

GUFF, the Going Under Fan Fund or the Get Up-and-over Fan Fund, depending on the direction of the race in question, sends European fans to Australia and New Zealand, and vice versa. The 2007 GUFF race was held in April. Despite perhaps the shortest campaigning time ever for a major fan fund, a decent number of votes were received. This was possible because the British Eastercon happened during those two weeks, and because one of the candidates, Ang Rosin, campaigned vigorously. It paid off and Ang won by a large margin. Since the other three of us, Steve Davies, Anna Davour, and myself would not get to write a GUFF report, I came up with the idea of putting out a fanzine called the GUFF Losers' Fanzine, just as there is a HUGO Losers' Party at each Worldcon. The other two losers liked the idea, but unfortunately Steve didn't have time to write anything. But he's with us in spirit, I think.

So this is

THE 2007 GUFF LOSERS' FANZINE

This fanzine was written in the summer of 2007 by Johan Anglemark and Anna Davour, and compiled in early October by Johan. Comments are most welcome and can be sent to either

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We'd be most thrilled to get your own zine in trade if you're publishing one, and at least Anna is likely to keep up the trade. Johan is a phlegmatic, lazy bastard and cannot promise as much, but of course he nurtures a hope...

Thanks to Damien Warman and Juliette Woods, who persuaded us to run for GUFF. Without them this fanzine would never had happened.

AS DOWN UNDER AS YOU CAN GET

Anna Davour

So. I didn't win the GUFF race. Somehow I'm not really surprised. I didn't do much to convince anyone to vote for me, especially not outside Sweden. Ang Rosin did the right kind of campaign, with fanzines and all. Then again, I don't think you will get a lot of votes unless you're known to people before the race – and that's just as it should be.

Anyway, it was fun to be on the list. It made me think a bit about my international contacts and fanac. So far they don't add up to much. I made a small fanzine for Interaction, the Worldcon in Glasgow 2005. For a while I was a member of e-APA. I've been to several British Eastercons, and once (as a fan-fund delegate!) to Octocon in Ireland. Still, I don't really feel that I'm a part of an international fandom. I should get to know some fans, and read more fanzines!

I'm not going to travel as a fan fund delegate, but I got a postdoc position in Canada and therefore I'm moving abroad this year [*The move happened late in August 2007. Ed.*]. We'll see what happens. And some day, maybe, I will also visit Australia.

I have *almost* been in Australia. Twice. My crochet hook was confiscated in Melbourne. I *have* been in New Zealand. Twice, three weeks apart. These facts are related to neutrinos (the elementary particles) and to ice. Let me tell you the whole story. This was in 2003, and I left home in grey November weather. It's a long journey around the world, about 24 hours, and I had really looked forward to this. The weeks before had been hectic, and travel more than anything else has a very relaxing effect on me. I enjoy travelling, especially by train, but airplanes are almost as good.

Delirium said it exactly (in *Brief Lives*, my favourite Sandman album): "I like airplanes. I like anywhere that isn't a proper place. I like in-betweens." This is what I love with travel. It's outside the normal time and space, and there is nothing to do but to relax, think, and read. Even better, no one expects me to do anything and I'm completely unavailable. I hope I can resist the working culture of laptop computers and mobile phones, and preserve my private sanctuary of the in-betweens.

I had of course carefully selected my reading. To reduce the weight I wanted to take small books that last long. One of the books I packed was *Die Unendliche Geschichte* by Michael Ende (in English translation it's called *The Neverending Story*). Bringing a German book is a good trick, since reading in German takes me about three times as long as reading in English, which in turn is slower than reading in Swedish despite many years of daily practice.

On the way down I made a stop over at Sydney airport. Just touching down on a foreign continent, only to go up and away again. I've done this several times in other places, and it's always strange. An airport is not exactly a real place either. I only got to see some shops and long corridors, with souvenirs and pictures telling me that I am somewhere new. Nothing more. I love airports, they are like pockets of time and space outside the normal world. Magical gateways. But still, I feel that I've been really close to Australia but missed it.

