hell of a note, won't it?

I have still had no word from Chicago. Since there's no urgency about money, I am not going to bug Earl for anything—but at the Discon I'm going to buy him a drink and cuss him out something regal.

A thought: If Chicago never does give TAFF any money, we will face the next trip with \$400 (or a little more—whatever the dickens I'm supposed to have, anyway, plus the thirty bob you hold) and whatever D.C. gives us. That'll be just enough for that damned trip—and a hundred or so left over.

That's not enough for two trips in 1964, love. Even with cash from Chicago we'll be strapped—since as things stand now they must have just barely made a profit, and will probably give us only \$200 if they give anything.

I think I'm going to spend part of this year thinking of ways to pick up an extra hundred or two for TAFF. I have some ideas...if you can do anything, please do. The Britcon this Easter should be good for at least twenty pounds—it's well publicized well in advance, and near enough to London to be easily accessible, so Slater should cut a wide profit. Talk to him in advance and soften him up for the idea of giving us a few ounces or gallons or whatever you measure money in... but don't try to commit him to a definite figure, because con chairman are notoriously and justifiably worried about not ever breaking even, and he won't want to commit himself until the shoutin' and yellin' is over.



Ethel Lindsay and Arthur Thomson in 1960.
Courtesy Peter Weston Collection.

Talked to Pelz the other day about ATom and Jeeves; he says he asked Jeeves to think about standing because ATom definitely said no...mentioning what you mentioned, that he couldn't afford it. I suggested to Bruce the ATom fund, which he likes muchly, and also suggested he find two Americans and three English fans to nominate Jeeves...if Terry is willing to travel, let's hook him, NOW not after the nominations open for the East-to-West trip. If you can grab a friend of his and get this started, do so.

Yes, Bruce is behind ATom. If he can get him to stand, he'll work like the dickens for him; he only asked Jeeves, as I said, as a second choice. Also because he would like to see a bursting slate of candidates for the first time in a long time.

Till sixty-five, then, Ron

#

By 'the Britcon', Ellik was referring to the Eastercon, the annual UK national convention, and at that point the *only* science fiction convention held in the country. In 1963 this was called Bullcon and held in Peterborough. Con Chairman was Ken Slater.

The letter below is to F.M. 'Buz' Busby, and Ellik refers to Ethel as 'sister Lindsay' because she was by profession a nurse and that was her professional title. Franson is Don Franson.

#

5 February 1963

Dear Buz, with carbon to Sister Lindsay:

Since TAFF has no letterhead or receipt form, this'll have to serve as official acknowledgement of your five dollars (\$5.00, or 1/8/6d, for Ethel) as a deposit on Wally Weber. (Oh, and unofficially of your one dollar (\$1.00, or 7/2d) for *Starspinkle*, you'll get to & including issue 16.)

To take up points as they seem salient:

Except when Peggy Rae wants to attend, I avoid LASFS meetings of late (ever since I was director) to avoid boredom or annoyance—nothing, but *nothing* happens at LASFS. So I probably wouldn't have seen Franson before you forwarded the five, because he seldom gets to meetings and the odds are against us going the same nights. Haven't seen Franson since—? Oh, maybe election-night, the end of last year.

Since she will be ballot-recipient for the fans trans-marine, I don't see how Ethel can stand up as supporting any one candidate; I remember Don Ford said he saw nothing wrong with an administrator supporting or even nominating a candidate (or maybe he just said supporting...it's a fine point) but each brace of sovereigns makes their own rules. If Ethel sees nothing wrong with nominating Wally, I'll wink at it...but I betcha somebody'll complain, and then where'll we be? Ella and John Barry would be superb nominators, if John was interested—surely there are no dearth of fans to stand up for Wally.

That 100-word platform jazz is a sonofabitch, colleague, and you have to watch yourself with every single one of the hundred—remember Kent Corey's platform, in which he nominated himself because he was such a nice guy? That's an extreme, but platforms have a hell of a lot to do with the campaign—they should describe your candidate sufficiently so that someone who doesn't know *any* of the candidates can make a fairly intelligent decision on the basis of the flip side of the ballot. Remember, everybody else will be padding the truth a little bit—but remember, also, that platform will be intensely scrutinized by whomever is your opposition. Good luck.

Yes, I need a signed statement by Wally that he will travel if elected, barring acts of God or fungus of the tongue or

something. This is pretty minor—the money and signature are only token bonds of interest in the campaign to prevent random nobodies from seeing their names up for vote just for the hell of it.

As far as I can see, you've covered everything. If I think of some bit of minutiae you've left out, I'll say so. Heck, I even gave G.M. Carr a chance not to be thrown out of FAPA...I'm the most easy-going guy I know.

Besides, we need candidates. Wally is the first to file, and—well, if nobody else files I don't see how we can have a TAFF race.

And you?

Ron

#

5 February 1963

Ethel:

Wally is the first (only, to date) to file for TAFF. I have his five dollars, as indicated overpage, and Buz says I can expect five signatures, a platform, and signature in a matter of...well, in plenty of time, he says.

For your information only, I should mention that other people are being asked to stand for TAFF: Bob Tucker, Marion Bradley, and Bruce Pelz have been asked. I am getting a lot of help from local fans in starting TAFF campaigns at this late date—things look a lot better. Since we don't know which of these fans will respond affirmatively, I wish you'd not mention their names to anyone.

Since Wally has not filed as yet, he is not yet a candidate, strictly speaking. Perhaps this also means that he should be included as a DNQandidate.

That \$5 is the first money TAFF's gotten in ... hell, months. Since Harrogate, I guess.

What order forms are you talking about in yours of Jan 25th? If you have forms to distribute, you should be talking other means than *Starspinkle* because of its extremely limited circulation. We would be happy to run anything of that sort with *Shangri-L'Affaires*, however...publication date is the end of this month, circulation 235, covering a very representative cross-section of fandom, as you can tell from the material and the letters therein. Send me one sheet, and we'll reproduce it on the LASFSrex for our use, saving you postage and time.

Do not use Art Hayes for anything, please, as a favor to me. He is doing his damndest to drag Al Lewis through a lot of muck, and I'd rather not do him any favors. If you want to distribute anything to the N3F, why, you could do it with *Tightbeam* (the official letterzine, publication date the tenth of March, editors Bill Mallardi and Bill Bowers)—remember that Hayes' fanzine is not official.

Howard DeVore says a Chicago final report will not be forthcoming, but *The Proceedings* is on the way. This is not official—just through Howard.

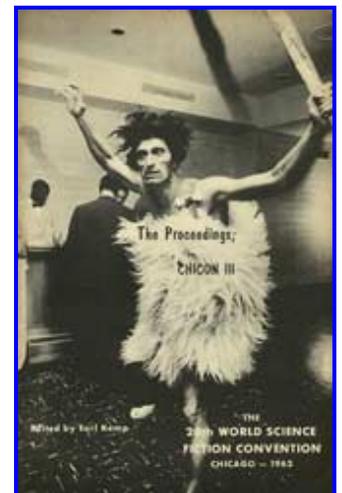
Congratulations on getting down to your trip report so early—as you can probably tell I am writing ten or twelve pages of mine as each issue of *Shaggy* is ready to be stenciled, and it's suffering a little from it...I kind of wish I had written it all down when I got back.

See you at London, Ron

#



Ron "Squirrel" Ellik in his squirrel costume. (Date, location, photographer unknown.)



25 February 1963

Ethel,

I just realized I've overlooked one important thing—keeping in touch with you.

I've been going to school three nights a week, you see, and trying to keep up with Peggy Rae for the past two months, and working between times...and for the past week I've been writing the third installment of my TAFF report (*Shaggy 64* will be out with it next week: glad to hear yours is coming so well, and I wish *I* could be as verbose).

Now, memory tells me that I have an unanswered letter from you, but I can't find it. I think it was your response to my answer to Busby, re Weber—in which case, as I recall, all you said was that you approved thoroughly and agreed that you were a poor choice as nominator, since you're a ballot counter.

Today I have Wally's nomination complete, with Busby, Franson, Donaho, Ella, and Madeleine Willis as signers. I already have the \$5. Busby included a statement of willingness to travel, signed by Weber, and a one-hundred word platform. Everything is okay, and he is a full-fledged candidate.

Two problems: (1) Do you agree with me that we cannot close the race on one candidate? If we do, you know, we are just giving it to Wally, no competition, no voting, no nothing. I think it's obvious that we **MUST** keep it open until we have at least two candidates. Please feel free to express yourself on this; if you object in any way, tell me.

(2) I would like to keep the race open until a specified time, and then close it, and declare no competition, and **NOT** send Wally. Now that he's been fully nominated, this is awfully sticky—but we just can't *give* it to him. The date I have picked as optimum is 30 April 1963—this gives us the minimum possible time for a whirlwind campaign, to close 31 October (instead of 30 September as planned last year), with the UK-to-US race opening 1 September at the convention.

If you want to alter this, we will do so; the only announcements of it are going out to a handful of fans, and can be retracted easily. But I want to put it in *Starspinkle* this issue (will send your copy airmail) and would like you to shoot me back a reply by return air (a reply to this letter, I mean, not to *Starspinkle*) if you object.

Now, I'm sorry things have gotten this tight without me writing you. I've been busy organizing campaigns for Lichtman and Marion Bradley, work I don't think I should be doing—but nobody else is going to get off their behind to do it and we need candidates.

The deadline is upon us—by the end of this month (a frightening short time from now) we ought to be able to announce something.

As I said, *Starspinkle* and the other lot who will know about it will be minimal—less than 125, total, all of whom I have close contact with. Any change you want will be slammed in on top of my announcement.

Item: The one reason I have gone ahead with such confidence is that you haven't objected yet to the idea of holding the nominations open and closing them if there are less than two candidates, If you objected, I thought you would have said so before now, so I am 99% sure you'll agree this time.

Let's hear from you, Ron

#

31 March 1963

Dear Ethel,



Well, a month of the extended deadline is now past, and we have two full-blown candidates. Wally Weber and Marion Z, Bradley have both been thoroughly nominated and will appear on the ballot.

Bob Lichtman had to withdraw; after much soul-searching he decided he can't take a semester from his college work...he had too much trouble going back to school the last time he took a leave. I kicked him across the room for this—but I agree thoroughly that school is more important than TAFF. He is writing to his nominators, apologizing—if Bruce Burn or George Locke haven't heard from him, you might mention it when you see them.

He was completely nominated, too, damn it. Had *six* signatures.

Bruce Pelz is working toward a campaign—but of course this needs to be DNQ until he gets it completed. He lacks one US signature—there are plenty of localities willing to sign for him, but he's angling for an eastern fan, or a midwestern. People are so darned slow at these things.

I have over twenty-five orders for your report, all pre-paid. Let me know if you want the names now, or at date of publication—I'm keeping the whole thing in a special manila envelope signally marked for easy location on my desk, plus a running total in the TAFF records. The total fund is now up to \$505 here.

More DNQ: Chicago (Earl, that is) has apologized for having to ignore TAFF in their financial settlements, but can't afford a donation. So I'm going to stump this whole country getting funds—I'm going to write to every single local club and ask them to pass the hat. This is something TAFF hasn't done before—but I think there is no time like the present to drive home to club fans their role in TAFF and the benefits they can derive just from helping make TAFF possible. I'm waiting on this until I can send ballots along with the requests—much better tactics, I think.

I will also be begging away at the Westercon and the WorldCon this year. I think I can buy a chap a drink for 50¢ and ask him for a personal contribution over and above his balloting-donation and come out ahead. Right?

Of course, I'm a little unfettered at this sort of thing compared to you—I'm a male, and known for brashness. I would never suggest my approach to you...but I know that you swing enough weight in English fandom to allow you to solicit funds in far different ways—such as writing to types like Shorrocks, Willis, and Schluck, and getting them to hit up their associates for contributions.

I think we really need to break our backs getting money this year, sweetheart—at least I would dearly love to close out the current campaign with enough cash left over not only for the Easter '64 trip but also for your successor's trip to the '64 WorldCon.

About ballots: I think Bennett would be happy as a duck to be given preferential treatment with an advance form. Why not type him out a sample form, I'll send you platforms of the two candidates thus far, and you can ship it to him bright and early May Day so he can send it out with the next *SKRK*. If you'd like to work it any other way, or distribute the ballots in some special fashion, let's hear your ideas.

That's a beautiful cover on the latest *Scottish*; I bet ATom could build a reputation again equal to his current fame by just doing pin-up girls. This issue reminds me to remind you that your stock with *Shaggy* is sinking...I know you're interested in it, and am glad to carry you gratis for long periods; but we'd really enjoy letters of comment from you, too. You should just be getting #64 with the Mervyn Peake cover.

Have an unprecedented good time at the Peterborough con.

Ron

#



Bennett was Ron Bennett, and *SKRK* was short for *Skyrack*, the UK fannish newszine he edited (see <http://www.gostak.co.uk/skyrack>). Bennett had been largely responsible for organizing the Harrogate Eastercon that Ellik had attended during his TAFF trip the previous

year.

In his first letter, Ellik had worried about only having one TAFF candidate. By the time he sent his next, there would be four....

#

22 April 1963

Dear Ethel,

Hope you lot had a good time last weekend at Peterborough; Archie says it was a fabulous con, and George Locke gave it a good write up, so I suppose it did all right, even if nobody did know where Peterborough was. George didn't say who volunteered to hold the affair next year, though—did anyone?

At this writing, Marion Bradley, Wally Weber, and Bruce Pelz have been nominated for TAFF. There has been no word from the supporters of Ted White, except only that Leslie Gerber sent me two signatures for TEW about a month ago...I guess that makes three signatures, counting Leslie's own. I prodded him (Les) two weeks ago, and if I hear nothing we shall have to assume that nobody else would sign.

Signatures are, by the way, **Marion**—Ted Carnell, Mal Ashworth, Jean Linard (she is to pick two), Bruce Pelz, Juanita and Buck Coulson, Bob Tucker, Dan Mcpahil (she is to pick three). **Bruce**—Bjo and John Trimble, Dick Eney, Marion Bradley, Terry Jeeves, Eric Bentcliffe. **Wally**—F.M. Busby, Don Franson, Bill Donaho, Madeleine Willis, Ella Parker. I'll send you the nominating platforms as soon as the last one gets in (Bruce's nominators are a bit slow).

As Tuesday evening next is the deadline, please shoot me an airletter confirming that you have received no further nominations. It will probably cross in the mails with my next, with the nominating platforms and final info; then, if White or anyone comes in in the last four days (minimum reliable airletter time), I'll phone or wire you... otherwise you can send a TAFF form off to Bennett at the midnight hour on May Eve.

I will include with my next letter a sample TAFF form. But essentially all you need is the name of the Fund spelled out on top, the names of the candidates, and instructions about money and voting, and, on the flip side, the platforms. We might also include a blurb on that flip side for your TAFF report. As no one has been selected from the howling mob (one person) to publish *mine*, we won't advertise it yet.

Re *Shaggy*: Sorry, but I got the latest *Scot* just after writing you; had thought you too busy to publish. LASFS won't really be interested in bulk mailings of *Scot*, or *Haverings*...or any fanzine. There's a remarkably unliterary lot, fannishly. I'll keep you on the mailing list, old turnip—but it's nice to hear every six months or so that you do read and do like us.

Re your report: Here're the people who've given up cold cash (which *I* have in *my* pocket, do you hear? Heh heh heh) for it.

Jim Caughran, Charles Wells, Betty Kujawa, Donald Franson, Norman Metcalf, Dave Locke, Al Lewis, me too for that matter (I want one), Bjo Trimble, Vic Ryan, Robert P. Brown, C.L. Barrett, M.D., Stan Woolston, Fred Galvin, Peggy Rae McKnight, Earl Kemp, Fred W. Arnold, Ralph Watts, Roy Tackett, Bob Christenberry, Paul Williams, Larry Shaw, Martha Beck, Bob Pavlat, Ruth Berman, Frederick Norwood, Edward Wood, Jerome McCann, Bob Tucker, Mike Deckinger, Elaine Wojciechowski, John Boardman, Peter J. Maurer, Larry Pinsker, Ann Chamberlain, Rosemary Becker, Mark Owings, Stephen F. Schultheis.

Just telephoned Marion—she picks Carnell, Ashworth, Coulsons, Tucker, McPhail. She was a bit sleepy (it was 11:20 in Texas, just 9:20 here).



Dick Eney and Ron Ellik, London, 1965

Now, I'm going to write to Bennett, tonight, too, and tell him of our arrangement; you may write him also, to double-check, if it's convenient—you two had best work out the details if any present themselves. As he published twice just before the convention, I suspect his con report issue will be a bit late; but I don't know that, merely suspect it.

Another thing: when the devil can I tell people about ATom standing for TAFF? Rick Sneary is dying to find out what my secret is.

Didn't get anything from Lichtman for you for a sub to *Starsprinkle*, but I'll send you a few copies until he coughs up. Or would you rather buy (for Al Lewis who will pay me) a copy of Ella's *Harpy Stateside*? I ordinarily don't allow subscriptions over a dollar (I'm a hard-fisted, hard-headed editor trying to hold down a mailing list, it says here) but we'll make an exception in your case.

Ron

Damn, forgot: Do you think 1 January 1962 is a fair cut-off date? I mean, voters must have "been a fan" before then to qualify? If not, please be sure to reply by return air...but do so anyway. If you follow. I'm confused, love, Ron

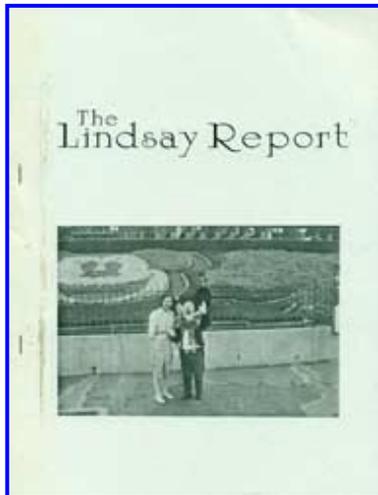
#

27 April 1963

Dear Ethel,

Many thanks for your prompt reply. Enclosed is a dummy TAFF ballot, but I'm afraid it'll have to be enlarged. I have a letter from Gerber which says the Ted White movement is almost through.* Naturally we have to allow him to the end of the month—he says a British signature is on its way to me directly from the signer. That'll do it too.

*This means almost complete NOT almost dead. Sorry—Ron



Now, Al Lewis has raised a question that we ought to have time to discuss, but which he feels ought to be decided now, so I'd like you to consider it as well as you can and shoot me a decision.

It's the number of votes to allow. With three candidates, we should give the voter the slots to fill in; with four, we should allow three slots. Al thinks that the ranking of candidates is detrimental to TAFF—he thinks that this is what caused the backstabbing and bad feeling in the Ford and Bentcliffe elections—the idea that you should "Vote for X, and don't mark a second or third choice, which will be a negative vote for Y."

