

FAFIA #3

Peter Sullivan

1 Englemann Way, Burdon Vale, SUNDERLAND, England, SR3 2NY.

peter@burdonvale.co.uk

26th January 2006

This is issue 3 of FAFIA, the fanzine that's even more frequent (at the moment) than The Drink Tank. But with rather fewer shots of M Lloyd's cleavage.

The Big News

As my local hospital doesn't (quite yet) do angioplasty itself, the plan always was that, once I'd got to the top of the waiting list, I would need to be transferred to the Newcastle Freeman Hospital the day before the actual procedure.

But on Tuesday morning at about 9.30, I was working on another letter of comment for Banana Wings, when the nurse came in and told me I was being transferred there and then, for an operation that afternoon. Within an hour I was in an ambulance and on my way. All I can guess is that someone had not turned up and that I'd been slotted in as a late replacement. My condition had definitely been deteriorating – I was now getting (mild but noticeable) chest pain even just walking about the ward.

I went in just gone 3, and was out by 4. An absolutely text-book case, with no complications at all. This time they went in through my wrist rather than, as for the original angiogram, my groin¹. The whole thing seemed to take no time at all, despite them deciding that the blockage was sufficiently long to justify two stents. I had been warned that I was likely to feel pain as if I was having one final angina attack when they actually inflated the stents in position – sort of like the last, lingering kiss of a departing lover – but in fact I felt nothing. I was walked back to the ward afterwards (no need for a trolley) and could already feel the difference – no breathlessness at all.

In fact, the most painful part of the whole procedure had been getting the venflon into the back of my other hand beforehand, in case they needed to pump any sedatives or whatever into me during the procedure. Which, as it turned out, proved unnecessary.

I was sent home Wednesday lunchtime, and now have a week at home to recover before I go back to work. Then completely back to normal, until the whole thing needs replacing in 5-10 years' time.

And I would just like to say that when A. came to see me on the Tuesday evening, she looked more beautiful than she has ever, ever done.

¹ One side-effect of this is that the phrase "They Came And Shaved Us" probably now has a rather different word association for me compared to the rest of British fandom, for whom it will remain just the name of a convention...

More Books Read

Bill Bryson, **A Short History of Nearly Everything**. This has been on the “to read” list for a while. Does what it says on the tin – explains various forms of science in an accessible way. In particular, he talks about the personal rivalries between scientists in various fields, adding a more human touch to some of the stories. Bizarre to think that Mme. Curie’s research papers are still so radioactive that scientists have to suit up if they want to consult the originals. I found it a bit heavier going through some of the palaeontology, but I guess even Bryson can only do so much with dead rocks. If you like his various travel bits, you’ll like this.

Adam Hart-Davis, **What The Tudors and Stuarts Did For Us**. Hart-Davis, who also has a nice sideline in doing TV spots for the Inland Revenue reminding us of tax filing deadlines, started with a TV series called, with a suitable nod to Monty Python, What The Romans Did For Us. This was followed up by a series on the Victorians and then this. A combination of inventions from the period, combined with social history, all done in an accessible, but not populist, manner. Interesting to see him rate the invention of printing as more important (in terms of the social change it unleashed) than the internet.

E-mails

We Also Heard From: Eric Mayer, Chris Garcia, Dave Locke. Many thanks for all of your good wishes.

Ed Meskys writes:

Thanks for FAFIA #2. Never did see #1, but that might have been while I was having trouble with my ISP. Thus I had not known about your procedure.

I, too, enjoyed reading the Narnia books in the order written. I liked to see how the world was fleshed out in his mind as he went along. first he just started with a vision of the fawn and lamppost in a snowy forest, and then tried to figure out how it got that way. It is about 20 years since the last time I read it and am thinking of going back to it. Have not seen the new movie yet, tho I did hear a radio dramatization, also about 20 years ago. I think NPR got it from the BBC.

Peter replies:

Apparently the very first draft of The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe (as read to the Inklings) didn’t have the Aslan character, which must have made it a very different story. Just about the only trace of this in the final version is where Father Christmas gives the children their gifts, whereas it would be more logical for these to come from Aslan. In fact, I think the 1979 animated version changed it to this anyway.

Ed continues:

Noted that they have trade-marked the word Narnia. Just read the latest Minas Tirith Evening Star and noted there that the Tolkien estate has trademarked his name, and they are referring to it with permission. Does this mean that word-police will arrest you if you write "Tolkien" or "Narnia" without their permission?

Peter replies:

To be fair, I think this is more to do with protecting commercial interests – the sort of discussion we're having here would be fully covered by Fair Use.

Ed continues:

Noted that you quoted Langford that the almost only drink seen at parties is diet Coke. Ted White and his circle will go for diet Pepsi. Since I try to drink only diet soda, and cola of either brand is about all you can get for diet drinks in restaurants, I am always seeking a non-cola. I especially look for Dr. Pepper, fruit flavors like black cherry or orange, or fudge. Loved Canfield Diet Fudge, 4 calories per can, but it is no longer available here. When I found it in Chicago I brought home a case, but wonder what security screeners would think of that today. Wastewatcher also makes a diet fudge, but it is hard, but not impossible, to find here.

Peter replies:

Diet Coke or Diet Pepsi (but never both!) is pretty much the only diet soft drink that most pubs seem to do over here. I can see me getting used to a lime and soda as my "regular."

Ed continues:

I had a cataract operation in my only eye June, 1971, and then I was in the hospital for about 5 days. And they could not fit me with new glasses for six weeks. That was how long it took for the shape of the eye and remaining part of the lens to stabilize. For a short time I saw a bit better than at any prior time in my life, but it was short lived as I became totally blind that November.

The late fan, Ethel Lindsay, worked in British hospitals as, what I think, was a nurse. She referred to herself as a sister, perhaps as a holdover from when it was religious nuns who did most of the nursing in hospitals?

Peter replies:

I'd never thought of the religious link, but it makes sense. The sister is the senior nurse in charge of all the other nurses on the ward; the matron used to be the senior, senior nurse in charge of all the sisters. Over time, this job tended to get re-designated as "Director of Nursing" or similar. The Modern Matrons, just re-introduced over the past few years, are now more involved with staff training and promoting best practice rather than direct line management, as I understand it.

Shelby Vick writes:

Number One read and enjoyed, ditto Number Two. I think it's great you can carry on like this whilst hospitalized! For one thing, it helps keep your outgoing attitude on straight -- and attitude is what keeps you going! My friend, Joe Green, recently commented to me (after I told him I was into a really lo-o-ong range project) something like: "Hey, I hate seeing you spending your time like that! I just had my 75th birthday, and you are several years older."

To which I responded: "So? My doctor has tested my heart and said it would be a credit to a 50-year-old, and then they tested my brain and said it was like a 20-year-old's. I plan to be around another 20, 30 years!" and he wrote back, "I like your attitude."

Hey, what am I supposed to do, go around counting the days? I long ago decided that any day I could get out of bed on my own was a good day.

Peter replies:

Who was it who said that, every day, he read the obituaries in the local paper, and if he wasn't in it, he'd get up out of bed and fix breakfast?

Colophon

FAFIA #3 is a Startling Press Production. There may be one more issue just before I go back to work. Letters of comment will be assumed to be for publication unless advised otherwise. Errors and Omissions Excepted.