I arrived in the New Zealand spring, with sunshine, green things and long days. At the hotel I met the others from my work team. E and I went hiking in the hills around Christchurch, and I strolled up and down the streets looking at buildings (there was a cool art museum, and the buildings that once were Canterbury University College and now are an arts centre – with a museum dedicated to Ernest Rutherford and the atom).

New Zealand was not our final destination, and these couple of days were mainly for curing the jet lag. Soon it was time to gear up for leaving. We dressed in long underwear, heavy boots and thick red winter jackets – extreme cold weather gear it is called – and boarded a Hercules. It was not exactly comfortable, but kind of exciting. Off to Antarctica!

Antarctica is a big place, and on the way to the South Pole we stopped at the McMurdo station on the coast. Since this article is intended to be about what I experienced of New Zealand and Australia I will not write so much about physics, Antarctica, or the South Pole. I will just mention that in McMurdo we had a snow storm, which prevented us from leaving for a couple of days.

In this time I raided the local library for reading, and found (and finished) *Angry Young Spaceman* by Jim Munroe and *Nova* by Samuel Delany. I killed a lot of time talking to other people, but since there was not much to do I had a lot of time to read. During the stay in McMurdo I also started reading *At the Mountains of Madness* by H. P. Lovecraft. A friend of mine had made me promise to read this story in Antarctica, and so I did. It was sort of fun, but it reminded me that I don't really get Lovecraft. I don't understand what people like so much about it. I never reach *suspension of disbelief*, I just doubt that the narrator is very sane. I'm told that there are horrible things, but mostly it just seems to me that the narrator is xenophobic or paranoid and the things he finds are really only interesting and not horrible at all.

Speaking of horror, do you know that there is a tradition of watching *The Thing* at station closing at the South Pole? The station is isolated for more than half the year, and when the last plane leaves before night and winter the staff gather to watch this movie.

Another time I can write more about the South Pole.

This time I will cheat, and only quote what Kim Stanley Robinson wrote about AMANDA in his novel *Antarctica*:

“From here Spiff studies the northern sky,” Viktor told Wade. “He is part of famous AMANDA project. They use the whole body of Earth to catch neutrinos. The neutrinos that fly through Earth from the north mostly miss everything completely and fly right through without obstruction, am I right, Spiff? Weakly interacting particles, like me. But sometimes they hit atoms from Earth and knock off muons, and muons fly into this ice cap from underneath and cause a particular blue light, Cherenkov light, yes? So they use the planet for their filter, and the ice cap for their lens, and the record the blue lights with strings of photomultiplier tubes extending one, two kilometres down. These tubes are like light bulbs in reverse – they take in light and put out electricity – but what light bulbs! They amplify incoming signals by a hundred million times, isn't that what you said, Spiff? And from that they determine how many neutrinos, and even where in the sky they came from.”

“You’re kidding,” Wade said. “Impossible.”

“No, no! Is possible, is quite possible!”

I stayed nearly three weeks at the pole, working on detector debugging and calibrations. I learned a lot, and worked hard. And then we returned to the world.

On the way back I passed through McMurdo again, this time with no storms. I talked to a guy in the canteen, and told him that this might be a journey I would tell my grandchildren about. He didn’t think they would be impressed: “It’s still on the planet Earth.” Well, that’s true. Reading a lot of science fiction has not cured me from sometimes believing that everything will always be the way it is now.

When we returned to Christchurch it was like another planet, where there were green things and I could wear light spring clothing.

I went hiking again. I love hiking, and there were nice places to go on foot or by bus, with nice scenery. Mostly I went alone and stayed out all day. I was fascinated by the strange flora of New Zealand, even more foreign for the abundance of European flowers and grasses. There were sparrows as well, someone must have imported them for obscure reasons. They were much more aggressive than any sparrows I’ve met in Europe, some of them sat down next to my plate to try my cake – I’m not joking.