I agree with him—but if we don't allow people to rank their candidates, to express a second choice in hopes of seeing him elected if the first choice loses, rather than see another fan he doesn't like win, we will be cutting off a good deal of the freedom of the vote...we will also be countermanding the rule set up by Don and Eric years ago.

Admittedly, we should be working for TAFF's betterment, not holding insanely to long-established rules. But I'm torn between the two, and I don't know how to decide. Do you have any thoughts? If you don't feel very strongly about the backstabbing possibilities of a ranked voting system (and I'm not *really* worried, just apprehensive) (you remember me—I'm always apprehensive) I think we ought to run it the way it was originally to be run. Please say anything you like, pro or con—I'd like to hear your opinions.

About the money: When I heard that the Peterborough gathering voted to increase the ante, I just automatically agreed. As you can see from the enclosed TAFF Newsletter, which I wrote before your letter arrived, I am going to just announce it to fandom and rely on fans' generosity. Besides, you know, it's true that many fans contributed over the minimum to the past two campaigns.

My copy of the *The Lindsay Report* arrived; many thanks. I haven't read it as yet, but John Trimble loved it. Almost took

it home. Why not run off 100 more, and send me a bundle to sell around here? I bet I could sell two dozen at the Westercon in July. You should look forward to longer-term sales—if you limit your runs, you'll cost yourself a lot of work.

I want to make the deadline 31st October, not 30th September, as you can see on the ballot, because of the later opening time. This gives us just six months—which is less time than TAFF races usually run, as is. Close 31 October, open noms. UK-US trip 1 September, close those on 30 November, open voting 1 December, close voting 31 May. That, again, is six months' voting time—enough?

Feel free to add a second page to my newsletter and, please, stencil and you publish it in the UK for me. Copies (with a second page if you send me one) will go out with the ballots as soon as you and I and Gerber get straightened out. Write to Bennett again, will you, and tell him of the delay.

Will write soon, Ron

#

Walpurgisnacht 1963

Dear Ethel,

That abominable nit Les Gerber just phoned (it is, by the way, ten to seven Pacific Daylight Saving Time this warm, clear May eve) and lamented to the skies that none of Ted White's signers had come through. Not one. Further, he (Leslie) had no hundred words, no five dollars, and no Ted White signature, in the mail to me. I convinced him to give up on the whole thing, and finally I guess we can go to town.

This letter is undoubtedly crossing with yours in the mails. Your answer to my airletter of last Saturday (27 April) should contain:

(1) Your decision

(a) to allow one slot, in which case I will immediately publish the TAFF ballot and distribute it to LASFS and so forth

(b) allow two slots for first and second choices among three candidates (Marion, Wally, and Bruce), in which case I will *also* immediately publish and distribute etc.

(2) Various other natterings which I will answer when things calm down around here!

In your last letter you asked me to compare fan jobs with you. I am mailing-list of *Shangri-L'Affaires*, editor of *Starsprinkle*, Publications Bureau Manager of the N3F, Administrator of the most confusing year of TAFF in history, still working at the *Doc Smith Index* which could occupy my full time if I had any such and still would take months to complete, writing that wordy old TAFF report (I just finished last night on a second draft of the final installment for this upcoming issue of *Shaggy*), coordinating a trip this weekend to San Francisco for *The Mikado*, and...oh, I guess there must be other things.

But of course I'm working a lot of overtime these days, *and* going to school three nights a week.

And you know what? I'm happy with all this fuss and furor. I like it, being overworked fannishly and mundanely. It keeps me off the streets.

Very happy to have you buy us fanzines or prozines for *Shaggy* sub. I just asked Al what else he would like (that copy of *Parker's Peregrinations* is for Al, you know, not me—I bought a copy out of my Brag winners at Harrogate), and he said he'd also like Bennett's *Colonial Excursion*. So if you'll send off 7/6d or whatever's Ron charging in sterling (I know it's a dollar here, but I forgot if I ever knew what he wants over there) I'll credit you with a year's subscription (five golden issues, nonpareil in the fan press).



Al Lewis and Lois Lavender sightseeing during Loncon 1965

One last time, about TAFF: On receiving your letter tomorrow or Thursday, I think I'll be ready to publish the ballot. On your receipt of *this* letter, *you* should be ready to publish the ballot. Right? Right.

London, mate, Ron

#

Evening, 1 May 1963

Dear Ethel,

I think—I do not know—but I think, I say, that I have forgotten a vitally important part of this whole hassle.

When Ted White's name was removed from candidacy, that enabled me to make use of a dependent clause in a letter from Walt Willis—who had nominated White, only on condition that Bruce Pelz did not need his (Walt's) nomination.

Now that Walt is completely free from the White campaign, *Bruce wants him*. Bruce has told me, explicitly, that he would like Eric Bentcliffe's name removed from his list of nominators, and would like to substitute Walt Willis' name.

As a further item, I have a letter from Walt, explicitly stating that he will nominate Bruce.

I hope to Belfast that this letter arrives in time for you to correct the TAFF ballot. If it doesn't—my gosh, *please* run another one and airmail copies of it to Bennett or anyone else you've sent the earlier edition.



I am not publishing the ballot (as I said in yesterday's) until getting your letter with the decision about number of slots.

Forgive me? Please?

Abjectly, Ron

#

6 May 1963

Leslie Gerber, Ted White, John Berry, Bob Shaw & George Charters, Ethel Lindsay, a copy for file:

...hell, I might as well have mimeographed it.

Miss Lindsay and gentlemen,

Enclosed is a copy of the current TAFF ballot, which you are encouraged to return to me or to the British Administrator. If you are the British Administrator, I hope this isn't confusing.

It doesn't have Ted White's name on it; I'm sorry this happened—especially because of the announcement of Ted's candidacy at the luncheon last month—but you should write it off to experience, and maybe Ted can stand next time, to go to London in '65.

As Les knows, the only requirements for candidacy that Ted met were three of the five signatures—two domestic, one foreign. The cable from Bob and George arrived the morning of 2 May, well past the deadline. John's letter, excusing himself due to a prior commitment in Wally Weber's behalf, arrived Saturday. The nominating platform, the five dollar bond, Ted's own signature indicating intent to travel, and a final US nominator's signature, never did arrive.

Sorry, troops—but I don't think I got too stringent with regulations, or acted in anyway opposed to Ted's interests. The requirements simply weren't met, or even approximated closely, and...well, hell, let's try it again next year.

Sincerely,

Ron Ellik, iron-hard US Administrator

Madle's TAFF report has never been published. It's one of the seldom-mentioned inefficiencies in the US. —Ron

#

23 May 1963

Dear Ethel,

Dear me—I *did* flub, didn't I? Well, you and Bennett seem to have recovered the fumble adequately. The current (12th) issue of *Starspinkle* says essentially what Bennett says in the current (54th) issue of *Skyrack*. I'm going to rubber-stamp my ballots "Under no circumstances will more than two points be allowed any one candidate on any one ballot." Suggest you do something similar.

History: The 1957 TAFF form says, Don Ford himself speaking, that you can best boost your favorite choice by writing him/her in all three places, for a total of six points. The 1959 TAFF form says, Bob Madle writing (after the explosion in *Contact* and at the MidWestCon in 1957), that under no circumstances will more than three points be allowed any one candidate on any one ballot. ...you note, of course, that this means you can vote X, Y, Y, giving both X and Y three points. I dunno.

I suggest we send Miller and Slater's ballots back and ask them to indicate on fresh forms (free) how they want to vote under this once-only rule. If they wish to withdraw their votes, let them have their money back—but they will probably be reasonable as both are sensible sorts.

I will send 500 ballots to Slater right off.

I just add all money to TAFF reports to TAFF. If anyone wants cash, they will deal with TAFF through you or me—and we will ask them for a simple, but substantial, accounting of sales, costs of production, etc. I think that's reasonable.

By the way, do you want any money from this side? Your report ought to have cost plenty.

More orders: Ed Meskys, Ted White, Len Moffatt, Rick Sneary, Robert Lichtman, Miriam Knight, Joe Pilati, Claire Beck, Dannie Plachta.

If you are going to send a batch of TLR reports for me to sell at the Westercon, please send them before the first of the month; thirty days is pretty close for a package of printed matter, you know. If they don't arrive, I will show my copy and take orders; if they arrive, I can actually hand them to the eager and panting fans when I take their money. Right? Right.

Finished my own report—the last installment for *Shaggy*, that is. It's pretty good, too...but I found it difficult to wrap it up to an upbeat ending, so it kind of – stops.

Len Moffatt has already written, and I am rewriting, a *Fandbook* on TAFF. If you have any more suggestions, please shoot them along—your notes in this letter will help me considerably, for which thanks.

Love, Ron

#

27 May 1963

RAGNAROK END OF THE WORLD DOOMSDAY C'EST A DIRE!!!

—or maybe it isn't anything to get excited about, but *I'm* excited. I, Ron Ellik, United States Administrator for the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, went out during my lunch hour today and by golly I bought myself the first new typewriter ribbon this ancient Royal has seen in half a year.

That, as you can see quite easily, is remarkable.

-oOo-

Been thinking about something, and it's going to go into the 4th *Fandbook* (this one about TAFF) this way: The \$5 bond is evidence of intent to travel, bond of serious wish to run, etc. It is demand of the candidate himself—if his nominators want to put it up, that's bloody good of them and they can do it (because *I* can't tell whose fiver it is, can you?) but if they don't, then *he* has to, and he can't go whining that he's being put upon.

I'll word it more gently than that.

I put up my own bond—ten dollars, I put up. I did that because Don Ford told me bluntly that Eney had put up ten dollars. It didn't hurt me, and I knew I had to look good. I never thought of my nominators putting up the money—they were signing for me, by Roscoe, and that was all I could ask of anyone.

(Whisper it—I even wrote my own platform, cribbing from a longer blurb written for me by Doc Barrett.)

I think the misuse has crept into this because (you'll pardon me) of the British attitude (which in general I applaud) that a fan is not running, he is standing.

Which means a crowd of people is fighting for him, and naturally he is pictured as sitting back modestly waiting for the results. Which implies that somebody else writes, gets signatures, shovels out dough, etc.

But it ain't always that way, and TAFF is set up to compromise between this and the slightly more forward attitudes of my colleagues here—the attitude that you have to sign a statement that you want to go, and you have to post a bond of intent, and that's enough to commit you to positive action in your own interests, no?

Compromise, I said, Ethel, compromise. I know that the latter attitude would rankle in the delicate nostrils of your insular brothers and sisters—that's why there's a compromise. I am weighing these things as I rewrite Len Moffatt's TAFF *Fandbook*, which has to go to press next week.

Why am I writing this letter? I just finished a take-home final exam in Systems Engineering, and I have to study for a three-hour exam in Linear Algebra for tomorrow night. I must be mad, writing to you.

I'm writing to Bob Madle tonight about his report, asking him for a definite estimate to completion if one is available. It's only been six years—I hope he doesn't think we're rushing him. I have about five dollars on hand in orders for it from last year—the buyers are all patient fellows, but this is stretching things. I asked Bob and Don Ford last year about it... nothing but "We're working on it."

Took care of the No More Than Two Points thing by running a stencil with only that on top of the already-run TAFF ballots. Bennett did a good job of covering up for us, didn't he?

Thanks for your patience with me. I'll try to stop being a nit.

Ron

#

From *Starspinkle* #13 (6 June 1963):

THE TAFF SCENE: Arthur Thomson is definitely standing for election as England's representative to the 1964 WorldCon



Fred Parker and Ron Ellik. Loncon 1965

(to be held somewhere in barbarous Northern California). This is the news we politely waited to let Bennett publish first—you can stop holding your breath, and go out and cheer the good news or something. It is one of the best things to happen to TAFF in years.

#

6 June 1963

Dear Ethel,

Betty Kujawa just sent five dollars with her ballot—she's terrific. I know there are many fans to whom money is nothing—as, for instance, the Kujawas, who would never notice five dollars. It's great to see them doling out of their plenty to TAFF. ##LASFS just gave TAFF \$50. Yes, that's *eighteen guineas* (more or less). (More like eighteen quid, now that I think of it...but it's a whale of a lot of dough in any man's currency.) Straight contribution, from the treasury (which is still over \$200—LASFS is filthy rich since it stopped paying rent last year).

I have 27 ballots now, counting Betty's, and the votes are Bradley 26, Pelz 19, Weber 29—which is about the same sort of distribution you report in England, with Wally now having a slight edge and Bruce way behind. I expected Bruce to lose. (oh, for heaven's sake, I almost wrote DNQ—leave us not be silly—naturally all details about voting are so secret as to make a DNQ look like publication in the *Times*) but not so soon nor so seriously. I don't know whether Mez or Wally will win—since you and I both report near ties or ties, I think we'll have to wait until the MidWestCon and Westercon votes are in, wot?



I was going to send you details of who voted, but changed my mind. I don't think it's very interesting information. If you want to know, I'll send it along next time.

All right, if you can't send those copies of TLR for the MidWestCon or Westercon, why, I can certainly sell copies at those affairs, taking money and orders, and have you send them along later. (Copies on hand will sell faster, you understand.) Please be sure to send me at least 25 copies for the Discon. Send them to me c/o Dick Eney, though, so I don't have to tote them across the nation.

About your notes to Terry and ATom: I didn't need a visa. Why do you? Had I been visiting several countries I think I should have had to had one (the English language is a frightening but beautiful thing).

I recommend the TAFF man planning to fly to New York and drive out to the west coast with fans, and drive back with fans. I'll talk to several people about this at D.C.—but you can always count on Bob Pavlat to be driving to the convention, and there are always many others who decide on such travel.

—slight interruption for dinner and a LASFS meeting—

LASFS HELD AN AUCTION THAT NETTED \$53.30 for TAFF—THAT'S EIGHTEEN GUINEAS AND THEN SOME. And Jack Harness sold some sealing wax or something (he is setting up a sealing wax service or something), all proceeds to TAFF, and gave me \$1.35. This is unbelievable.

Do you know, I bet I can hit LASFS again in the fall and get another \$50 from the treasury? Why, at this rate, we don't need to worry about the ChiCon's lack of a contribution.

I advise all TAFF candidates to carry American Express Travellers' Cheques, in the currency of the country being visited. I used another kind (New York bank of some kind) in dollars—and had to pay a shilling for each ten dollars, plus tuppence for the tax stamp. AmExp will be good anywhere—absolutely anywhere.

Labor Day always falls on the first Monday in September, so the con in 1964 will be the 4,5,6,7 of September, as you said. May I suggest that it might be that one candidate would want to spend more time in the US than the other. And they might have difficulty agreeing? I hope it works out so that they can make one reservation and place the name later. Or

something.

I know about the “fare or 90 per cent of the fund” rule; it hasn’t appeared on the ballot in a long time, though. Not since Madle won, I think. The way things are going (and have been going, come to think of it) I guess we can shelve that rule.

I think it is generally enough understood so that we need not publicly state that an unsuccessful candidate may stand again anytime. I also think he should be allowed to stand the very next time...for instance, I think Bruce knows he is going to lose this race, and wants to try again for 1965, to go over with the charter plane if there is one.

The shorter voting period has received considerable applause over here; I think it’s one of the best things TAFF has done in recent years. ##Nobody has complained about the increased ballot fee; everybody has cheerfully paid it, or more. ##I have \$695 in the TAFFund here, including some money for Bennett, Ford, Bentcliffe, and you. Do you want any money now? ##I don’t intend to try an Auction Bloch at D.C., because I don’t think we need the extra hundred that would bring in, or at least we don’t need it badly enough to go through such a straining thing. I’m going to ask the committee for a flat donation, though. ##We may have to stop telling people how much money we have—it’s going to be hard asking for contributions when we have enough for the next eight trips.

Yours, Ebenezer Ellik

#

From *Starspinkle* #14 (20 June 1963):

THE TAFF SCENE: The Los Angeles SF Socy held an auction on the 7th which netted over \$54 for TAFF. Together with the voluntary contribution of \$50 from the treasury, this makes LASFS the biggest single contributor to the Fund since the Seattle convention. Your humble and obedient Administrators are thinking more and more seriously of upping the ante, to give the winner \$600 instead of \$500 for his trip to the 1964 Britcon—I will be at the Westercon, and Al Lewis will be Official Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund Representative to the MidWestCon and MidSouthCon, and we will both be available to take ballots, contributions and suggestions about TAFF.

#

27 June 1963

Dear Ethel,

You ought to be about rested up from vacationing by now—trust you enjoyed yourself and Scotland no end—and I guess I can bother you with some miscellany that has piled up here.

First, thanks for *Parker’s Peregrinations*—but it was made out to *me*. I take it to mean that this is your subscription to *Starspinkle*—well, I gave it to Al, for whom it was. So that’s okay, and your sub (as will be indicated starting with issue 15, out next week, you should receive it in a month or so) will expire with issue 26.

TAFF voting here is Marion 35, Bruce 25, Wally 43. Wally is getting the majority of first-place votes, Marion next. Bruce is not doing at all well, as the totals more than show. There are 38 ballots in—no, 39—one from Lee Sapiro, voting for William Blackbeard (2 points) and Harlan Ellison (1). Much money with all this—Fred Arnold just sent \$5 with his ballot—the total is now \$710, but that includes money for TAFF *Baedeker* (two or three copies), and all the cash I’ve taken in for you for *The Lindsay Report* and a bit of other stuff. Do you want your money now? Will be happy to arrange anything—can send check, or international money order, or bouillon or what you say.

The *Fandbook* about TAFF is going slowly—I’ve got it about half dummied and will try (but can’t promise) to have it ready for the Westercon next week. I was sick all last weekend (miserable cold, damnit—it took four days to go away, all of which time I ate no solid food) and have been busy as the devil since Al Lewis left for the MidwestCon.

Sent 500 TAFF ballots to Ken Slater on 25 June, book rate, special handling. Would you drop him a note so specifying? Tell him I’m sorry they weren’t sent off till then, but ... well, anyway, I haven’t any excuse. Just tell him I’m sorry, and Bob Lichtman assures me they can conceivably get to him in two weeks. I sent him none of the Progress Report, figuring the extra postage did not warrant it. The ballot is self-explanatory, and the PR is largely just a booster which can be

ignored.

Also, I didn't have any more ink to run off 500 of them.

Thoughts: Assuming \$600 of the current total is free for TAFF (that's a minimal estimate we have the spring '64 trip sewed up. ##I am going to buttonhole everybody at the Westercon and Discon for donations—donations, not balloting fees—for as much money as I can possibly squeeze out of them. ##I am going to ask the Westercon and Discon committees for a cut of their money, and present them with the opportunity to help us up the ante, *in their name*. I'm sure you will agree this is a good way to get a couple hundred dollars. ##You still have about sixty quid, no? ##To sum up, I think we can make it—six hundred dollars each way in 1964.

Qualification to the above: We have to plan on another trip in the fall of 1965, because I am more and more certain that London will walk away with it, and we'll HAVE to have a TAFFman at that convention—again, I'm sure you agree. That means \$600 more in just another year—now, we are getting into the realm of high finance because this means \$1,100 more than we have right now—all to be raised by, say, May of 1965.