One day I went to many museum shops and market stands. It was much the same paua shell and greenstone things everywhere, which is a bit boring perhaps, but I kind of liked it. I played the tourist game and wanted to bring home exotic treasures from foreign lands. These souvenirs looked like pearls and gemstones, and would fit perfectly in a dragon’s collection. Perhaps I’m childish, perhaps I’m a victim of an industry producing kitsch to take the money from stupid visitors. Well, I don’t care!

Another day some of us in the AMANDA calibration team rented a car together, and went sightseeing. The tourist information in the countryside made a big thing of Lord of the Rings, and there were many kinds of maps showing all of the filming sites. We were not that interested, but in the end we tried to find the location of Edoras. This was actually a bit adventurous. The road was very small, and we crossed several small brooks which we had to drive through. We saw some cattle and a lot of mountains and grass, and then the road ended at a little house where some dogs came to meet us. The surroundings looked exactly like the hills in a Swedish children’s comic (Bamse), but no one knew what I talked about. Anyway, we were lost. The friendly people in the house were not used to visitors, but they did know about the Peter Jackson crowd and the tourists following the films, so they could tell us that we passed the site long ago and should turn back.

The Edoras hill looked much like the other hills, but in the end we actually identified it. Nothing special, really, but it was generally very beautiful in these parts. Getting there was interesting, and we saw a lot of the varied landscape in New Zealand. Funny that people want to see the places they have already seen on film, instead of enjoying all of the real world. Perhaps they do that too.

When I’m telling you about it like this, it feels like a long vacation on New Zealand. Really it was only a few days. I could have stayed much longer, but it was nearly Christmas. I

missed my husband, Andreas, and really didn't want to be alone over the holidays. So I boarded a plane.

In Melbourne I had to go through another security check, and this one was tougher than the others. I had planned to work on a funny hat to kill time on the journey, but a crochet hook can apparently be considered dangerous and I was not allowed to bring it on board. Who knows, perhaps I could have used it to make a really big net and capture all of the cabin crew? I don't know. A small woman armed with a little pointed hook could perhaps be a little bit annoying, but I don't think I would be a real threat. I'm surely not the only one to think that the security measures nowadays are somewhat exaggerated.

And for the second time I left Australia without really being there. I hope I'll see more of it some day.

I DIDN'T GET TO ÅSTRALIA, BUT I GOT TO ÅLAND

Johan Anglemark

Yeah, I didn't win the GUFF race to the fabulous countries down under. But instead I could undertake another journey instead. This is what you get instead of a GUFF report. At least it's shorter.

In Swedish, *all* is spelled with an *å*, just like in Åcon, and means *eel*. There are perfectly good linguistic reasons for this; *meal* is *mål* in Swedish and *steel* is *stål*. See the pattern? Good. And eels are electric, remember that.

But first let's take a step back to last year's Finncon in Helsinki, where I and Anders Reuterswård were chatting with Eemeli Aro, wonder kid of Finnish fandom. (Eemeli does not mean eel in Finnish as far as I know, but it might as well, because if he isn't electric he's definitely electrifying, and he gives you an impression he can be in two places at the same time. Small wonder he's now a father of newborn twins – a single discharge from him cannot possibly result in anything less than twice the normal result.) Eemeli was telling us of this idea of a small hotel con on the Åland islands that Jukka Halme and Ben Roimola had come up with during a ferry trip a few years before; an idea that he and Jukka were seriously considering reviving. A small relaxacon in a hotel, and a con that would appeal to Swedes and Finns alike.

Åland, you see, is a tax paradise, a sort of Baltic Sea Jersey or Isle of Man with all kinds of special dispensations from EU laws. And the language on the island is Swedish. (It is a part of the Swedish Baltic Sea archipelago that the League of Nations awarded to Finland in the early 1920s to adjust the balance of power in the Baltic Sea, against the outspoken will of the islanders. They have stopped complaining by now, though. Better be a privileged part of Finland than a neglected part of Sweden which would have been the alternative.)

"Fine," Anders said, "I'll be your Swedish agent. How much is it?" This caught Eemeli by surprise.

"How much is what?"