Bright hopes etc.: After this Westercon, I will know (1) if they will give us any money (2) if London really has it sewed up ..., remember, the 1964 voting will take place in Northern California, not back east...if I can get California fans in favor of London, it's a lead-pipe cinch. So the above are just my thoughts and worries. Will discuss this at greater length next month sometime.

And how are things in your town?

Ron

#

20 July 1963

Dear Ethel,

Excuse me letting another month go by phhhttt without writing, but this time I've been harried, not busy. Lots of personal things...a new girl, one I'm not going to lose by proposing marriage (a novel concept) and some personal problems involving other people's girls (I'm worrying again ...but that's all right, because I worry best when I've got somebody else to worry about).

Anyway, first to your letters of 28 June and 2 July—which I may well have answered previously, but let's touch on salient points:

Things are still confused in the voting: as of 2 July you had MZB 18, BEP 12, WWW 13. As of 28 July I have MZB 65, BEP 44, WWW 62—so things are pretty tight between Wally and Marion. I have received 60 eligible ballots (have had to void about four for neofans who (it seems) can't read the cut-off date rule). Have still only Lee Sapiro's write-in votes for Harlan Ellison and Bill Blackbeard.

Have \$780.28 (or about 276 pounds sterling) in the fund here.

Check on Dr. Antonio Dupla—I asked Don to send him a copy of *TAFF Baedeker*.

Will query the three candidates—if they agree, I'll stay in "office" until they are through with their trip (the winner, I mean). If they insist, I'll stay on until the winner is through writing a report ...but that's not a good idea, generally—look at Madle's report. (I got a letter from him about a month after sending that airmail-with-reply-postage after you wrote me ...it was noted in the last *Starspinkle* (#16)).

Wish you would snap back a comment as soon as possible on the following. Not immediately, but in the next two or three days, so I can get it off right away.

Suggestion: that I sent a mimeographed letter to every European (not just Albionic) fan I can find, saying the following.

Dear TAFF pillar:

Enclosed you will find a copy of the ballot for the current TRANS-ATLANTIC FAN FUND campaign, in which Marion Bradley, Bruce Pelz, and Wally Weber are vying to represent American fandom at the 1964 British convention. The most immediate purpose of this letter is to encourage you to use this form if you haven't already voted—it will be most convenient for you to send five shillings or the equivalent (cheques, money orders and postage will be most easily sent and received—currency from beyond the sterling or dollar areas might be inconvenient) to the British Administrator, Ethel Lindsay, with your vote.

But looking beyond this current TAFF campaign and the convention we're aiming to send an American fan to, we are now thinking about the next campaign, which will elect one of you to represent European fandom at the 1964 World Science Fiction Convention in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Nominations for this campaign will be opened on the first day of September, at the Washington, D.C. WorldCon—I will make an appeal to everyone there to nominate the fan of his choice from beyond the Atlantic to come to America on fandom's donations and votes. When you receive this letter, it will be time for you to start moving—you have until the last day of November to send nomination requirements to Ethel or me.

If you would like to see one of your friends stand for TAFF, contact others who correspond with him or know him, and get five signatures (three from Europe, two from the Americas) of fans who want to see him up for the trip. Besides these signatures, you need a \$5.00 (thirty-six shillings) bond of good faith, a one-hundred word platform describing the candidate, and his signature stating his willingness to travel to California next fall if elected.

There is time for you to get a campaign going if you act now. Write to Ethel or me for more information—we'll shout you back an airmail reply with all the answers we can give.

And send that TAFF ballot in at the same time, will you? Use your right to help select your own guest, at the same time you're making plans to select a representative for the next trip.

Thank you, (signature)

How about it? I can run off a hundred or maybe a hundred-fifty of them for the BSFA membership list and so on, and have them in the mail very quickly. They should receive them just about the first of September, surface rate.

There is another alternative, by the way: you could write, reproduce, and distribute this letter over your signature, rewording it as you will. If you like the idea, you could even use both our names. How about it?

By the way, the Westercon committee (represented by Donaho) asked me if I would like to make a deal—they give me a cut of their profits, and we raise the ante to \$600 for the winner. I almost hugged him. ##This isn't official, because at the time they didn't know how their finances would turn out. I expect to hear from them momentarily.

I also expect to hear something from Bill Evans soon. Wrote him early this month (see, I'm not always too busy to write letters) submitting an ad for TAFF, and incidentally asking him in advance not to forget TAFF in the summing up. I mentioned the Westercon thing, We'll see.

London, mate, Ron

#

From *Starspinkle* #18 (15 August 1963):

GO D.C. On Fri 23 Aug a trio of starry-eyed innocents will depart Los Angeles in Al Lewis' Ford Econoline. Al won't be going—the voyagers will be your humble and obedient (and innocent) editor, Russ Martin (a member in good standing of the Sorcerer's Rumrunners and Pariahs, Ltd.), and Calvin W. "Biff" Demmon (who has never been to Las Vegas and thinks it might be fun). We'll stop in Chicago around Tues and arrive at the Statler-Hilton around Thurs.

#

20 August 1963

Dear Ethel,

It's three days before I leave for D.C., and I've been remiss about writing you again, so I'd best take care of this before the trip. I'll be back in LA about the ninth of September (a Monday) and will answer my mail from you then as soon as possible because of the approaching deadline.

Last I have from you is dated 2 August and reports your total as MLB 21, BP 18, WW 16 to which I add MLB 75, BP 47, WW 65 for a total of MLB 96, BP 65, WW 81...so Marion is pulling ahead; it's the East Coast that's doing it, too. If the Westerners would get off their collective arse and vote, Wally would probably win. But DC is going to cinch Marion—you just watch.

All three TAFF candidates will be at D.C.—I'll ask them what they think of me staying on until they write a report. I'm willing to bet they wouldn't like the pressure this would imply. We'll see.

I have \$805 (over 285 pounds), and a promise of \$20 more from the NFFF at the Discon, and (SURPRISE) a promise *in advance* of \$50-\$100 from the Discon committee (I have it in writing over Evans' signature). This means they are already doing very well, and we might even get \$200 from them.

So anyway, we have \$1,000 now. I think that, with the announcement of the winner, we can also announce that the winner will get \$600. Don't you? We'll still have to hit Peterborough as hard as possible during the next race (but they should be eager to contribute with ATom running), and I'm going to really get rough with the Bay Area fans because they reneged on a virtual promise of money...they ended up just barely ahead of the game and gave TAFF nothing. I'm going to get them to pay the 1964 winner's room.

You damn betcha I am,

About this race: Your results will be final at midnight Greenwich time on the night of 31 October. My results will be final nine hours later. I would like to have things work this way:

As soon as you count your ballots and have another fan count them (preferably someone closed-mouthed like Shorrocks or Bennett or Parker...glory, who'd ever've thought I would have called old Ella closed-mouthed?), send me an airletter with total points, points for each candidate, and, for redundancy's sake, a separate sentence saying " X wins with Y points ". Got it?

As soon as I've counted my ballots and had Al Lewis double-check me (he counted the last race with me and kept me honest) I will wire you the results. My wire will say

ETHEL LINDSAY SIX LANGLEY SURBITON SURREY ENGLAND
BRADLEY 102 WEBBER 85 PELZ 73 BRADLEY 102 RON 947

—in this way you will have all the details—the winner twice for safety, and the total dollars on hand here at that time. Sound okay?

Now, we have to watch out for lovable old Ron Bennett's ulcer, so I'd like you to add the two totals ... points for each and dollars or pounds on each side, and send the info to Bennett as soon as you get my wire. He will probably send you a ten bob note to phone or wire him with it so he can scoop me.

You see, I'm not going to press until Thursday 7 November so he can scoop me all he likes. But let him feel good about it—I've already pulled his leg unmercifully about your results being ready nine hours before mine (so you could wire me and I could go to press nine hours later before Bennett ever could) so let's give him a good one this time.

If you find fault with any part of this plan please say so right away so we can arrange something else.

Glad you wrote that letter to European fans; I couldn't have, as things worked out. Much too busy. Be sure to tell me if you get any good responses.

Every TAFF winner so far has written a report of the trip—it is immutably a tradition. If broken it would stand out like a sore thumb (witness the ill feeling that Madle's goof has caused...he wrote a report but only segments of it have appeared in print). I certainly agree that each winner should write about his trip. . .read my words on the subject in *Fandbook #4*.

Why couldn't Marion stay with Ella if she wins? I mean, is there any ill feeling between Marion and Ella? I don't know of any. It's good of Ella to be offering hospitality so far in advance.

I highly recommend that when the winner is known you post notice of him/her with every fan available and recommend to them that they extend hospitality before or after the Repetercon if it is possible for them. The many invitations I received (some of which I had to turn down—like Fred Smith, and the Gerfans) made the trip much brighter. ##Another important thing is transportation—any alien will be happier traveling with fans than on railroads. If you can work transportation from the con to wherever the winner wants to go it'll be a big help. Certainly it is obvious that he/she will go to London and then to Peterborough—and there'll be no dearth of wheels going that way.

We'll see in a few weeks, anyway.

Sorry I was so silent about my current flame...didn't expect details would be interesting. She's Lois, daughter of Roy and DeeDee Lavender (not Primrose) from Ohio who you met at Moffatt's last year. Tall blonde, same age as Peggy Rae, ##I agree, Dian is a good girl and very interesting. But she's after Bruce, old thingumbob, not me.

Love, Ron

#

From *Starspinkle #20* (19 September 1963):

THE TAFF SCENE: We are sorry to announce report that B. Terry Jeeves, whose candidacy was announced in issue #9, has had to withdraw due to continued periodic attacks of asthma. At the time of the Peterborough con he thought it was getting better—instead, it continues to plague him unpredictably.. ##Nominations are now open for candidates to win a trip to the Pacificon II in Oakland next Labor Day weekend. Deadline for filing is 30 Nov 63.

#

24 September 1963

Dear Ethel,

I have tried polling some people, and have gotten two responses indicating fans who might be popular enough to stand for TAFF next time.

George Nims Raybin named Ken Slater as a likely choice. G.M. Carr named Phil Kohn (Beth Krinski, Yokneam, Israel), Alan Dodd, Arthur Thomson, and Pierre Versins.

Both George and Gem are former candidates; ordinarily I would not pick them to ask such a question of, but former candidates seemed like a good bet. I would appreciate it if you would ask around and find out (1) if any of the above have friends in England who would like to start a campaign for them—if so, these friends can contact George/Gem and get something really started; (2) if these people are interested at all in being candidates.

Gem recommending Arthur reminds me, however, that you've never stated that Arthur's nominators have fulfilled the requirements. A statement of candidacy is not enough, you know, they've got to have the signatures, the money, and the platform to you or me before December.

If I can help in digging up friends of possible candidates, tell me; I'll query a couple of Dodd's and Versins' friends on this



Ron Ellik and Ethel Lindsay

side, but must admit I know of few people especially interested in either of them.

I know no one (except, naturally, Gem) who would be at all interested in Phil Kohn. But he was her first choice.

As before, old compatriot, we can't close TAFF nominations with only one candidate. Can we?

Money is as reported in *Starspinkle*. Votes are MB 97, BP 73, WW 132, added to your 13th September results of MB 26, BP18, WW 20 to give a grand total of MB 123, BP 91, WW 152.

You will note that this is a difference of opinion, East-to-West—it has been observed by Al Lewis that England and US fans have always elected the same person. I pointed out to Al that the race is five weeks from finished and your results are still very indeterminate.

Yours, Ron

Actually, Lewis was wrong to assert that UK and US TAFF voters had always elected the same person. In the 1960 TAFF race, which was won by Eric Bentcliffe, Sandy Sanderson came first in the voting in the US and last in the UK. A full analysis of the results of that race can be found here:

<http://www.gostak.co.uk/skyrack/skyrack20.htm>

#

Will you please send me an airletter Friday afternoon confirming my results and including your final results? Then I can publish it in *Starspinkle* the next Wednesday.

26 October 1963

Dear Ethel,

Well, the race is almost over. I just called Western Union, and they say it will take about three hours for a telegram to reach you; so if I send it at midnight, Halloween, then you should receive it three hours plus nine hours (for time difference) later, or at approximately noon on All Saints' Day.

Okay?

The telegram will read

LINDSAY SIX LANGLEY AVENUE, SURBITON, SURREY, ENGLAND
WINNER POINTS PLACE POINTS SHOW POINTS DOLLARS WINNER RON

So you'll have all the information you need as of midnight, including the money in the TAFF fund here at that time and a repeat of the name of the winner.

My results to date are little different from last time: Your last total MZB 36, BEP 23, WW 23. My latest MZB 108, BEP 80, WW 152. Total MZB 114, BEP 103, WW 175. And I have \$912.23 (roughly 322 pounds sterling) in the Fund. Your last report was 65 pounds, so we have 387 pounds, or \$1,095. Wow.

I am very sorry to see England and America electing different candidates, because there is just a possibility, a slight chance, that this can cause bad feeling in your country. There is not a big difference of opinion over there (the voting is feeble, for one thing, and undecided for another and more important thing) but I sure hope the Bradley fans can't feel bad about Wally being pushed in by America.

Four months ago I bragged to Bennett that I knew who was going to win. I thought at that time that Marion was a shoo-in...but of course I had no way of knowing that the Discon would change everything so drastically.

If noon Friday is a bad time for you to receive a telegram, please say, so; I could delay it six hours so that you would receive it about supper time.

Come to think of it, if you want me to delay it, you had better REALLY shoot back a reply. You should receive this letter Monday or Tuesday; if you write to me Tuesday and get it in an early post I might receive it Thursday. If I don't, you may as well expect that telegram at noon Friday.

Sorry this sat around a few days before I got to it—if I'd written two days ago things'd be less hectic.

Suggestions Department: I think we might profit by writing to Walter, Bulmer, and other Anglofen interested in TAFF (or is Bulmer, anymore?) and asking their advice about our problem with the next race. It's not the same as last time—I knew I could get candidates enough, once the deadline was on us. But in England I don't think anyone will stand against ATom.

And have you received ATom's nominating materials yet? Busby has pledged the five dollars if no one over there has gotten around to it

Ron

#

4 November 1963

Dear Ethel,

Am writing tonight to Willis, and other such people as I can think of later, to beg them to come up with another candidate ...or to tell me what I can do if nobody else will stand against Arthur.

About Arthur: Buz has pledged the five dollars if nobody else pays it. If Bennett has given you a dollar, why, I will tell Buz to pay four dollars.

But, honey, you never did send me the platform by Willis for Arthur—I just looked through every single letter you've sent me in 1963, and there's nothing about such a platform—no mention you even received it. Please look for it.

Donaho would not be such a strong candidate this year—last year, yes, but during 1963 he has done virtually nothing.

Redd Boggs is going to edit the next issue and succeeding issues of *Shangri-L'Affaires*. He plans to publish late this month (#67).

The nickname of squirrel came to me in 1956 when I fouled up some FAPA business (very trivial stuff, really) which affected Howard Lyons and Boyd Raeburn. Raeburn called me a squirrel (since it was a matter of confusion, not malfeasance or anything) to Cliff Gould, and Gould used it as a nickname. In 1957 Dave Rike drew a cartoon cover for *Innuendo's* first Annish, showing several fellows milling around parked sports-cars, hanging a squirrel by the neck from a lamppost; caption: "In Toronto, nearly everyone hates Ron Ellik." In 1958 Bjo started drawing squirrel cartoons, and here I am. It won TAFF for me—but I wish I could shake it.

The TAFF report is once again a chain around my neck—it isn't good enough for final publication, and I HAVE to rewrite it. Or at least expand it, and correct a few mistakes and rewrite a few awkward sentences. So I tried to, a few Sundays ago...and do you know, that's harder work than the original document was? So anyway, there's no hurry.

Many thanks to you and Brian for the quick reply about British votes. I got your two airletters and the 59th *Skyrack* in today's post. This info will appear in *Starspinkle* 24, of course, and I intend to publish a single sheet TAFF *Progress Report* #5 in the next few days to go with *Starspinkle*. I will run off 1,000 copies and send them out pretty much at random—if you would like to send me the names of the British voters (and addresses, for that matter) I'll send them copies. No hurry—send them when you get a chance.

...wait a minute, wait a minute, I'm not thinking. A moment's reflection has convinced me that a bulletin NOW would be a silly idea. Yes, it would be good to notify everybody—but really, wouldn't it be best to save the news (oh, spread it around—but save the flyer) for a month and publish the TAFF ballot and the *Progress Report* at the same time? Yes. So I tell you what: send me the names and addresses of the British voters any time in the next two weeks, and I'll publish an

alphabetized list of all voters in this *ProgRep*. We can then send it out with the *Pacificon II 2nd Progress Report* in December, and with *Starspinkle*, and with all sorts of goodies. Right?

Recommend: deadline of 31 May 64 for voting if we close nominations on schedule; cutoff date of 1 Jan 63 for eligibility to vote. Okay?

Have written to Wally, long letter accompanying carbon of letter to all three candidates notifying them of the official results.

Must go do some homework.

Ta ta, Ron

#

4 November 1963

Dear Walter,

I have a question or two for you, sir, and it is in dire need that I write—dire fannish need, but serious for all that.

Question: although you are about as solidly behind Arthur as anyone has ever been behind any TAFF candidate, can you conceive a name, any name, in England or on the continent or in Scandinavia or for that matter ANYONE, who might be willing to stand against him? If you know of any such person, whisper to me the name and you shall never be connected with it; my word.

Question: If no one will stand, what becomes of the 1964 TAFF race? I cannot in fairness to Arthur and the hundreds of donors close out nominations the end of this month with no race in sight—TAFF was not originated to hand \$600 to one person with no race.

In fact, the second question is my reason for writing, because I am despaired of finding opponents for (probably) the best candidate ever nominated—Walt, what do we do now?

Ethel is quite content to close nominations and give 'im the dough. I agree—it would be a popular decision. But it wouldn't be unanimously accepted, because (glory, you know as well as anyone!) there are myriads of nit-picking confounded busybodies who would just love to find TAFF handed to someone with no contest, so they could scream their juvenile (regardless of chronological age) heads off about bought races, favoritism, graft, autocracy, etc. And let's face it—a whole lot of people have contributed to the Fund, and they ought to have a vote.

But it's not feasible to hold a poll of fandom to determine what we should do—as always, TAFF has to try to decide what fandom wants it to do, and do it, and ride out the whirlwind.

Walter, what does fandom want us to do? I'm right here in the middle of it, and I don't know.

Sincerely, Ron

#

From *Starspinkle* #24 (7 November 1963):

FINAL RESULTS (subtitle: Scooped Again). In the first hours of November the TAFF ballots were counted on both sides of the Atlantic and cables and airletters split the ether. I wired my total to Ethel Lindsay at 1:30 am Pacific Standard Time, and at 2:30 pm Greenwich Standard Time she relayed them by phone to Ron Bennett in Liverpool. *Skyrack* 59 arrived here Monday—and here we are:

	England	U.S.	Total
Marion Bradley	47	118	165
Bruce Pelz	40	89	129
Wally Weber	38	165	203

The candidates have been officially notified, and Wally is preparing to travel to the Easter convention in Peterborough, England. Anyone wishing to add themselves to his itinerary should write him at Box 267, 507 Third Avenue, Seattle 4, Washington, to find out when he will be in their part of the world. ##140 people voted in America; a complete list of voters on both sides of the big pond will be published soon. ##Wally is the second fan to lose a TAFF race and win on the second time 'round; in 1956 he was one of seven runners-up in the race won by Lee Hoffman.

#

13 November 1963

Dear Ethel and Wally:

Wally has acknowledged my letter with the election results (as have Marion and Bruce, by the way) and is now the US Administrator of TAFF, with the following exceptions: I am keeping the Treasury, and will provide him with \$600 when he is ready to travel (or when he needs it, or whenever he asks for it, for that matter) and will provide all remaining funds at any time he requests, or keep them until his successor is elected; and secondly, I will publish the next TAFF ballot in America, with my final issue of TAFF *Progress Report*, summarizing the recent election and publicizing the next race, as my last official act.

I think there will be a lot of unnecessary bookkeeping because the treasury is with two people, but that's the way Wally wants it.

All the TAFF reports listed are available, with the notable exception of Robert Madle's report, which hasn't been published (Bruce Pelz hopes to publish it soon, if Madle can't, but don't announce that as we know not *how* soon) ...they are available from the authors, and at list price; Ethel can order Bentcliffe's or Bennett's for you, or you can order them direct. Ford takes his own orders. Bennett is the only one requiring money—all the others ask you to stick it into the Fund, letting them keep a record of it against an eventual settlement.

-000-

Now, to business: you chappies have a problem, and I have a solution. The problem is that Arthur Thomson seems to be the only Anglofan willing to stand for TAFF, and the solution was provided by Walt Willis in reply to a wail of despair from me.

(1) George Locke may stand, because Fred Patten has asked him to and we are waiting for his answer. I would appreciate it, Ethel, if you or George would write to me directly that a decision is reached.

(2) Rolf Gindorf may stand, because Ethel has been working on German fandom to put forward a candidate. Ditto an immediate notification, please.

(3) I don't know that Arthur has been fully notified, Ethel—do you? Did you find the nomination platform? Did Cheslin's signature arrive? Did two American nominators show up?

(4) Now, let's assume that Arthur is nominated and nobody else is: Walter says as follows.

“To get down to basics, the purpose is to bring across the fan other fans most want to see; in the present instance this is Arthur, and the fact that nobody is willing to stand against him is evidence of the fact. The only purposes of a TAFF election are to decide a question, which in this case is already settled, or to raise money, which in this instance is already raised.”

He goes on to say we might establish a precedent which would later have one fan elected by default who was absolutely

unworthy, and we have to watch for that. He says this won't happen if TAFF is run according to the laws of supply and demand—that when there are no worthy candidates, there is no trip, and when there is no money, there is no trip. If shabby nonentities are foisted off on the voters, interest will die; and, surely, if nobody contributes, interest will already be dead and it won't matter how fine a slate you have.

“This false stimulation could so burn out TAFF that it wouldn't work properly when it was needed.

“I'd thought of suggesting you just provide a blank space on the ballot for a write-in vote, but the situation is such it will be obvious to everyone this is a mere meaningless formality. On the whole, I suggest you put the problem honestly before fandom and let it decide, as follows. On the ballot paper you will explain that only one British fan has been nominated this time. That it is the opinion of all the fans you have consulted that the reason for this is that the fan who has been nominated is so outstandingly meritorious a candidate that no one else wants or thinks it worth while to stand against him. That as an impartial administrator you must however recognize that this is a subjective question to which only fandom as a whole can give a final answer. And you must now lay down a procedure which can be followed in all types of future case in which the one-candidate situation may arise. You will then present the voter with the choice of the following alternatives

“Arthur Thomson in 1964

“The money to be carried over to the next WorldCon.

“There is a precedent for it (Willis continues), I having put a question like this to fandom in one of the early TAFF votings for my guidance in the situation where the winning candidate and runner-up both backed out, and I was left with the possibility of handing out money to a candidate hardly anyone wanted (TAFF was shakier in those days).”

M'lady and m'lord, I give you the words of Walter Willis, who probably knows more about TAFF and fandom and fandom's reasons for having a TAFF than anyone.

My suggestion is that we wait until the end of this month, and (1) George might stand,

(2) Rolf might stand, (3) Arthur might stand alone, under the Willis-suggested condition. I doubt a dozen people would vote for No Trip, and I doubt anyone would be dissatisfied with the choice.

Your thoughts, please?

Ron

#

19 November 1963

Dear Ethel and Wally,

Many thanks for the list of British voters and copy of ATom's campaign platform. I now have signatures from F.M. Busby and Bill Donaho—would you please ask Arthur if those two, plus Willis-Bennett-Cheslin represent his choice of five nominators? If so, and if you (Ethel) have his signature indicating willingness to travel if elected (ho ho ho) we have a complete nomination. You also have Bruce's signature, he says.

About Phil Rogers and the Bentcliffe-Ellik Rule: Eric and I agreed that voting in two previous campaigns was a good rule, and it was announced in *Skyrack* and *Axe*, but immediately thereafter I had a thought—suppose someone came into fandom in January of 1962; couldn't he conceivably become popular and liked and respected enough to join our hallowed ranks (kof kof) by, say, early 1965? The answer is obviously a loud YES, because it takes no longer than that to build a fannish reputation. Yet, when you think carefully, such a person would not have been ABLE to vote in the two previous campaigns. Right? So Eric and I just sucked our thumbs, hoping everybody would forget about the rule—we felt it would be a bad show to announce we'd changed our minds.

That's why the rule appears not in the *Fandbook* on TAFF, or anywhere else since the middle of 1962.

So, I think Phil is quite qualified to stand for election—I am sure he hopes only to pull a few votes, and I hope he won't mind losing like a shot to Arthur. If I were you, Ethel, I would not encourage Phil's nomination, although certainly you must provide any reasonable help requested, like information. Fair-minded, that's what you have to be.

And I think it would be quite all right for you to publish a complete revocation of the Ellik-Bentcliffe Rule, because by this time 95% of fandom will have forgotten it anyway. I agree it is a good rule, but there is also strong objection to it in the above argument. I think, too, that if it were to be enforced in a touchy situation it would look like a very arbitrary rule, not fair at all. Why not present it as a suggested Good Idea to get people to vote, but make sure it's not called a Rule.

Al and I are going to Europe because we want to go to Europe and we are using the WorldCon in London as an excuse. We'll spend the whole summer just knocking around France, Italy, and Greece, as we have it planned now.

Wally, we do not keep "books" on TAFF, but since I took up this job I have been keeping a simple In-Out-Balance book to keep from losing money personally. The TAFF Funds are to be kept separate from your personal money—at least, while there is no such rule, I highly recommend such a policy. I have two savings accounts, TAFF and my own.

Don Ford assured me that the TAFF Fund is not taxable, and that you do not need to declare your \$600 as income—I didn't do it, and nobody said anything to me, although an audit of my tax return would have shown many expenditures outside my own income, I'm certain. I recommend (1) that you ask a tax consultant before declaring the \$600 (2) that you try to get out of paying tax on it.

Interest on a TAFF account is negligible, believe me. Drop it into the Fund, and forget it.

I think there is no way to keep TAFF Funds from being tied up in your estate if you die. Probably the best thing to do is (1) mention them in your will as belonging to TAFF, and name somebody—hell, me as well as anyone, but Buz or Larry Shaw or Walt Willis or Ethel or anybody else responsible would do as well—as recipient in case of your death (2) keep them in a separate account, labeled TRANS-ATLANTIC FAN FUND, with your signature. Those two things should keep things fairly clear, even though it would be some time before the problem got resolved.

Theoretically, TAFF should apply to any fan, anywhere. There are certain objections, however, to anyone except *English* and *American* fans standing:

- (1) The host country could be either England or America, and the sending country would never receive a return visit.
- (2) It is conceivable that two New Zealand fans could win in succession, leaving all of TAFF in NZ for years, and throwing a monkey-wrench into national identification with TAFF in America and England.
- (3) Another possibility is that five TAFF winners in a row (or any number of TAFF winners in a row) could be from outside America or England, and America and England might well wonder when they would get a chance to send somebody.
- (4) Conclusion: These weird happenings are highly improbable, because the votes are cast here, not there—witness the negligible turnouts from other countries. I think it would be a good thing for Foyster, Uhara, Gindorf, Stenfors, Ladonka, or Dupla to stand for TAFF; I doubt they would win, but it would certainly add a world-wideness to the Fund that would not hurt.

The only foreigners—or, to be exact, the only non-US non-UK fans I can think of who might ever have won TAFF are now inactive—Linard, Versins, Mervyn, Barrett (he's UK, but Aussy), Bruce Burn (not a bad idea for next time, perhaps), Jan Jansen, etc. Mostly European, I think.

I think there is one other interesting thing to consider: a far-out TAFF candidate is about as likely to win as a far-out country is likely to win the world con selection. Maybe it's not as bad as all that, but it's similar.

I think there will never be an incompetent TAFF Administrator, for reasons I pointed out in the Moffat-Ellik *Fandbook*—such qualities as competence are among those weighed when people cast their votes. Kent Corey, for instance, never stood a chance at TAFF, so it did no harm whatever to let him stand.

You are not causing me any extra work, Wally, by not taking things seriously. I fully expected to continue working with you until such time as you are ready to take things over completely—which I fondly imagine will be when you return from England, in May or thereabouts. I hope you won't let me make all the decisions in the meantime—whenever you have an opinion, express it, and rest assured that you are as much the Voice of TAFF as you want to be, not as I want you to be.

See you folks, Ron

#

30 November 1963

Dear Ethel and Wally,

Damn damn damn. Ethel, duck, I didn't realize until today that your vacation would conflict with the opening of this TAFF race. I sure hope this letter reaches you in Monday's post, but, I don't see that that's very likely.

Anyway, you said it would be forwarded to Scotland if arriving during the first days of your trip. But then, you'll be all that way up there and, oh well.

Look, I have four dollars from F.M. Busby to nominate Arthur with, and that makes ALL the nomination requirements to my knowledge except Arthur's signature, which (I believe) no one has ever explicitly claimed to have seen. I doubt not its existence, just that I'd ask.

By the way, I would like to apologize humbly; yesterday I cleaned my desk (you wouldn't believe the difference—did you know my desk is wood?) and found a letter dated 7 October, Ethel, containing a transcript of Walter's nomination platform for Arthur. I abase myself.

Now, please forgive me and stop cursing and sit down and write me a return- mail letter with (1) confirmation that all requirements have been met and Art is a bona fide candidate (2) as much info as you have on the Phil Rogers case, and (3) your decision about the deadline. If Rogers is about to be nominated in seriousness, I agree that you might stretch the deadline for him a few days. If it is going to be a (you will excuse me) half-assed affair *comment celui de* Ted White last time, please close out the race now. (I threw in some French because whenever anybody in my family says something crude they always follow it by saying "Pardon my French" and it usually isn't in French anyway, because they stopped speaking it two generations back.)

I will undertake to (1) publish the ballot to your specifications; (2) get an airmail copy to Bennett; (3) get an airmail copy to Mercer for BSFA; (4) distribute it with *Starspinkle*; (5) even inform Wally what's going on. Numbers (2) and (3) are easy because Ron and Arch get (4).

Oh, yes, I'll even pay fifteen cents and airmail a copy to Good Old Wuntram with a plea for his services transductive.

About Bruce: everybody and anybody in the States would be happy to be a Thomson nominator, Bruce is not unhappy to be left out; he was just trying to be helpful.

Wally, write to Bill Evans for info about a British Railways Pass and stuff like that. He talks about them at length in the current issue of *Celephais* (his FAPA magazine) when he talks about his trip to Europe and England last summer—read Buz' copy. The SFCoL has contracted to purchase you a London transport pass (the "Seven Day Go-As-You-Please Ticket" which they provided me) but the British Railways pass and perhaps similar things might be a real savings if they fit your itinerary.

And get your damn vaccinations as soon as possible. I waited until two days before leaving, and it was sore the first week—Beryl Bentcliffe had just gotten the same vac., and we compared large, tender red shoulders while I was in Stockport. Her shoulder is much more attractive than mine, I might add.

Ron

#

This was the final letter by Ellik in the letterfile. It seems like a very odd place to stop so I can only assume there were further letters but these have been lost. However, his newszine continued:

From *Starspinkle* #27 (19 December 1963):

TAFF TALK: The Discon finished off rather well, reports treasurer Bill Evans, accompanying his words with a donation of one hundred dollars to the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund. The Fund now has over one thousand dollars on the U.S. side, before either 64 trip is paid for. ##Five ballots received here to date. ##Yes, reader "Curious", the next US winner will go to London in '65 if there's a WorldCon there.

#

There was indeed. Arthur Thomson duly won his TAFF race and attended Pacificon II, the 1964 WorldCon, where he presented the bid for a London WorldCon to be run by SFCoL—the Science Fiction Club of London. As predicted, it won easily.

Links to reports of their TAFF trips by Ellik, Lindsay, Weber, Thomson—and indeed me—can be found here: <http://taff.org.uk/taffhist.html> at the wonderful TAFF site maintained by Dave Langford, as can a breakdown of results for all the races

Lewis and Ellik would attend the 1965 London WorldCon, in the company of Ellik's girlfriend, Lois Lavender. An account of the convention, with lots of photos, can be found here: <http://www.fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/THEN%20Archive/1965Worldcon/65Wcon.htm>

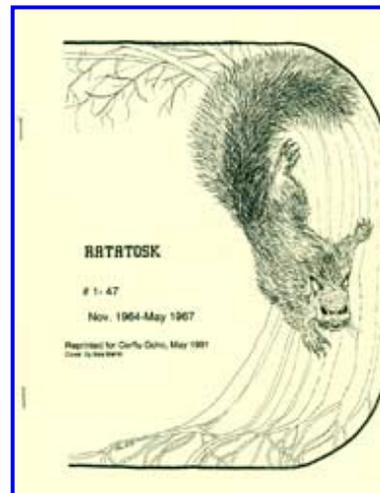
Before this, however, there would be major changes in Ellik's life:

From *Starspinkle* #50 (5 November 1964):

MON 16 NOV 64, I report to work at the Washington, D.C., office of Computer Sciences Corporation. They're transferring me, permanently, to the big Goddard Space Flight Center contract we just acquired; at the end of one year, I will be allowed to return to L.A. or stay in D.C.



Starspinkle



Ratatosk

What this means to you is that the team of Ellik & Pelz, Gossip Mongers, is splitting up, and after a searching thirty seconds of introspection I have decided not to continue *Starspinkle*. Bruce plans to continue the good fight, with the title *Ratatosk* (I like that title, but what's it got to do with science-fiction?), first bi-weekly issue to appear on 19 November. Subs at 3/25¢, large amounts discouraged; overseas rates, agents, etc., will be announced shortly. Send him your newspaper clippings, your sticky quarters, your comments on Harlan Ellison's TV shows, your changes of address, and

the full story of your love life. He does not guarantee to publish all of it; clippings, however, will continue to go to the Institute for Speculative Literature.

The team of Ellik & Lewis is also splitting; Fred Patten is moving into 1825 Greenfield in my place. Al and I will still take a trip around Europe next summer, culminating at the LonCon II; it'll be harder to plan, a continent apart, but we hadn't planned on doing much planning anyway. Watch for us.

#

Tragically, Ellik was killed in a car crash on 25 January 1968, the day before he was to marry Lois Lavender. Here's what Ethel Lindsay wrote at the time:

From *Scottishe* #47 (March 1968):

In the death of Ron Ellik by one of those senseless accidents that always seem so unfair; fandom has been robbed of a universally popular fan. A young man at the height of his power, with a glowing future before him—this is always the hardest death to which we can reconcile ourselves.

I think one of the reasons Ron was so well liked was because he had a basic seriousness beneath his happy extrovert appearance. Ron could seem so carefree—and yet be so capable and efficient. During his time as TAFF Administrator he was seen at his best; full of bubbling enthusiasm and very practical ideas. TAFF has never been conducted so well before or since.

His style with words was inimitable; I cannot remember anyone who made me laugh so often as I read. In particular his newszine *Starspinkle* can stand as a shining example of how to convey facts and news and entertain at the same time.

He was a good friend to many fans like myself who have kindnesses to remember. I never knew him but he was helping with something, or giving help to someone. He smoothed the way for many of us.

I never thought of Ron but I smiled and felt good—I am so glad that I knew him.

#

Ron Ellik (1938-1968)

—

Photo credits: Some of these photos are from Ethel Lindsay's album. I believe the others were all by Tom Schlück, except for the one noted as by Keith Freeman. Fanzine cover scans courtesy Robert Lichtman collection.



Lois Lavender and Ron Ellik.
Photo by Keith Freeman

True terror is to wake up one morning and discover your high school class is running the country.
—Kurt Vonnegut

Spooky*

by John Baxter

London in 1965 was coming alive, particularly the former no-go areas of Notting Hill and Ladbroke Grove. The libertarian tradition of SF ensured that sex, drugs, and rock and roll were available to any writer or fan who wanted them. 'At the end of February 1965, I threw a party in my tenement,' says Charles Platt. 'Science-fiction fans came from as far away as Liverpool. Former school friends showed up. Moorcock, Langdon Jones, Ballard, John Brunner, Graham Hall, and other *New Worlds* contributors were there. The lowlifes on the ground floor were smoking hashish (a novelty, in those days). A couple of them were shooting heroin (even more of a novelty, since at that time it could only be obtained by prescription on the National Health Service). On the floor above there was heavy drinking and vigorous dancing, making the floor flex disconcertingly.

Jim was the spectre at this feast. 'He lurked in one corner,' says Platt, 'looking uneasy, clutching a copy of my fanzine which I had thrust into his hands.' He appeared utterly and irretrievably out of his depth.

Firmer ground awaited him in the Hampstead home of John Brunner, who dispensed hospitality just as liberally, but with more discretion. Alcohol and conversation flowed, a powerful strain of marijuana, known as Hampstead Green, flourished at the bottom of the garden, and Brunner and his wife, Marjorie, openly entertained a succession of lovers. Brunner's vainglorious manner, reminiscent of a Jacobean cavalier, could be hard to take. Ostentatiously *engagé*, he'd written songs for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which is where he met Marjorie. He also endowed a prize for poetry, and answered what he believed was a pressing public interest in his work and personality by printing a glossy autobiographical booklet which he distributed widely.



John Baxter in the Luxembourg gardens. The building behind him is the palace of Marie de Medicis.