“The membership fee, of course. This is Finncon; no better time to announce your Åcon. It’s a lovely idea. We’re coming. Set a fee and we’ll pay and the ball will be rolling.”

Eemeli said he would confer with the others and get back to us. He did, we paid, at the dead dog party they announced Åcon to the gathered fans. To the Finns this was a big thing, because they have no tradition of the type of conventions that English-speaking fandom is used to, and they have never had a hotel convention. Finnish cons are basically “Get sponsors, a cheap venue, no entrance fee and announce it to the masses”. But now a formal boast had been made, the stakes had been driven into the ground, reputations would be made or lost forever, Ferdinand and Isabella could be seen on the quays waving good-bye. Finnish fandom would sail west and either meet the indigenous Swedes or fall off the edge of the world. Was there a Vån Diemen’s land to be discovered? (See how I desperately try to cling to the GUFF theme?)

Okay, I guess that was a beginning. At least that was the reason why I almost a year after the Helsinki Finncon had packed my bags and was ready to set off. Fellow Uppsala fan Sten Thaning had found a ridiculously cheap travel plan. Free bus from Uppsala to the ferry, free ferry to Åland, and I would be there. Great. I wondered where the catch was. There were two ferries to choose between, one that required me to get up at 6 AM and one that left five hours later. Not a difficult choice if you’re me, although it would become evident that the other ones preferred the early ferry. Their problem, not mine.

The bus to Grizzly Harbour, the area’s shipping port for bear hides, was indeed free just like Sten had promised, although the driver looked surprised when I told him I wasn’t going to take the late ferry back. In Grizzly Harbour, I had to board the ferry, and had that “uh-oh, now they’re gathering us for transport to the camps” feeling when they herded the crowd through narrow corridors onto the ship. But I got onboard, and just like Sten had promised it was free. Uneventful trip. In the duty free shop I didn’t find much of interest except a bottle of Ålvados. I’m not making this up, it was a local apple brandy in a marvellous bottle, a bottle they wanted 65 euros for. Ouch. Was that because it was so good, or because of the fancy, hand-blown bottle? I was to find this out later. When I get rich I will indulge in Calvados, but at the moment I am dizzily, unhappily in love with it. I have only tasted the cheap duty free stuff once or twice and didn’t like it at all, and then a couple of drams of 30+ year old Calvados and that was among the best things that was ever introduced to my palate. However, no ordinary human can afford the aged stuff.

Unencumbered by the local Manhattan Dynamite duty free, I got off the boat for the final leg of the journey. Here my bout of lucky Sten-discovered free lunches (actually, the mediocre steak I wolfed down on the ferry wasn’t free) ended, and I had to pay for the bus into Mariehamn, the capital of Åland. (Population 10,300.) There were roadworks everywhere, obviously not my EU tax dollars at work (I hope!), and an endless series of vintage cars gathered for some sort of show, making the bus about half an hour late despite not being even half full. My worry that I would miss heaps of interesting programming were moderate, however. The lay of the land was unusual. There was water everywhere: ditches, brooks, meres, and inlets. It was easy to believe that Åland isn’t just one large island, but a swarm of 6,500 (most of them uninhabited, of course). The bus delay was to some extent compensated for by the friendly bus driver. As we reached the bus station in Mariehamn, the only remaining passengers were I and an elderly British couple, and we

were all going to stay at Hotel Adlon so the driver took us directly there, to save us the expense of taking a taxi.

Hotel Adlon sits right by the sea in the west harbour of Mariehamn, very close to where the Tyrannosaurus ferries stop by on their way from Stockholm to Helsinki and vice versa, so they can saturate the Sueco-Finnish need for duty free alcohol. Outside the hotel is a nice sundrenched patio, on which Hal Duncan can be found on a sunny evening. Like the one when I arrived there. It was tempting to enter the con space continuum right away, but I checked in first. Friendly staff; nice spacious room.