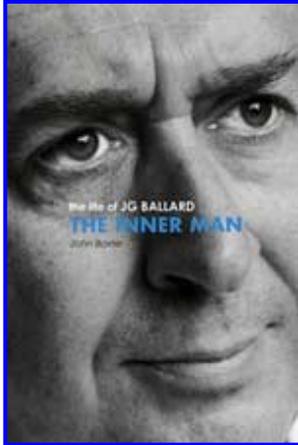
Sometimes Ballard and Moorcock squabbled over which of them should accept Brunner's invitations. Jim didn't resist too much. Conveniently for him, these soirees took place on Fridays, when he most needed to unwind. They were also an excellent place to meet women. With no time to waste in idle chat, he propositioned them with vigour and had considerable success. One of his earliest partners was the vivacious Marjorie Brunner, but he preferred women he could take home to Shepperton for the weekend, sometimes swinging by Ladbroke Grove to describe the party to Moorcock and show off his conquest.

In the summer of 1965, Jim piled the kids into the car and drove to Greece. Less than twelve months before, he had been in Spain with Mary. But the year since her death had seen fundamental changes in his life, both professional and personal. His work was entering a new phase, and he'd come through bereavement not only intact but more confident. Sitting in a café in Athens, he watched the actor Michael Redgrave cross the street, buy a magazine, chat with the kiosk owner, and enjoy a drink in a bar. Though Redgrave had no reason to believe he was known in Athens, he automatically exaggerated his gestures, acting even when there was no audience. It confirmed Jim's conviction, shared by Marshall McLuhan, that we all cast ourselves as characters in a fiction of our own authorship.

In Athens he received an unexpected visit by two emissaries from Stanley Kubrick, then filming *2001: A Space Odyssey* at Shepperton Studios. With the movie almost completed, Kubrick and screenwriter Arthur C. Clarke were wrestling with a conclusion. Before choosing Clarke as a collaborator, Kubrick had set out to read something by every major living SF writer, Jim included. Now he demanded his immediate presence to consult on the film. Jim refused. His holiday and his children took precedence. Such intransigence made Kubrick testy. When Clarke brought other writers to the set, including Moorcock, he ordered them off. Jim saw the completed film at the same preview as Aldiss and Moorcock and, like them, felt it, in Moorcock's phrase, 'a bit cold in the visionary department'. The famously self-confident Clarke was unperturbed. 'He took our poor response with his usual amused forgiveness reserved for lesser mortals,' says Moorcock,

‘and told us how many millions the movie had already made in America.’

In 1965, Jim also met William Burroughs for the first time when the writer paid a visit to Britain. The following year Burroughs moved to London and rented a small apartment in the very centre of the city. ‘This was in a street called Duke Street, literally about 100 yards from Piccadilly Circus,’ recalled Jim. ‘That’s where all the boys used to congregate, in the lavatory of the big Piccadilly Circus Underground station. It was quite a shock for a heterosexual like myself to accidentally stray into this lavatory and to find oneself in what seemed to be a kind of oriental male brothel.’ Burroughs’ paranoia also spooked Jim; he warned visitors to keep away from the windows, claiming the CIA and *Time* magazine had him under surveillance from a laundry van.



Kubrick wasn’t alone in seeing Jim’s work as movie material. Edith Cottrell, a neophyte producer based in Paris, bought the film rights to *The Crystal World* and hired critic Jonathan Rosenbaum to adapt it. Both Jean Seberg and Susan Sontag, already an enthusiast for Ballard, read his script, but it was never filmed. Sensing the new media interest in his work, Jim even wrote, on spec, a screenplay for *The Drought*, hoping to get work as a screenwriter, but he never found a buyer.

In 1964, the BBC had hired US producer Irene Shubik to create a series of fifty-minute SF plays on the model of the US shows *The Outer Limits* and *The Twilight Zone*. She bought stories by Asimov, Pohl, and Bradbury from American agents, then approached Carnell, who sold her stories by Wyndham and Brunner, as well as Ballard’s ‘Thirteen to Centaurus’. One of his first sales in the US, it appeared in *Amazing* in April 1962, just after the novella publication of *The Drowned World*. The story belonged to the ‘claustrophobic’ phase that inspired ‘Manhole 69’. The characters are again lab rats, twelve people living in what they think is a spaceship en route to Alpha Centauri but

which is actually a sealed environment in a subarctic hangar, under constant surveillance. A doctor on board and a team in the hangar monitor the reactions of the crew, gathering data against the day when they make a real journey. Fifty years into the experiment, the doctor discovers that the hereditary captains have long since figured out the deception and even created a peephole into the outside world. They prefer, however, to maintain the fantasy.

The fifty-minute play, in black and white, aired on 13 December 1965, with Donald Houston giving a serviceable performance as the doctor. Allowing for the cardboard sets, the toyshop scientific equipment, and the insistence that even the observing technicians dress like Buck Rogers, *Thirteen to Centaurus* did only minimum violence to a story that, in terms of Jim’s development, was already an anachronism.



How many of these people can you name?

The one fundamental change made by screenwriter Stanley Miller, a veteran of TV adaptations, highlighted the key problem of dramatising Ballard: his stories have no ‘third act’. Most end in an irrational action by the protagonist – existentially authentic, but a storyteller’s nightmare. Jim’s version concludes with the doctor’s discovery of the deception, leaving any aftermath to the imagination. Miller rewrote this to show the next candidate for captain

overpowering the doctor and brainwashing him into believing the voyage is real. The solution imposes rationality on a writer who never professed to be rational.

In August 1965, another World SF Convention, the twenty-third, took place in London. Jim was still in Greece, but on his return he met one of its guests, Judith Merrill, the US editor who'd championed his work. Born Judith Grossman, Merrill, seven years older than Ballard and far from beautiful, was as famous for her voracious sexuality as for her militant Zionism and Communism. Ballard called her 'the strongest woman in a genre for the most part created by timid and weak men'. Shortly after Ballard returned from Greece, they became lovers.

It was Merrill who, exploring the house at Shepperton after having spent the night, discovered Mary's clothes still in the wardrobes. 'Spooky!' she confided to friends. Nor was she the first woman to feel offended when Jim packed her off on Sunday night with a clear indication that he had no further use for her until the following Friday. Another woman complained to Jim 'I only see you at night', and Jim admitted that, as he swept down the Thames Valley at sunset each Friday, heading for an assignation, his behaviour did resemble that of a vampire thirsting for fresh blood.

Merril found Ballard's behaviour progressively more disconcerting. During one of her weekends at Shepperton, Langdon Jones, Charles Platt, and Moorcock paid a visit. According to Platt, 'Jim had acquired a copy of The Who's single *Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere*. "I like it much better at 33 rpm," he said. We all started laughing, and he became slightly annoyed. "Well, have you tried it?" he challenged us. Of course none of us had listened to it at 33 rpm, so, we then had to sit patiently while he played it at that speed, and then at 16.'

On her last visit to Shepperton, Merrill pocketed as a souvenir Ballard's Parker fountain pen. It had no intrinsic value, only a symbolic one as a relic from life with Mary. Forty years later, he'd still be writing letters with it. Once he discovered the loss, Jim pursued her urgently, eventually arriving at Waterloo station as she boarded the boat train to Southampton. Having wrongly assumed he'd come to see her off, Merrill handed over the pen with poor grace. 'Well, *sayonara*,' Jim said, awkwardly, but with an intonation polished in Lunghua. As the train pulled out, Merrill, who knew no Japanese but was determined to have the last word, leaned out of the window, fuming, and, aware of how he disliked editorial correction, shouted, 'It's *sayon ara!*'



Judith Merrill, William F. Temple, Fred Parker (Ella's brother), and Ron Ellik (foreground right). Photo by Peter Mabey.

—
*Excerpted from *THE INNER MAN. The Life of J.G. Ballard*, and reprinted with the permission of John Baxter.

New knowledge is the most valuable commodity on Earth. The more truth we have to work with, the richer we become.

—Kurt Vonnegut Jr., *Breakfast of Champions*

Echoes of Peake*

by Michael Moorcock

Titus Awakes, by Maeve Gilmore, based on a fragment by Mervyn Peake, The Overlook Press, 267pp \$24.95



Linda and Michael Moorcock.

An outstanding painter, illustrator, poet, novelist, and playwright, Mervyn Peake is now solidly part of the British literary canon; voted in a recent London *Times* critics' poll one of the best fifty UK writers since 1945. His centenary, celebrated this year, includes an exhibition at the British Library, an academic conference, the publication of new material such as *The Sunday Books* and republication of several of his very best works including *The Illustrated Gormenghast*.

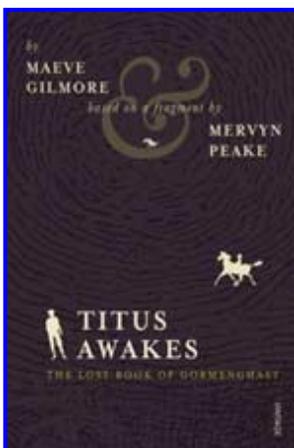
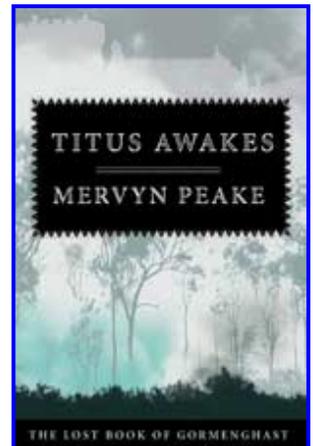
In the US Peake tends to be mentioned in the same breath as Tolkien simply because he wrote three books set in a world 'parallel' to our own. But his Gormenghast sequence was never intended to be a trilogy, has little or no supernatural content and lacks Tolkien's sentimentality. Before his descent into the debilitating illness which eventually killed him Peake planned further novels which

would bring his protagonist Titus Groan into worlds more specifically like our own. *Titus Alone* drew more directly on what he had seen in Belsen and Europe in the aftermath of WW2.

Planning *Titus Awakes*, the fourth book, Peake sketched out where he would take Titus. Scenes were headed 'Titus in the mountains; among the snows' and so on. He would take his naïve protagonist into the contemporary world, returning him to Gormenghast to suit a narrative blending fantasy and reality. He discussed these ideas with his wife, the painter Maeve Gilmore, his close collaborator in the preparation of his novels, with whom he was probably happiest on the island of Sark.

Maeve Gilmore loved Peake passionately and selflessly. His illness and death devastated her. In an effort to ground her grief she decided to write the novel he had planned, using his notes and remembered conversation. She used four notebooks and when she had finished she set them aside, making no real effort to publish. She died in 1983 and last year, her daughter rediscovered the manuscript, an ideal work for this year's centenary.

A fascinating, intensely personal homage, *Titus Awakes*, with its themes of baffled love and loss, becomes a testament of Maeve Gilmore's devotion as Titus wanders into a world even more dreamlike than the original.



Accompanied only by his faithful Dog, Titus is soon on a quest for place and identity in a succession of increasingly uncomfortable landscapes. Frequently a passive participant in the ambitions of others Titus reflects the increasing bewilderment of Peake as his hold on reality weakened. The protagonist is really more Peake or Gilmore than he is Titus.

Finding a way successfully to echo the music of the originals if not the eloquent precision of her husband's baroque style, she sends Titus first on Peake's proscribed adventures and then, as her confidence grows, into situations of her own devising.

Ultimately Titus finds friends in a painter's colony whose backgrounds and characters have the authority of observed reality. There are chilling scenes in a hospital reminiscent of Peake's own experience as his condition worsened. One character – the artist – might even be Peake.

Death is present everywhere, even in the lyrical passages. Close to the novel's end, Titus is

captured by a nihilistic political gang and begins to grow into a substantial character, no longer merely reacting to others. Gilmore's talent, as in her paintings, was for intensified reality and gradually she reveals herself as perhaps the ideal person to take Titus into Peake's intended world. 'He knew he was at last determining his own life.' Ultimately Titus crosses the sea and arrives at an island very much like Sark, where the Peakes were so happy. Before he disembarks he sees a tall man watching the ship. To us it is evidently Peake, surrounded by his children, who joins Titus as he walks from the ferry. 'Titus no longer felt alone but part of someone who would shape his life to come. There's not a road, not a track, but will lead him home.'

Thus Maeve Gilmore as well as Titus finds resolution, affirming the deep love of life, the fundamental optimism she always shared with the man she loved.

—

*Reprinted from the Los Angeles *Times* with the permission of Michael Moorcock.

A purpose of human life, no matter who is controlling it, is to love whoever is around to be loved.
—Kurt Vonnegut, *Sirens of Titan*

Some Varieties of Authenticity in “Throwaway” Paperbacks

By Jay A. Gertzman

In 1950s-60s paperbacks, the criteria for success often had little to do with the writer. The number of copies sold depended on cover illustration, title, blurbs, points of sale, genre, and display strategies. Could a writer working in the genre of “throwaway” mass market paperbacks create something that leaves a lasting echo in the mind of a reader? Their work could not satisfy literary criteria such as allusions to famous works, experiment with language and form, or non-chronological narratives. But to satisfy readers meant, to some pulp paperback writers, leaving the readers thinking, because they could not help doing so themselves.

These writers saw a space opening up for something chaotic, tentative, experimental, and new. It was, as the *New York Times* book reviewers (or editors) would put it, “sub-literary.” Public intellectuals labeled such writing “mass cult.” Dwight MacDonald, who coined the term, believed movies, TV, and pop fiction were producing a “mass” who cannot develop a sense of individuality, or any “aversions” or “aspirations” that are not mere clichés. Someone should have wised him up about the flexibility of capitalism, the subversive kind that the system ignores because it is just a flaw in the corporate fabric. Beyond the prurience and escapism, which sold and were the reason the writers of the thrillers and soft-core sex pulps got their assignments, notes of a rough authenticity could be heard in the background.

The paperbacks that did not deserve to be throwaways were about the way their readers lived. In the '40s and '50s, the audience for paperbacks was downscale. Self-aware, self-obsessed writers in the genre brought to their readers a search for awareness of what lay behind confusion and bitterness about their present and future situations. Their work existed in that unregulated space of “lowbrow,” “adults only,” “soft core” sensation. Not at all a black hole, that space was a borderline or no man’s land between social taboos and a guilty but not prurient fascination with going beyond them.

Exploring that fascination is what each novel I discuss touches on. I don’t know, specifically, who bought the cheap paperback novels of the mid twentieth century. I obviously was a mass audience: many sold over a million, print runs could be 30,000 and up, the points of sales were varied and placed where passersby and browsers were legion.

They were a staple of urban mass entertainment areas, along with grinder movie theaters, record shops, flea circuses, pinball parlors, newsstands, bars, and Tad’s Steaks. You could get them from airport and bus terminal kiosks, candy stores, cigar stores, and even from vending machines in subways. That kind of availability to working class, office workers teenagers, minorities, and the underclass in itself explains the congressional investigations. They were instituted to question not whether, but how, paperback availability to “inchoate minds” contributed to juvenile delinquency and sex crimes. Thus Ezekiel Gathings of Arkansas, head of a 1952 House Committee Investigation of Literature *Allegedly* Containing Objectionable Material, predicted the focus would be on “the kind of filthy sex books sold at the corner store which are affecting the youth of the country.” Someone had to be shamed by the anxiety, and prurient and violent fascinations, of Americans. It was the paperback distributors, with their “improper [allegedly!] emphasis on crime, violence, and perversion” who were punished, and the mass readership that was patronized. But not by many of the writers.

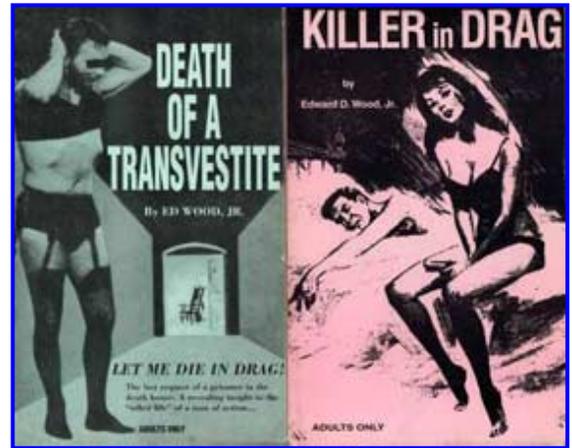
Ed Wood, Jr., *Death of a Transvestite* (1967, Pad Library)

“If Jerry Springer had a book club, this book would be first on the list.” So wrote poet James McCrary. He’s got Wood’s audience right. The book would be likely to fascinate a number of readers, since it is about one of the most fascinating of alternative sexual behaviors, transvestism. It is also a thriller—two hit men, one fleeing the mob (*Glen/Glenda*) and the other (*The Killer*) paid to eliminate the defector. Springer book club members are less likely to sneer than the members of Oprah’s audience would. Everybody knows *Plan 9 from Outer Space* was the worst movie ever. Everyone except people who like that space between the hard core banned expression and what was acknowledged as “serious” or “significant” art. People like Wood’s biographer, Rudolph Grey, whose *Nightmare of Ecstasy* is based on Grey’s ability to enter Wood’s “bizarre and hermetic environment” with interviews, posters, press books, family photos, stills from the films, and images of the movie houses that showed them. “Wood’s art is a cultural mutation. He defies comparison,” wrote Grey. Cultural mutation is met with snarl words such as sleaze, degeneracy, and sub-literary.

Wood’s originality comes from his deepest level of awareness: transvestite desire for happiness with a female lover, while wearing women’s clothes. LA’s Pad Library was a soft core outfit. Its titillation sold even more books if the moralists tried to censor them. Woods’ descriptions of a male in drag having hot sex with a woman fit its formulae, and might establish

a niche audience whose need overcame its uneasiness at having to read what was most important to it in a disreputable publication. The stores that sold it and their honky tonk locations were equally so. Wood's characters, plots, and settings exist in an aura of sleaze and kitsch as a kind of protective covering, or camouflage for the challenge he presents for those who look for authenticity behind the mountain of meretricious bullshit vomited out by phrases such as fag, queer, fairy, special rights, crime of sodomy, beatnik, sissy.

Wood tells us that the transvestite's desire—indeed his “religion”—is to die in female attire. It isn't a confession of guilt; it's the desire to die as one needed to live. He does not want to end in authentically, masquerading as a sexual creature he could not be in life. Although Glen wants to screw women (and therefore does not want a sex change operation), he wants to do so dressed in slip and panties. Yet he knows he is male, and speaks of Glen in the first person, Glenda in third. His body is sacred. He controls it to an extent most people do not even think of doing. He has found an ecstasy that is intense. It is associated very closely with pain; a “nightmare of ecstasy.” This is a kind of outrageous authenticity that gives the novel immediacy, and gives the narrator a weird power over himself. Therefore, he can please and fascinate others, not only the women he loves to the point of self-sacrifice, but even the prison warden.



Wood, as filmmaker, knew a lot about point of view. He dares his viewers and readers to challenge their own. The Killer shares Glen's sexual preferences and fashion preferences, and he had the same hawk nose as Wood himself. He's a doppelganger, or evil double, of Glen. Glen has the strength to dispose of him. Wood brings his plot to a climax in the novel's final sentences, which a literary critic would call absurd, cartoonish, or bad taste but which could be evaluated without the soiled coin of bad faith and skewed judgment. It's an extreme stretch of the imagination, weird in the best way—because there is so much more to it than it appears to conventional eyes. The point of view, which had been shifting between police officials, various witnesses, the prison warden, and Glen/Glenda himself, is finally that of a bobblehead reporter:

“One of the reporters in the witness-stand (in the electrocution chamber) watched the beautiful, short-haired girl mince her way toward the seat of destruction. He wanted to whistle, but instead turned to a fellow reporter.

‘I thought it was a guy they were strapping in.’ ”

It was, asshole.

Elliott Chaze, *Black Wings Has My Angel* (Gold Medal, 1953)

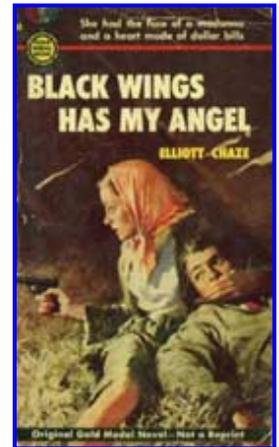
This book is an imitation, or replication, of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1939) actually published by Knopf in an experimental paperback series and in hardback (1934). The protagonist, Tim (an alias he assumed after a prison sentence), even looks like John Garfield, who plays Frank in the film version of James M Cain's novel. I do not know how many readers recognized in *Black Wings* the clear patterns of Cain's novel: desperate need leading to murder, leading the perpetrators to fear betrayal by each other, leading to their re-establishment of love and hope for the future, leading finally to a gruesome justice that is the spirit of truth itself and meant to be contrasted to the way the law is used as a game to amuse lawyers and elected officials.

The climax in both books is loaded with irony and narrated starkly. Readers could weep, sink into a depression (Tim, like Frank in *Postman*, is awaiting execution as he writes), and possibly end up with a dispassionate admiration. The latter would hinge upon recognizing that redemption can only come about through sin, and only exists in the mind and heart of the individual, not in any clichéd consolation from a lawman. It is people whose vulnerability depends of low social status and defiance of a hostile world who can attain that kind of redemption. In *Black Wings*, the protagonists, Tim and Virginia, have possessed the cultural capital of college education, country club membership, and aristocratic drinking, eating, and speech patterns. He and Virginia have escaped the synthetic for the earth-bound, and they will never adjust to bourgeois life.

Bill Crider remarked that *Black Wings* is “the definitive Gold Medal paperback original. He may have had in mind the preference of Tim and Virginia for underclass life after upscale youths. The sex, violence, and suspense would have been major criteria, as would the setting, which shifts from the Oklahoma oil fields and New York to the skid row in Denver,

where the robbery takes place. Then the now-wealthy couple experiences the middle class whites of New Orleans, and the deep South's honky-tonk bars and tough police, and Parchman prison in Mississippi (where Tim learned thievery and where his teacher planned an armored car robbery but was killed in an escape attempt). The book has plenty of sex and violence, and thus prurient appeal. But it also encourages a working class readership's empathy.

Proletarian frustration, bitterness, lack of resources, and inability to contain accumulated anger guide the action in both *Postman* and *Black Wings*. Cain's Cora and Frank feel trapped and desperate enough to kill. Their work is clumsy and at first a failure. Tim and Virginia also are killers. But Tim cold-bloodedly knifes a security guard ("custodian" of the armored car) in "rugged, animalistic," and at the same time Machiavellian, self-interest. Their shrewdness is reinforced by Tim's higher education, and Virginia's having grown up in New York high society. The armored car, and the corpse of the driver, are driven into a vast pit in an abandoned mine site. "I keep thinking about the custodian [the guard] down there is the blackness, floating forever, his face bobbing against the slits of the steel wall [of the armored car]." "He wore [the knife Tim thrust into his chest] like a stickpin, right through the middle of his black service tie." Tim realizes that if he does not have to worry about being caught, he does have to worry not only at the force of justice inside his own head, but Virginia, who may be planning to kill him. After all, he is thinking of killing her.



The denouement in Chaze's story is as fatalistic as Cain's, but is not as tragic as *Postman's*. Cora and Frank eventually recovered trust and love for each other. They are able to believe in a future for themselves and the child Cora is carrying, when a car accident claims Frank's pregnant wife. Frank can face what he has done, both as murderer and as a man who has atoned, not only by recognizing his love of Cora, but by being brought to experience the cruelty of cosmic justice. Tim and Virginia are not as sympathetic, being cold blooded killers. Virginia, unlike Cora, is a femme fatale, as the title indicates, although she is not consistently that. She's more an archetypal Lilith than a noire Brigit O'Shaughnessy. Chaze may have loaded his thriller with one too many themes. Virginia is driven by sexual lust but also by a drive for authenticity, only reachable in her culture by "animalistic" hard-heartedness, her black wings. Of course, it is Tim who planned the robbery and who preemptorily thrusts his knife into the guard so forcefully that he feels bone and well as flesh. When he tears open the money sacks, he feels gratitude toward the dead guard, and a sexual thrill, which he shares with Virginia. But it's also worship of Mammon's black wings.

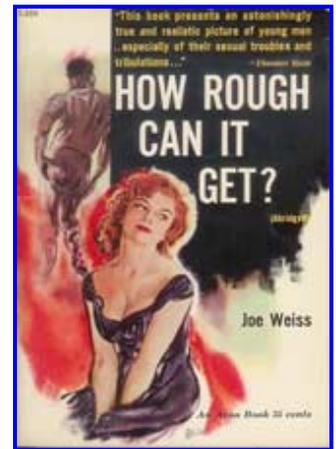
Tim and Virginia feel they can only break out of their frozen enslavement to mutual suspicion by a baptism of darkness. They must look into the pit where the "custodian" with Tim's knife in his chest will spend eternity guarding the looted car. In Tim's obsessive fantasies his victim's bald head shines "like a pearl, with a lot of pink and blue in it." That suggests guilt, but Chaze's imagery is too scintillating to attribute to any one response to human experience. I'm not sure whether Virginia's prediction that she will die a death as horrible as anyone ever has indicates guilt or the vulnerability she had purchased from her behavior. It's a very different fate than that of Cora and Frank.

Virginia would never give her lover the chance to kill her that Cora does. Tim and Virginia are in hell. Chaze's ending is first rate horror, definitely from the twilight zone, and as noir as is possible: screams, paralysis, torture of soul and body: "the dizzying pull of the blackness." *Postman's* lovers find a togetherness that can outlast death and destroy fear. Outfacing a ragged-edged, stony, flooded, unfathomably deep pit will not do the same for the protagonists of *Black Wings*. Its author is not about to draw a moral. Is that to his discredit, compared to the tragic sense Cain elicits? I would say it is simply a different piece of writing, and guided not by any lack of respect for his readers. Instead, he actually refuses to come to a closure that would dilute the dread. That may be "sub-literary," but it is also a complement to readers who are hard nosed enough to put up with it.

Joe Weiss, *How Rough Can It Get* (Avon, 1952[?])

The paperback cover (published no more than a year after the hardback original) is not as much a come-on as it looks, although Florence Goodman, the girlfriend of the narrator Bob Engel, would not wear such a come-and-get-me dress and assume such a posture, being a "nice Jewish girl" from the Bronx circa 1950. Nor would Bob, a nice Jewish boy (with a spanking fetish) have the street corner tough guy posture. But the girl in the painting is a submissive, and Bob would love her as much as he does Florence. She's only five feet tall, "cute," his "baby." Her girlfriends call her "our crotchie doll," and even her mom admits she needs a "fine man who won't take her guff" and will "turn her upside down every once in a while." Filtered through the "Jewish geography" of the Bronx—weekend dances ("rat races"), the park at 161st Street (the "Bronx Country Club"), the cafeterias, the cheaper rooming houses at the shore or in the Catskills—the mating ritual takes its course.

There's Barry Feinstein, an intelligent, quiet guy who works for a publishing house. He reads a lot, likes ballet, has a lot of books, but did not go to college, so he does not have the same ambitions as his friends who are studying to be professional people. Not a big operator, Barry lives like "a man without a country." His brother, called Lifty because he is so ugly he needs a face lift, is a good dancer and dresser. After a single dance, he would ask right away for a date. The rules of the game say that's too much pressure, but Lifty did not want the girl to talk over his looks with her friends. She'd decline, and he would counter with "You're no bargain either." Note the spite that frustration and competition for elusive resources. The wind up is "taking it to the mattress," the guys relieving their blue-balled frustrations with porno, girlie magazines, burlesque, or fantasies built on glomming a babe earlier that day.



Weiss devotes a whole section of his novel to Herbie ("what a piece") Browsky, a truck ("airplane") pusher in the Garment District. Bald and moon faced, he compensates with a polished line, an excellent dance technique, and bold action, like kissing a girl he's not yet met on the neck. He peeps at models getting dressed, sometimes masturbates in an alley, not being able to wait until he gets home, where sex novels and photos await. He believes with all his heart that "I'm the biggest sex maniac in New York." For him, it all pays off big when he becomes a live sex performer at the midtown "sex circuses" the garment district execs put on for their rich clients.

Herbie's dream comes true, while his buddy Spencer Birnbaum crashes in flames. After a bad morning that starts with mother and sister calling him a "bum" and his job hunting failing for lack of credentials, he snaps. A pretty girl flirts with him and he tries to rape her. The scene is not well realized. Of course the physical specifics must be left out, but Weiss also fails to take us inside Spencer's head, to what must be self hate and inability to stand up to the ego frustration that he has suffered. Herbie is less of a "sex maniac" than poor Spencer, as it turns out; both are the victims of fortune, since neither is in control.

Weiss wrote many novels for the hardback sex pulps of the '50s, similar in points of sale and cover illustrations to the paperbacks. *How Rough Can It Get* takes advantage of the space that both kinds of publications open up between escaping censorship on the one hand and entertaining with prurient titillation on the other. In that space grow plenty of weeds, but also a weird freedom to be authentic. Despite the stylistic anarchy of *How Rough Can It Get* (how can a writer describe what his narrator sees when he removes a woman's bra as follows: "Her breasts snapped up like Brussels sprouts"?!), its authenticity in setting, plot, and character cannot be denied.

What Weiss did well could be found in the work of James T. Farrell, Budd Schulberg, Irving Shulman, Herman Wouk, Irving Robbins, and Jerome Weidman. But the sex pulp hardback, and the newsstand paperback that reprinted many of them, had a simpler focus. With implied social commentary cut out, the pace was faster. That as where the fun came in. Weiss' editor was the late Alan Wilson of The Woodford Press, named for Jack Woodford, king of the 1930s sex pulp novel. Alan told me *How Rough Can It Get* was a success for the same reason the sleeper hit *Marty* was a few years later. It was dead-on real: the boredom and continual frustration of the young men, the dick teases, the "dogs," the schmucks imitating Bogart or Mitchum, the clumsy wallflowers who couldn't look a girl in the eyes, the creeps who left their dates for hotter-looking chicks, the tired young people still stuck on the dream of finding the elusive right line, right clothes, right eye contact, and dance step.



Borgnine and Blair in *Marty*.

But there is a big difference. The screenwriter for *Marty* was Paddy Chayefsky, a dramatist who drew fire from "literary" highbrows for not having enough "serious" social commentary in his work. Instead, he lets the audience look through the events and get for themselves why *Marty* the film and Marty Piletti the "big ugly man" are so likeable. He rises above his friends because he finds someone he can talk to and who respects him for what he hears ("I can't stop talkin"). Clara is the "dog" he can't stop explaining himself to. Even his anti-pick up line, "So you see, you ain't such a dog as you think you are," makes her smile. Note the movie still of Marty and Clara holding each other. Compare it to the Avon cover that shows an innocent girl in the foreground and in the upper left corner of the image, a guy who lounges with his back turned. They exist on totally different planes. When Marty sits his ass down in that telephone book and calls Clara, he turns his back on his friends, his mother, and his brother (who need him to make themselves feel safe) and begins to live for himself. He has gotten to know his own needs and whom he wants to share them with: someone who cares for him. With Bob, these values are reduced to platitudes. They are all he knows.

Bob, unlike Marty, is without sensitivity to another person: he thinks he loves Florence. What does he see as the difference between her and other girls? All he can understand is that she is “cute,” submissive, she “has tender feelings,” she “blushes,” and is “naive about certain things.” Her mom seems to think it's okay for him to dominate and spank her. He's a girl he can “come home to” and “share everything with—my joys and my troubles.” What about hers? For Bob, like his buddies, reality and fantasy are the same. Marty understands the reality of his feelings, and the sight of Clara crying at the dance makes him see a kindred spirit.

Joe Weiss provides a denouement for the flagellant that substitutes sleazy prurience for explicitness. It's a dream Florence has of being captured by a savage tribe, whipped (you bet), forced to dance naked, and finally being approached by the witch doctor with a flaming pole he is about to stick in her. “It couldn't be happening but it was!” Due to the break in first person narration, the passage is printed in italics. Apparently the inconsistency did not bother the book's editor. Weiss was enjoying himself and so would the spanking lovers taking it to the mattress. Florence awakens, and the fever she had been running has disappeared, according to Weiss. “Normal.” Now Bob approaches with the engagement ring.

A better writer than Weiss would have been more in control of what his story implied. This is a problem with the genre of pop culture he is working in. Bob cannot be called an unreliable narrator. All the potential irony and implied inadequacy are undeveloped. Thus the happy ending, pure wish fulfillment for young male readers who identify with Bob and thus remain as clueless as he, Florence, and her parents are. It shouldn't have happened but it did.

A writer's failure to confront his characters' inner chaos can be a result of what s/he chooses to do rather than a fact of the kind of novel the publisher had ordered. It is more difficult, because of the editors' requirements of soft-core sex scenes, explicit violence, basic language and sentence structure, and sympathetic protagonists. David Goodis, in a paperback original published just a few years later, was able to surmount the obstacles while adhering to the criteria.

David Goodis, *The Blonde on the Street Corner* (Lion Library, 1954)

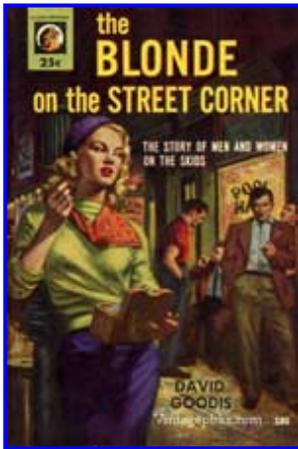
Ralph, Goodis' protagonist and his friends are in the same circumstances in working class Philadelphia as Bob and his Bronx pals find themselves in 16 years later (*Blonde* takes place in 1936). Both sets of single, horny guys live in a large eastern city yet have narrow horizons, hang out at corner stores and public parks, live at home (where some are repeatedly harangued about not having jobs), sleep late, and try to pick up girls at dances.

A major difference is that Ralph Creel senses he is helpless to find happiness. Ralph suffers from an awareness of an inability to fight his demons. He and his best friend Philip “Dippy” Wilkin (because he is as dippy as Weiss's Lifty is in need of a facelift) receive implicit encouragement to stay on the sad merry-go-round of laziness, girl-hunting, dependence of parents, and boredom. Dippy's mother, like Marty Piletti's, is afraid of being alone after her sons are gone. Dippy's brother is married, but Dippy tells his mom, when she expresses her fear, that he will never leave her. “You're a good boy,” she opines. Ralph's father not only is glad to offer his son money, but he is so unenthusiastic whenever Ralph discusses employment that he changes the subject. It's as if his parents have written Ralph off as an emotional cripple. Partly for that reason, Ralph thinks he would hate the dull routine of family life where the man and wife struggle to keep what they have, which is just enough to keep their horizons from expanding beyond the neighborhood's movie theaters and modest eateries. “Little, little, little.” Ralph, ironically, is himself endlessly circling in a routine of dependence and self-contempt. His buddies talk variously of moving to Florida, playing in the majors, or writing. Ralph doesn't even want to show up at dances, talk to girls, or hope for a future relationship. He knows he cannot control his self-defeating compulsions, which include lusting after slutty and violent women, and is in major depression as a result.

When I taught *Blonde on the Street Corner* to first year college students, one member of the class brought the class to stunned silence, by telling us about her personal experience with manic depression. The solitary walks Ralph took repeatedly around the lake in the park, “dark in the thickness of the late night,” especially resonated. The student had counseling support and looked to the future hopefully. Ralph doesn't, and seeks it in Edna, a girl he was too depressed to talk to at a party. Twice he goes to see her; twice she pleads with him to stay. She manages to get him inside, but just barely. Perhaps he is afraid of falling in love with a woman he senses would care so much for him that he would break free from his aimless circling, and reject what he cannot fear to reject: the compulsion to stay with what has hurt him: his friends, his parents, his manic depression. It's very hard to fight enemies all the time, especially when they are within you. It's like walking in aimless circles around the lake, with no light as a guide.

It is a common theme in Goodis, and its autobiographical roots have been clearly explained. Also typical as is the contrast between two basic stereotypes of femininity: the ethereal, soulful, loving heroine and the sexy, fat, blonde, nasty-tongued vixen. In this novel she is Lenore, the sister-in-law of Dippy. The pathos of this increases because it is Edna's as

well as his own chance for happiness he is destroying. He's thinking of Edna when he and Lenore get it on one night while he is waiting for Dippy to come home. The ending is perfect. "In the darkness under his eyelids he could see the shabby house where Edna Daly lived. . . . Then gradually she faded, like something floating out of a dream." Lenore crooks a finger at Ralph like a jailor at a prisoner who has just made a pathetic attempt to escape.



James Sallis has observed that in Goodis' nakedly autobiographical novels the story line is thin, nothing is resolved, and some major characters are underdeveloped, their curious stories only hinted at. In this book, Lenore appears in only four scenes. It must be a disappointment for sex pulp readers, although one scene describes a mutually violent, sadomasochistic sexual contest, and another a blow-by-blow fight with her mother-in-law which ends with an unconscious Lenore lying on a couch with her legs in the air. The ending is a "downer," and even more frustrating for readers who, with low horizons themselves, understand the tragedy of quiet desperation. Finally, the protagonist's story does not end when the novel does, which would annoy the casual reader as much as the lack of suspense.

Goodis seems to be experimenting with his sentence rhythms and choice of words. The latter is sometime bluntly primitive and the sentences consist of four or five words, hammer strikes of repetitive common-as-day monosyllables, interrupted by a image of an everyday something touched with mystifying beauty.

"He would walk around the lake. He would light a cigarette. He would stand at the edge of the lake, looking at the smooth blackness sprinkled with glowing ribbons from lamp posts. He would walk around the lake, moving slowly. He would walk around many times. . . ."