Then to the hotel bar, which seemed reasonably well stocked, but more about that later. I had a Danish wit beer and made my way over to the patio. So what had I missed by the way of programming? It was after all two and a half hours since the programme should have started. I had missed nothing it appeared, because the weather was too good for the programme to start, so they were waiting for it to get a little worse first. That occurred half an hour after I got there. During that half hour I watched with fascination how Jonas Wissting tried to carve himself a third door key to his and his room mates' room from an old plastic card using one of those high-tech pen knives that computer geeks like. I don't think I was alone in drawing a breath of relief when the home-made key proved not to work.

The programme commenced less than three hours late with a general introduction to Åcon and Hal was brought onto the stage to say hello. After this exhausting bit of programming, we were a bunch of fans who felt peckish, so we tried to get something to eat. Unfortunately, things to eat were not easy to find on a Thursday evening in Mariehamn ferry port. We went to a small fry shop, but they had closed for the day and were busy cleaning. The cleaning lady wasn't exactly fluent in either Finnish or Swedish, and my Turkish has never been what it was, but she pointed us elsewhere. We rambled about for fifteen minutes or so before finding a decent hotel pub that also served food. Then back to the con.

Because Swedes and Finns regard each other with a little bit of suspicion (Why aren't they unhappier about being ceded to Russia in 1809? Do they all fight with knives? How come even their gays regard us as effeminate wankers? How can they pull off so huge cons?), the first exercise when we returned after dinner was a game of hangman, to let our respective fandoms get to know each other. I don't know how well that worthy goal was achieved, but I can tell you something you didn't know before; something no one in the world knew before. If you exchange most vowels in English words for the letter å, the level of difficulty is increased exponentially. I think Hal won the game. Or perhaps it was someone else. It was good fun at any rate.

After this exhausting exercise a number of us ended up in Hal's room, because Hal had a minibar. To our mild disappointment – and Hal's *enormous* disappointment – Hal's minibar contained two cans of beer, two cans of sweet cider and a lot of mineral water. No nest of inveterate drinkers, this hotel. The room party went on and on unperturbed by this, until nine o'clock next morning they told me the day after. I retired at three or four in the morning. But those who remained until the end were treated to a preview performance of most of Hal's coming musical. The day after the convention it received the nickname *Room 416 – The Musical*.

Breakfast on Friday morning was OK. Not great but then it never is except at British Eastercons and then only some years. For some reason, Nordic conrunners haven't managed yet to convince hotel managers to serve beans, rashers, black pudding, sausages and mushrooms at our breakfast buffets. Instead we get what in that Shangri-la of cholesterol-laden tables is called continental breakfasts. I mean, Åland isn't even *on* the continent. It's an island. Åland is more insular than perhaps even Britain.

Anyway, breakfast was OK. (I got sidetracked there. I'd appreciate if you as a reader help me when I start to digress instead of egging me on, or this report will never finish.) After breakfast we took a stroll over to the *Pommern*, a sailing ship which is permanently moored in the harbour and is on display as a museum. Today was International Museum Day or something like that, so there was no entrance fee. Fascinating ship. She was commissioned and built in 1903 as one of the last commercial sailing ships, and during the 20s and 30s she transported wheat from Australia to Europe until World War II broke out. Sort of a GUFF ship, in other words. In 1953 she was presented to Mariehamn as a museum. One of the last in an age where engines had already won. But because she was an industrial, mechanized worksite and a sailing ship, both archaic and modern at one and the same time, there was something decidedly science fictional about her. Like steampunk but the other way around. If you ever get to Åland, visit her.

Then we went into the town centre, had an ice cream and some espresso, and checked out the off-license. Here I found the Ålvados again, but now it cost about €100. My interest was piqued further. Then back again for the Guest of Honour interview. Hal brought the ones of us who didn't know all interesting trivia about him and his novels up to date. For example, why he writes under the pen name Hal Duncan when his name is actually Al Duncan and how long that incredible messed-up miracle of a book *Vellum* took to write. I'm glad I had read it before coming to the con, but I'd appreciated meeting Hal just as much if I hadn't.