"The big men. Big winners. Winners in a great big crap game. Big men, smart men, lucky men. The glitter, the glimmer, the gloss and the glow. And the emerald studs in a white shirt front and seven thousand bucks. Seventy thousand bucks. Seven hundred thousand honest to God dollars. Sing, dice. On the corner, outside the candy store on the corner. On lots of corners. On a lot of corners in a lot of cities. One the corners of the big cities in this big country. . . ."

This last is part of a three-page incantation on the American Dream. It's also a mechanical mantra, romantic and at the same time as ubiquitous in its street-corner naivety. Repeated with variations at least five times in the passage is "The glitter, the glimmer, the gloss and the glow."

Goodis' publishers, after his career as a hard back writer ended with *Behold This Woman* in 1947, were Fawcett, Lion, and Avon. He died regretting it, as did Jim Thompson, who was never recognized for his innovations in language and theme, and his perhaps too authentic reality checks on the glitter, the glimmer, the gloss and the glow of American life.

Newton was advised by those who were his nominal supervisors to take time out from the hard truths of science to brush up on theology. I like to think they did this not because they were foolish, but to remind him of how comforting and encouraging the make-believe of religion can be for common folk.

—Kurt Vonnegut, *Timequake*

SIGHfication

by Dave Locke

The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction: William Wilson, UK writer ... his book of criticism, *A Little Earnest Book upon a Great Old Subject ... 1851 ... defining there a species of literature called "Science-Fiction" (the first use of the term) as writing "in which the revealed truths of science may be given, interwoven with a pleasing story which may itself be poetical and true – thus circulating a knowledge of the Poetry of Science, clothed in a garb of the Poetry of Life"*.

Encyclopedia Britannica: science fiction, abbreviation SF or sci-fi, a form of fiction that deals principally with the impact of actual or imagined science upon society or individuals. The term science fiction was popularized, if not invented, in the 1920s.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary Definition of SCI-FI: of, relating to, or being science fiction—Origin of SCI-FI: First Known Use: 1955.

Cambridge Dictionaries: Sci-Fi—informal for science fiction.

Urban Dictionary: Sci-Fi—A term used to describe the genre of Science Fiction within books, films, comics, games, and television shows. —Sci-Fi shortened form of Science Fiction.

Or, pick another source from the many given at OneLook Dictionary Search <<http://www.onelook.com/?w=sci-fi&ls=a>>.

The disagreement is why a few double-handfuls of science fiction fans think they need to sometimes act like frothing Cujos when a fan or a 'mundane' uses the term sci-fi, even though that mundane may often enough be a more widely read science fiction reader than they are and love it just as much. Arguments that "sci-fi" means anything different than "SF" does are, of course, representative of meaning that the Big Show is inside their relatively few heads, those being the only places where such a difference exists. Sure, it's fine if a group of people want to assign different definitions—it happens regularly enough and we've all seen it happen—but telling the vast majority of people that sci-fi means bad science fiction and not simply science fiction is to be a bit excessively creative in promoting the local to the universal.

I remember well a few years back when an online non-fan friend of mine, who I've subsequently met and found to be as delightful as I expected him to be, attended an Albuquerque SF convention. He reads more in a month than I do in a year, most of it science fiction by authors considered to be among the best in this genre. He's one of the most top-caliber amateur writers I've ever encountered. He's sharp as a whip and is a double PHuD, with Ph.Ds in both computer science and nuclear engineering.

So, on his first day at the con he had two non-Diplomatic Corp. fans together begin insulting him for using the term "sci-fi". I told him "yeah, there are usually a few needles in the haystack," and he explained that he didn't have any problems except for those two. They bothered him enough that he considered leaving, but persevered and found out it was just his bad luck to encounter these two on his first day. "After all," he told me, "what's a couple of assholes? Every group has them." "Well, that's true," I told him.

Then we got to discussing what anyone hoped to gain by this behavior, which I'd read and heard of all too often. I told him he was more likely to encounter that kind of thing in print than at a con but, yeah, in either venue it was undesirable. He asked "Isn't your recruitment medium the science fiction readers?" Well, yeah, sure is.

Since virtually everyone in the world sees "sci-fi" as interchangeable with "science fiction," for at most a few hundred people (and more likely a few dozen) to throw a hissy fit when they hear or read the term is exceptionally shortsighted. The reality is that railing against "sci-fi" has an unfortunate effect on recruitment. Here are folks showing up in our circles who have been living with the term "sci-fi", some of them for over half a century, love science fiction just like those who won't tolerate the term sci-fi, and these fine folks don't find it appealing to see people approach them with a "I'm not a Trekkie, I'm a Trekker!" display of attitude.

When I mentioned this tale in an online mailing list, two fans were quickly prompted to tell their own.

Michael Lee *The only systematic sneering I've ever encountered in my 25 years of con-going and fandom about "Sci-Fi" has been in some elements of fandom. Obviously it's the same thing with Trekkie vs Trekker, and in Doctor Who it's about if "Dr Who" is acceptable, whether it's appropriate to refer to "The Doctor" as "Doctor Who", or the proper spelling of the actor playing the Fifth Doctor's last name.*

There are going to be connotative differences between "SF", "Sci-Fi", "Scientifiction", "SFF", "Science Fiction and Fantasy", "Science Fiction", "Scientific Romance", "Fantasy", "Fantastika", etc. I'll use different terms at different times, and in different media. (A 140 character limit has an impact!)

Leane Verhulst *I have been a reader of Sci-Fi (not "skiffy"—that's just a dumb way to pronounce it) since I was a child. I would go in to Waldenbooks and head straight for the "Sci-Fi/Fantasy" section to see if there were any new books for me to read. And if there were, I would beg my mom for a few dollars so I could buy one (or twenty).*

I never knew that there was such hatred for the word until the day I witnessed the following event. About 10 years ago, I was at a small con, sitting in the audience watching the few entries for the masquerade contest, when the people on stage mentioned how much they loved Sci-Fi and then this person in the audience stood up and started ranting at them about how sci-fi was a horrible term and they should never use it, etc. He ranted for a good number of minutes and then finally left. I thought his behavior was horribly rude and an incredibly dumb way to try to convince people to not use the term. From that point on, I decided that I was, and would always be, a "Sci-Fi" fan.

While many of us use SF rather than sci-fi as the shorthand for Science Fiction, newcomers who take a look at Science Fiction Fandom see what we'll call the Brute Force Squad in too many places. The more compliant newcomers will go along with avoiding the use of sci-fi, if only to keep the Cujo foam off of them. Others will say t'ell with that and wander away. Others will laugh at the absurdity of people telling them that a term they grew up with is insufficient when in the exalted presence of someone who doesn't use it or who uses it only for a meaning which isn't the standard in the world at large.

Quite a few of these "newcomers" have been using "sci-fi" for more years than the Brute Force Squad has been alive, and some know more about SF lit than you and me put together including a half-dozen of our friends. The term was around and gaining momentum even before I got into fandom (50 years ago this last April).

So a few of us use SF to abbreviate Science Fiction, and a few million use sci-fi. While everyone is free to abbreviate it however they wish, the issue of where Science Fiction Fandom gets its potential recruits from would tend to indicate that it's better not to be rabid about the terminology that virtually everyone in the world uses.

Of course, to someone actually paying attention, the issue isn't how any one individual or small group wishes to abbreviate Science Fiction. I use SF, and the vast majority use sci-fi. Some use STF. Some treat SF as meaning Speculative Fiction. The issue is whether or not it's reasonable for the very many to actually be bitched at by some of the very few because the few's abbreviation of choice isn't the one being used. Considering that we're in a group where supposedly we understand that it's good to be proactive toward those whose interests include Science Fiction literature (or, yes, even the Science Fiction field in general), it's good not to alienate someone for an abbreviation they've been hearing since their mom was kicking the crib. It's not appealing to be approached with a crabby display of attitude.



Dave Locke in January 2009.

Some from the Brute Force squad defend their arrogance by assuming that anyone who uses the term sci-fi is simply unacquainted with the 10% tasty and crunchy portion of Sturgeon's law. Sturgeon's revelation, commonly referred to as Sturgeon's law, is usually cited as "ninety percent of everything is crud." What's wrong with this assumption is that many have been brought up through Stapledon and Bester and Sturgeon and whoever you might want to name who defines the best of science fiction to you but, for decades, these people have understood that the abbreviation for this science fiction is sci-fi (or, at least, that the abbreviation is sci-fi as much as it is anything else they've encountered). That a relatively few folks consider this wrong understandably fails to impress the millions.

Telling these folks they are wrong, even in the best manner possible, fails to recognize that many have indeed been

exposed to more than what you personally define “sci-fi” to be.

It would be more helpful to the anti-sci-fi worldview if these folks were indeed all ignorant people who have only been exposed to the slice of SF that they personally call either sci-fi or crap. But, alas, the ignorance many of them are being corrected on is that some folks in the SF community have their own ways and are intolerant to the great many who lie outside their circles. Rather than welcoming these people (whenever they might choose to drop in) because of their mutual feelings about science fiction, and letting them abbreviate it as they wish, they would prefer to correct them on their terminology which—horrors—is different... As a consequence, we drive them away.

Is driving them away what we really want to do these days? Is the “-I HATE that sci-fi label!-” mentality somehow such a part of identity that it overrides common sense?

Of course, most of us don't launch a tirade when we hear someone using sci-fi as an abbreviation for science fiction. This action takes place often enough, however, to present a speedbump to the recruitment process.

It may be a false presumption that somehow these relatively few folks can be led to understand that such behavior is counterproductive.

I don't use the sci-fi abbreviation, but not using it is one thing and not accepting that in the world at large it's merely a common abbreviation for science fiction displays the amazing arrogance of someone not getting their own way. So much arrogance that some run about like yappy little dogs biting at the heels of anyone outside the tiny little household they come from.

It won't be until they can see themselves in this light that we can perhaps be rid of the bad behavior that too often accompanies the ongoing effort to make people welcome to science fiction, to the literature and to the conventions. Facts and logic and knowing the potential recruitment consequences of their actions doesn't seem to phase them. Shame might be effective.

On a mild but related tangent, to show that hatred of the term “sci-fi” may just be an instance of attempting to be more royalist than the king, this from an older SFWA site via the Wayback Machine:

Check out the very amusing SFWA item “*Is This Stuff Sci-Fi, SF, Or Skiffy?*” by Melisa Michaels, and especially the 1996 roundtable discussion she introduces at the end of her piece. The roundtable contains a variety of musings on the terms in use from Damon Knight, David Dvorkin, Kevin O'Donnell, Jr., Barbara Paul, Mark J. McGarry, Eileen Gunn, Peter Heck, David M. Harris, S. Rosenthal, Angie Penrose, John C. Bunnell, Melisa Michaels, and Mitch Wagner.

First of two pages: <http://goo.gl/9xrRV>

But that was 1996. Let's move forward to 9/1/08, just three years ago, and look at a blog entry by Alastair Reynolds which he entitled “*Sci-Fi Lullabies*”. The full and complete blog post is at <<http://goo.gl/TxFU5>>, and I recommend reading it in full. He notes how “*When I was growing up, the term “sci-fi” had almost universally positive connotations—to me, at least.*” And how he later discovered that “*To use the term ‘sci-fi’ in polite society—well, what passes for polite society in SF circles—was to reveal yourself as a bit of an ingenue, not yet fully versed in the ways of grown-up SF discourse.*” And then, ultimately, we come to these three short paragraphs of his essay:

The thing is, I don't think we're going to win this one. To the average person in the street, sci-fi is what we do. It's what copy-editors will always insist on putting into newspaper articles, even if the original author used the terms SF or science fiction. And guess what, I'm a sci-fi writer. I write sci-fi books. They get shelved in the sci-fi section. It's not the worst thing in the world.

So here's a suggestion. We get over the sci-fi thing. We can still keep talking about SF and science fiction, but we should give up the knee-jerk sense of insult whenever the sci-fi label is applied to what we do. To the outside world, we're like music bores getting upset with the term “hi-fi”. It should be “high-fidelity”, doncha know.

If we still need a term to isolate the tacky end of the genre, I've got one right here. We can call it “crap sci-fi”, like the rest of the world does.

Ultimately and succinctly, the point is that this “sci-fi” bitching has an unfortunate effect on recruitment.

Sooner or later we really need to grow up and recognize that to the vast majority sci-fi is nothing more than an abbreviation for Science Fiction, and that some of us don't use it (or don't use it that way) is no excuse for rejecting it and bitching about the use of it. Our usage doesn't automatically make any other usage invalid.

It's hard work. It's not pleasant—just in solitude, writing. You can't have anybody around. It's a very lonesome business, and we're social animals.

—Kurt Vonnegut, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, 4/01

God, how silly!

by John-Henri Holmberg

There is a funny sticker going around, saying, "Morality is doing what is right regardless of what you are told. Religion is doing what you are told regardless of what is right."

I was putting you on. It isn't funny at all. It's true. And the horrible thing is that if statistics are to be believed, at least eighty per cent of everyone in the world claims to believe in some religion.

Here, though, is a funny thing.

Billions of people throughout the ages have believed in the most peculiar entities and phenomena. If I tell someone I don't believe in witches or wizards, that I don't believe you can turn lead into gold, that I'm absolutely convinced that Thor and Odin and Jupiter Optimus Maximus and Zeus and Ra and Huitzilopochtli and Vishnu and Shiva are mythological characters, made up by humans, or that I view scientology as a sting operation run by a mediocre pulp writer and charlatan, nobody becomes terribly upset. On the contrary. Almost everyone agrees with me.

But if I tell them that I can't really see any meaningful distinction between these gods and religions and the Jehovah of the Jews, the God of the Christians and the Allah of the Moslems, a lot of people get upset.

Why on earth should they? I honestly can't understand it. At least the thetans of the scientologists were made up in the 20th century. All the others were made up a couple of thousand years ago, and in some cases even earlier. Why is one of them supposed to be more believable than any other? Are talking burning bushes really more believable than swans seducing nymphs? Is the demand to cut the foreskin off the penises of newborn boys more reasonable than the demand to cut the heart out of people and throw their bodies down pyramids, or the demand to put black tents with barred eye slits on women?

As I said, the majority of humanity throughout history has believed in at least one and often quite a few gods. The gods they have believed in have almost always been mean, envious, vengeful, and greedy. In this as well there is no particular difference between them. The god of Christianity according to his adherents is the one god, by all means apart from the son he had murdered and the never intelligibly defined holy spirit made up to enable, if with great effort, a single-god religion to incorporate the magic number three. But if he really is the only god around, then why on earth would he make it into the greatest of all sins to believe in any other and, according to his own claims, fictitious god? Why not just laugh it off?

Mean-spirited, that's what they all are.

Here is another funny thing.

You are not supposed to write this way about certain gods. It's okay to make fun of the extinct gods, the gods of the old Egyptians and Greeks and Romans and Vikings and Celts and Gallians and Germanians. All of that, after all, was just superstition. But you must be polite and respectful when you talk about the nonsense about Jesus and Mohammad and Jehovah. What reasonable human could possibly believe in Zeus, who seduced beauties all around Greece, sometimes disguised as an animal or a rainstorm? But reasonable humans are expected to believe in the Christian god who disguises himself into burning bushes and impregnates women who've never had sex. However that is supposed to be explained, since the famously virgin Mary according to what is claimed was actually married. And as far as I've heard, even in the Middle East a couple of thousand years ago marriages were supposedly completed by intercourse on the night of the wedding ceremony. But no matter; fairy tales have their own logic.

One religion whose adherents at least seem to have some fun is the Native American Church, with around a quarter of a million believers from some fifty different native North American tribes and where the primary form of worship is to come into contact with the divinity (which varies from sect to sect) by consuming peyote buttons. The otherwise uncompromising American ban on peyote does not apply to those belonging to this church. In other words, the Native American Church is a religion that has managed to get legal sanction for its members to get high as houses. Good for them!

This was a wise and funny guy.

Mark Twain never had the Nobel. He was born in 1835 and died in 1910. One reason for his not getting the award may have been that he was and has remained one of the world's most read and loved writers and humorists, author of *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *A Yankee at King Arthur's Court*, *Life on the Mississippi*. The guys handing out Nobels seldom appreciate great popularity. Another reason, of course, might be that he had no great respect for religions. He wrote a lot about them. Not least this:

“A man is accepted into a church for what he believes and he is turned out for what he knows.”

“There is nothing more awe-inspiring than a miracle, except the credulity that can take it at par.”

“To be a believer is to believe in things you know to be false.”

And in his autobiography, published for the first time in late 2010, according to his wishes a hundred years after his death, he writes, “Christianity: bad, bloody, merciless, money-grabbing and predatory ... Ours is a terrible religion. The fleets of the world could swim in spacious comfort in the innocent blood it has spilt.”

He wrote much more than this. Much of it is collected in a book called *The Bible According to Mark Twain*. Many of the texts in that book were published for the first time when it was originally printed in 1996. Being critical of religions wasn't easy a hundred years ago either.

Here's something that isn't the least bit funny.

If someone today, in any country on earth, cut the heart out of another living human and afterwards threw the victim's body down the side of a pyramid set with sharpened, jutting stones intended to cut the corpse in pieces so that the side of the pyramid would be drenched in blood, that person would be considered a psychopath and a murderer and be punished as such. Even if he made it his defense that he had followed the edicts of the Aztec sun god. But when other intolerant oppressors defend their murderous deeds by claiming them as demanded by their beliefs as Christians, or Moslems, we are expected to take that defense seriously and feel respect for their beliefs. Why should we? The issues are usually very simple. Is it okay to happen to love someone of the same sex? Should women have the right to decide what to do with their own bodies, when to have children, and with whom? Should someone who happens to have been born into a religion have the right to opt out of it, and to chose either to reject religions altogether or to join some other one more to his or her liking? Do women have the same right to life, liberty, citizenship, and free choice as males?

Let me be straight with you. I honestly, seriously, cannot understand how any person of good will, any civilized person, any person actually living in today's world, could respond in the negative to any of these questions.

But I know that probably hundreds of millions of people all over the world would reply to them with a resounding “No”. That is a frightening thing. Because it means that large parts of the world's population still have no understanding, no conception of the noblest achievement of the modern age: the rejection of superstition, the recognition of individual rights, the replacement of tribal repression with liberty and democracy.

Do you know what frightens me even more?

What frightens me more is that quite a few of those millions who'd say “No” to the questions I put are Americans.

America is the only country in the world founded on the idea that the rights of the individual must not be subordinated to any other concerns, and that not least for this reason government and religion must be separated. An abyss has opened between the foremost of the founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, chairman of the American Philosophical Society, who two hundred years ago wrote “Dare question even the existence of a god, for if there is any, he must prefer to be worshiped by reason rather than by blind fear”, who commissioned for his library a painting of what he considered the three greatest men in history: Francis Bacon, John Locke, and Isaac Newton, and today's American politicians, who have gradually – from Dwight Eisenhower, who inserted “under god” in the Pledge of Allegiance, to George Bush, who cites Jesus as his favorite historical thinker, and on to today's crowd of hopeful candidates who try to outdo each other in religious fervor – descended into a fog of populist superstition very difficult to reconcile with either inalienable individual rights or the rigorous scientific research that has transformed our planet and was once on the threshold of conquering space.

Not long ago, the Swedish department of education rejected a proposed new study plan concerning religious instruction in the first nine grades. The proposal called for the major current world religions to be given the same amount of classroom time. The department of education held the opinion that Christianity should be singled out and be given more attention. The reason for this, the department said, was that Swedish society rests on Christianity, and that Christian values form the foundation of Swedish culture and morality.

Obviously this is open to interpretation. It is undeniably true that Christianity was the dominant religion in Sweden over a period of roughly a thousand years, although with some variety – from around 1050, after bloody battles with the adherents of earlier religions, the catholic church dominated until around 1530, when the Lutherans ousted the Catholics, largely because the then king Gustavus Vasa needed the wealth of the churches to pay for his brutal and costly battles to consolidate his power. In 1593, the Lutheran church by law became the state church of Sweden, simultaneously making it illegal for any swede not to belong to the church. Not until 1952 did it become legal for a swede to leave the church without simultaneously joining some other state-approved religious group. Thus, undeniably, Christianity has had a considerable influence on Swedish history, Swedish traditions and Swedish lawmaking as well as social behavior. But if the department of education by its statement means to claim that the views today associated with a liberal and democratic society are Christian, this is nonsense. To the extent that modern western societies have been characterized by tolerance, openness, humanism, and individual liberty, these values certainly have not been preached by religion, but on the contrary have come to triumph in spite of religion.

Culminating in the 18th century, Europe experienced an intellectual revolution. We call it the enlightenment. Primarily French and British philosophers turned against almost two millennia of religious oppression. Their revolt primarily consisted of their view of knowledge. Their claim was that humans are born without knowledge and can gain it only through observation and rational thinking. Through thinking, humans decide their actions. Since this process is inborn in humans, it is also part of our nature, and in order to develop in accordance with our nature we must be free to act in accordance with our ability to reason.

Today, this idea isn't particularly controversial. But at the time it certainly was. Because in presenting it, the enlightenment thinkers pulled the rug out from under both the power of religion and the ruling aristocratic social order.

For centuries, the Christian church taught that "heaven" was an enlightened dictatorship. At the tip of the pyramid the god ruled absolutely over a hierarchal order with the arch-angels closest to the seat of power and the everyday saved souls at the bottom. Life on earth was organized according to the same principle; it reflected heavenly social order. Thus the king, by grace of god, ruled absolutely his realm. Each of his subjects was preordained, born, to his station in society and life, and any thought of overthrowing this order was a crime against the divine will.

This view of the world was swept aside by the ideas of the enlightenment. What the enlightenment thinkers said was that we know nothing except what we have observed. But what does that imply? In practice that we gain no knowledge from divine inspiration, prophecies, preachings, or intuition. They further said that knowledge can be processed only by rational thinking. What does that imply? In practice that each individual must have the right to think freely, without being limited by the claims of religion or superiors. They said that human nature demands a society of free movement, where each individual must have the right to strive and to cooperate freely with others in order to achieve her or his personal aims or goals.

Very obviously, enlightenment philosophy had political consequences. In politics, the expression of the enlightenment was liberalism. Liberalism was revolutionary. What liberalism taught was at bottom very simple. Each human is born with equal rights. Central among these is the right to life and the right to liberty. The function of government is to protect the rights of all individuals. If government instead abrogates the rights of its citizens, they have the right to overthrow that government and to replace it with another.

The idea of individual rights was dramatic. If all humans are born with equal rights, there is no longer any excuse for determining individual merit according to collective tenets. How to act toward an individual can no longer be decided by her or his gender, skin color, nationality, parentage, or social standing. If all humans have the right to liberty, there can no longer be serfs or slaves. Rulers no longer have any right to confiscate their subjects' income, force them to obey or deny them the right to think, believe or act even when they do so in conflict with traditions, expectations, or the views of the rulers or of the majority.

Enlightenment and liberalism brought the demands for rule of law, freedom of thought and expression, free entry into the marketplace, and free trade, the equality of women, the abolition of slavery and the demand for equal say in government, that is, for democracy. In other words, the demands to overthrow both monarchical rule and the religious

monopoly on truth and morality.

The humanistic view of individuals and the democratic institutions of today's western world are not founded in religion. Their foundation is the enlightenment and liberalism, and they were implemented through an often bloody revolt against the oppression of earlier centuries. They exist not thanks to religion but in spite of religion, and they were achieved only through a drawn-out battle against religious opposition.

Here is something I believe to be true.

Monotheistic religions are worse than polytheistic.

Polytheistic religions assume the existence of numerous gods. Sometimes one of them rules the others, but none of them is really omnipotent and there are limits to their knowledge and wisdom. Often they have different objectives and are in more or less constant feud with each other. This last is not unimportant, since it means that a human who happens to come at odds with one god may well find an ally in some other god. This creates room for different views, different opinions, and different lifestyles. Polytheism is tolerant and inclusive. If some people suddenly turn up who have happened on other gods than those already known, there is room for those as well. The flock of gods can always be extended, and nobody can know for certain just how many they are.

Monotheism, on the contrary, teaches that there is only a single god, usually all knowing, all powerful and unknowable. This is where we get problems. For if there is only a single omnipotent god, then everything said by that god is by definition right, while anyone objecting is by definition wrong. Monotheism consequently contains a built-in, self-evident, and absolute intolerance. The only god is, as one of them is claimed bashfully to have expressed it, "I am the way, the truth and the life". Which obviously makes anyone objecting, believing in other gods, or not believing in any, to a proponent of dead-ends, lies, and death. It is hardly strange that it is monotheistic religions that have set great store by converting people, most popularly through the centuries by letting them choose between converting and being killed. Anyone refusing to believe is hopelessly damned anyway, so why not kill them on the spot.

Here is something I find extremely dubious.

Already as children we are taught that religions are different from virtually everything else humans think, work at, claim, interest themselves in, or believe.

We are also taught many other things.

We are taught to separate between reality and fantasy. Though not if the fantasies are religious.

We are taught neither to lie nor to believe in lies. But not if it's a matter of faith.

We are taught that all individuals are of equal worth and not to accept that some are treated differently because of their appearance, behavior, or ideas. But not if the reasons for treating them differently are religious.

We are taught not to bully people, despise people, be impolite to people, or denigrate people. Though that isn't necessarily so if the reasons for doing it are religious.

We are taught to think critically, to question, not to blindly believe in or obey authority. Unless it happens to be religious.

In fact, we are taught that none of the instruments we are expected to use in order to live in reality and to meet others in a civilized manner are relevant to religion. Instead we are taught not only to respect the religiosity of others in itself, but to respect everything that in any other context would be considered abusive, unreasonable, mean, intolerant, or criminal, provided it is excused by being demanded by someone's religion.

The Indian-born neurobiologist and historian of science Kenan Malik in 1994 was asked by the British daily newspaper *The Independent* to write an essay on the 200th anniversary of the publication of Tom Paine's epochal critique of Christianity. But things were not quite as simple as they might seem; when his essay was published, it begins: "I was going to begin this piece with a quote from *The Satanic Verses* in which Salman Rushdie satirises the divine origin of the



John-Henri Holmberg,
photographed by his
daughter Laura Holmbergl.

Koran. It was felt, however, that this would be too provocative and insensitive. It is ironic that having been commissioned to write a piece on Tom Paine, the greatest free thinker of his age, I am unable to use a quote from a freely available book because it might cause offence to do so. It is a demonstration of the continuing relevance of Tom Paine to contemporary political discussion.” Obviously, the black irony in censoring an essay written to celebrate a critic of religion in order not to offend religious readers somehow escaped the editors.

Here is something I find truly frightening.

There are religions officially subscribed to by every inhabitant of some countries. But only in countries where government is run by the religious and where law metes out punishment to those not practicing the state religion. Like Saudi Arabia, where someone wanting to leave the sunny Muslim faith can be legally put to death. But even from Saudi Arabia, non-believers have fled. And there is no religion counting among its adherents all humans of any particular ethnicity or group.

Today, thankfully, most have come to realize that human beings cannot be judged, or measured, by the color of their skin or hair, by their race or place of birth. To that extent, liberalism has won, even if the price of victory has been great: centuries of genocide, mass killings, and segregation.

But suddenly some demand that in the name of tolerance – which is, of liberalism – we should not only tolerate religious views preaching intolerance, oppression, and brutality, but accept such views as legitimate. Tolerate them we must: humans have the right to believe whatever they wish, no matter how foul or disgusting it may be. Accept such views, however, we may not do. Not if we want to guard those liberties defining a civilized society.

How has this come about? By equating criticism of religion with racism. But religions do not define ethnicity. Despite the weird views of the Nazis, Jews are not a race. No more than are Protestants or Catholics or Mahayana Buddhists. Or Muslims. The claim that human beings should be defined by the religion their parents have happened to belong to at the time of their birth is at least as racist as the view that the value of an individual is defined by the color of her skin. And as deeply anti-humanitarian. Because such a view denies the right and ability of humans to decide their own convictions. Should critics of Islam such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali or Tasrma Nasreen or Wafa Sultan be Muslims because their parents happened to be? Three women all brought up within a religion but who had fled from Somalia, Bangladesh, and Syria and who are now being accused of “islamophobia” because they have damned Islam as a religion hostile to women and oppressive to all humans. Should atheist Albert Einstein be a Jew because his parents happened to practise that religion? Should I be a Christian because my father was a church warden?

To criticise or reject religion is no phobia. To consider religions instruments of oppression, uniformity, and subjugation is anything but a phobia. Nobody who has ever opened a book on history could reasonably view them otherwise. But, on the other hand, no one is as blind as those refusing to see. Most religious persons are quite willing to agree that other religions than their own have led to the enslavement, torture, and murder of human beings. But if the particular religion to which they themselves belong has had exactly the same consequences, this is either completely reasonable, in case the slavery and murders are still going on, as witness the stoning of women and the murder of homosexuals in many Muslim countries, or unintended and unhappy mistakes in no way reflecting on the true value of their religion, as witness the millennia-long slaughter of witches and heretics enjoyed by Christians until they were finally forced to admit that perhaps there really weren’t any real witches after all.

The struggle not only for freedom of religion, but for freedom from religion, has been fought for centuries. At the moment we are experiencing a backlash. Inspired by fundamentalist Muslims, fundamentalist Christians smell a new dawn. In the long run, their efforts to turn back the clock will prove insignificant. What speaks against the claims of religions is tolerance and humanism, reason and knowledge of the reality in which we live. It will hardly be possible for us to survive as a species without continuing to expand our knowledge and understanding of the world around us. But with knowledge and understanding, the space for wishful thinking, superstition, and blindness keeps shrinking. And consequently the space for religion.

But has this anything to do with science fiction?

I grew up a sickly child with a conservative father and a fairly liberal mother in an affluent upper middle class part of Stockholm. My father was active in the local state church congregation, being a warden as well as vice-chairman of the church board; I was taught evening prayer and was brought along to Sunday services. From around four and until somewhere around eleven I spent most of my time in bed with severe asthma, surviving most probably because I happened to fall ill just in time to become one of the hundred asthmatics selected by an eminent physician called Sven

Kraepelin to follow for his dissertation; for those in his study population, he was on call day and night, weekdays and holidays.

My mother spent days reading to me during the first couple of years. At six, I learned to read for myself and had two constant companions: radio and books. And at around that time I happened to read one particular book that impressed me as no other, about, and don't laugh too loudly, a few boys and their teacher building a spaceship in their back yard and going off in it. Today, I'd suspect the Swedish author had probably read Robert Heinlein's *Rocket Ship 'Galileo'*, but lacked Heinlein's storytelling gifts. Then, I was enthralled and kept searching for similar stories to read.

I found them, in a monthly science fiction magazine published in Sweden from 1954 through early 1966. I found them in the lines of hardcover and paperback sf novels tried in the country by several different publishers during the 1950s, all without success but all kept going for a couple of years. The stories and novels translated were those of the 1940s and early 1950s, by H.G. Wells, Heinlein, Asimov, and Clarke, by Poul Anderson, Fredric Brown, and John Wyndham, by Eric Frank Russell, A. E. Van Vogt, and Raymond F. Jones. They brought me into a world of infinite possibilities and no superstition, a world of reason, knowledge, science, and technology but no miracles except those made possible by human ingenuity.

Very much later, with a degree in literature and a few more thousand books read, I can claim as my view that science fiction is one of the two literary descendants of the enlightenment, the other being the detective story; that these two forms are the only ones dedicated to the idea that only observation and rational thought will lead to knowledge, and that knowledge in itself is the tool by which humans control their environment; that truth can be found only through knowledge and that consequently justice as well as progress are effects of knowledge. This, to me, seems an eminently valuable idea, not least because historically it is the one which has set us free from the tyranny of ignorance, illness, starvation, and slavery.

But all that was long after, as I said. The impact of reading and pondering science fiction on that boy in his sickbed was much more direct and emotional. I still remember, with pride, that evening at eight or nine when I stopped in the middle of my robotic recital of evening prayer to ask myself what I was saying and whether I really believed in this. I have never prayed since. A couple of years later, the local priest, who was a friend of my parents, began telling my father that he felt it was time for me to attend Sunday school. I will always respect my father for replying that this was reasonably something I should decide for myself. I declined, and on my 18th birthday I went to see the same priest in his office to fill out the form required by law to leave the Swedish state church.

To me, there is no meeting ground, no possible coexistence of reason and superstition, of knowledge and blind faith. I learned this first from science fiction, and it remains my conviction that religious science fiction is a self-contradiction. Religiousness is a valid subject for science fiction, as are all other human idiosyncrasies; a literature wanting to speculate in what is, and in what could be, must take into account also the delusions of those who exist. But this is something quite different than a literature taking the existence of supernatural beings for granted; that is what we in good reason call fantasy.

This will be a mercifully brief discussion of a hopeless question.

But if the non-existence of gods is so obvious, why do so many humans believe in them?

First of all, I think we can safely dismiss all the "proofs" for the existence of one or more gods constructed at great waste of time by theologians and philosophers over the past many centuries. I doubt that any single person has ever become religious on the strength of any such proof. Even apart from the fact that not a single one of those of them I have encountered holds water.

I do, however, assume that persons are religious because of other reasons. And I suspect that the most important of those reasons is peer pressure. In various forms. Even at best, in countries boasting freedom of religion, most children are brought up to be religious. At birth they are christened, circumcised, included in some congregation. They are taught to pray and brought along to services. Churches, mosques, and temples dominate the village or town where they live. Religious services are aired on radio and TV. Religion is taught on their school curriculum and the end of term is often celebrated in a house of worship. Almost all their friends go to Sunday school or celebrate their bar or bat mitzvah or go to Koran school. Later on, virtually everyone is married in a religious ceremony while their elders are buried in another religious ceremony. It takes a strong conviction to reject your parents' views and traditions, to abstain from your confirmation presents, to refuse to take part in school ceremonies, to risk falling out with your parents in law when you refuse to marry in church or baptize your children. And since being religious is generally not perceived as controversial,

most chose the path of least resistance. Additionally, in many societies pressure is considerably much stronger than what I have mentioned so far. In countries where religion and state are one, punishments for expressing doubt are often brutal and harsh. In religiously ruled countries, the rulers have all to lose and nothing to gain by permitting or even tolerating dissent or debate. And in all oppressive systems there are both winners and losers; those groups gaining by all confirming to a specific religion will do all in their power to retain the grip of that religion. In all the three main western monotheistic religions, men are the winners and women the losers. During the last century, women within all three religions have fought for the right of being accepted within the various priesthoods. In some sects, in some countries, they have had some success. What I have never been able to understand is why any normally gifted women would want to spend their lives preaching the creed which for a thousand years or more has oppressed their mothers and sisters.

Still, even if I would suggest that simple peer pressure and unthinking tradition are the main reasons for the continued dominance of religions, I also believe that the second most important reason is that we are alone and afraid and know that we will die. We are born alone and die alone. None of us knows with any certainty what even those closest to us really think about us. We are filled with hopes, wishes, dreams, and longings, but most of all that we hope for we never manage to achieve. Chance often rules our existence and with age our fear of the inevitable end will grow. Why then should it be so strange that we look for comfort in the idea that perhaps everything wasn't just pointless, that it all held some kind of meaning, even if we are unable to understand it? Or in the thought that there is some "higher" justice that will ensure that those who have been kind and concerned but lived hard lives will be rewarded, while those other self-centered heels with their probably undeserved Lear jets and millions will get their just deserts? Or even in the thought that our consciousness in spite of everything, in some way, against all odds, will remain even when our bodies have been burned to ashes or rotted away?

In all honesty, my view is that it is due to either or both of these main but quite simple reasons that religions exist and gain followers: they promise companionship and miracles at little or no cost, in a world where both friendship and miracles are otherwise hard to find. And the combination of peer pressure and wishful thinking, which of course is almost universal, leads to religions both fulfilling a psychological need and serving as a tradition profitable and empowering to at least part of the population.

But traditions surviving their usefulness gradually do wither and disappear.

Our need of comfort, meaning, and hope will hardly wither. But today we know, no matter how disturbing it may be, that none of the many illusions we use to fool ourselves, be they Ouija boards, horoscopes, the Tibetan book of the dead, prayers to almighty gods, or sugar pills, make the least difference. We hopefully even realize that what we hope for, wish, or believe doesn't in even the most minute way affect the real world around us. Only we, ourselves, can create meaning or unity in our lives. Only we, ourselves, can find the goals to make life worth living. And we can do so only by using those tools we have finally found: by observation, reason, and purposeful action. It's neither easy nor fair nor compassionate. But it is real. And true.

Here is a wise thought.

Neurobiologist and philosopher Sam Harris has written:

"'Atheism' is a term that shouldn't even exist. No one ever needs identify himself as a 'non-astrologer' or a 'non-chemist.' We do not have words for people who doubt that Elvis is still alive or that aliens have traversed the galaxy only to molest ranchers and their cattle. Atheism is nothing more than the noises reasonable people make in the presence of unjustified religious beliefs."

Gradually, most of our other pre-scientific efforts to explain or understand the world have lost their hold over us. We no longer believe that the earth is flat or the center of the universe. We no longer believe in magic, witches and warlocks. We no longer believe in ghouls and demons, elves and trolls. The ghosts of the Celtic new year's eve have become the dressed-up, candy-begging children of Halloween, as harmless creatures of the imagination as Santa Claus or the Easter bunny. This is a liberating process. It is time to take the next step and let also the last of the gods claim their place in our fairy tale tradition, which is where they belong.

To me, wanting every habitable planet to be inhabited is like wanting everybody to have athlete's foot.

—Kurt Vonnegut, *Hocus Pocus*



“Wide Apple World,”
by Ditmar [Martin James Ditmar Jenssen]