I guess it's time to mention the bar in more detail. The barman was friendly and professional. He had an interesting beer menu, but unfortunately nobody has tipped him off regarding fannish taste in beer, so he was out of most of the more unusual things even before the con started. In a way it was good, because it forced me to try some stuff I wouldn't have tried otherwise, and some of it was good. And then everyone had to order a Guinness, whether they were drinkers of stout or not. Nobody had seen these contraptions before, where you pour the Guinness from a can into a glass and put the glass on a vibrating disc that sets the gas moving, streaming upwards to form the creamy head. More meaningless technology to amuse us nerds. As the weekend ran its course the bar had fewer and fewer interesting things left to offer, but those of use who think lager is an acceptable beverage never had to complain. Finnish lager is decent and the local brewery, Stallhagen, had a couple of nice dark beers. And they had Ålvados. The barman wanted us to try it, because the bottle wasn't opened and he wanted to see it opened and emptied so he could take it home. Well, €5 for a dram of Ålvados was more appealing than €65 or €100 for a bottle, so I had a go at it. As I feared, nothing special. Nice bottle, though.

The program for the rest of Friday was a panel about the excesses of book collecting, where we swapped anecdotes of books taking over houses and destroying personal finances, a quiz where poor innocent people from the audience had to identify the evil panelists' lies from their truths, and the Guest of Honour speech. The first half of the speech consisted of Hal reading an extract from *Vellum*, with added commentary. I'm not

sure it really worked because either you had read *Vellum* already and then you didn't need to hear it again, or else you hadn't read it and then it was quite incomprehensible. The second part, where Hal held forth on ~~slipstream~~ infernokrusher was better. After the speech we went out for dinner and ended up on a boat in the eastern harbour, and got ourselves an okay Thai meal.

We returned to find a Finnish room party going on, but to get in you had to pull down your trousers and prove you had pants on. Everyone at the con seemed to have, considering how packed the room was. I think the ones sitting out in the corridor were there because they didn't fit into the room, but perhaps they simply weren't wearing any pants. We intermittently left the room party to go down into the bar, which is how we discovered that they closed at a ridiculously early hour. I don't remember exactly when any more, but it wasn't long after midnight. However, they continued to sell the local stuff in the reception until 1:30. Quite civilised, after all.

When the Finnish room party started to fade, some people went to Hal's room, where festivities continued until – once more – nine in the morning. The people in the room next door were not all of them amused.

The convention was supposed to have had a book guest of honour: *Hyperion* by Dan Simmons. However, because this had been announced so late, almost no-one had had the time to read or re-read it. As a consequence, the committee canned the whole thing and promised to announce next year's Book GoH earlier.

Saturday had more nice things to offer. The bar was open again, which we took liberal advantage of. There was a misnamed panel about guilty pleasures; misnamed because the panelists or confessors in the audience didn't look very guilty at all. It was supposed to be about things science fictional, I believe, but once people got cracking they started to confess all sorts of pleasures, not only Anita Blake and Xanth, but also reality shows, Internet flamewars, and a number of other worthy cultural phenomena.

Then the theme veered from low to high and a panel discussed the merits of ambitious literary fiction versus cheap entertainment. Is it moral to debase literature by consciously writing dumb stuff, is a failed ambitious book better than a successful dumb book, and related topics. Somewhat predictable perhaps, but interesting nevertheless.

The last item for the night was a quiz called Never Mind the Buzzaldrins that went on and on and on. People took the last opportunity to imbibe and some more than others.

Sleep, and the next day it was goodbye to everyone. The people travelling to Helsinki left later than I did, and so had time for the very last panel, The Future of Åcon. Apparently the future was decided to exist, for next year there will be an Åcon 2. I'm not going to write a report from that one – I'm on the committee for it. Next time the hotel promises us the bar will stock up with whatever we want it to! Yay!

A big, warm thank you to the committee: Eemeli Aro (*in absentio*), Jukka Halme, Ben Roimola, and Tero Ykspetäjä. Åcon was great, pirate flags everywhere and Toni Jerrman walking around being very much Toni Jerrman.