

eFNAC May-June-July 2000



Melbourne's active fandom in 1965 visits the Ballarat SF Group and listens to a talk: in the front row John Foyster's jaw sags in disbelief, Cedric Rowley looks to the heavens for help, and Bill Wright wonders what they are both thinking.

Editorial

Phew!

I hadn't thought that my little visit to South Africa (four weeks) would be so disruptive. But that's how it has turned out.

I had assumed that a week or so of readjustment would be necessary after I returned to Australia, but despite an unplanned season of genteel unemployment I haven't been able to catch up on many things, not the least of which has been eFNAC.

Rather than delay things further, I've produced this issue largely using what I had prepared before I went to South Africa, spiced up a little with some South African notes. What isn't here – what I expected to be here – will have to wait for the next issue (coming RSN!). I had been planning three pieces about different aspects of science fiction fandom – even something about paper fanzines – but each of those three pieces is only part-written. And the letter-column (thanks for the letters, by the way) is also missing.

Much of the disruption, I reluctantly admit, is the result of computer hamfistedness. This issue is being produced on a different machine from the one which generated the three previous issues. This means some things, like templates, have had to start from scratch. It has also meant that I have devoted far too much time to trying to get computers to talk to one another – the kind of thing that persuades one that talk of “computer intelligence” is idle.

But idleness is a topic I am going to try to avoid for a month or two. See you then.

John Foyster, 10 August 2000

The Science Fiction Writer As Primary Producer

John Foyster

Last week I imprudently watched one of those TV compilation shows - Australian in this case - devoted to recalling the works of some past master of the medium. There was nothing particularly interesting in the compilation itself, other than the extent to which it recalled earlier times in the making of popular television programs.

But something did strike me as noteworthy, because it fitted in with a particular pattern noted elsewhere, though on a different timescale.

Earlier this year, someone in the TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT drew attention to the changing financial structure of the Booker Prize for novels. In the early days, the writer remarked, three-quarters of the total budget (or some similar fraction) went to the author, with the balance being spent on publicity, entertainment, etc. Now, however, the balance is reversed, with only one quarter of the budget going to the winner. The big money, in other words, goes to the promotional "sideshow".

There was a similar change, though over a period of almost forty years, in the case of the TV compilation. In the 1960s that particular TV channel had a dance troupe, and a big band, that performed nightly on the channel's "big" entertainment program, IN MELBOURNE TONIGHT. Advertising was almost all done live, mostly in the form of the host sending up the products (which the advertisers loved). Now, of course, there's no such program, and certainly no dance troupe or band. And the big money goes not into programs but into advertising, so that whereas once the programs were occasionally interrupted by advertising, in terms of production costs it is now a matter of the advertisements being interrupted by the (lower-cost) programs.

This seems to be part of a more general pattern, one that farmers know all too well. The process of "value-adding" is one in which greater benefits are drawn by those later in the

production chain regardless of the nature of the value that is added – for example, a bookseller can hardly be daimed to add much value to a book that you buy, since he or she acts as a “delivery boy”, and the same applies to all retailers, who tend to become much richer than the original “producer”.

Science fiction writers know about this. Selling your work to a science fiction magazine has become increasingly unrewarding with time, partly because the revenue pie appears to be being sliced somewhat differently: *ANALOG* appears to have more members of staff than *ASTOUNDING* ever did.

It's not surprising that there are attempts to strike back. That's why I hope that Stephen King's efforts to sell his writings direct to the public will work. Although the rhetoric of downsizing has included reduction of the size of middle-management, the reality does seem to be otherwise. At least I find that most organizations I come into contact with still have large numbers of non-contributing managers.

In general, however, this seems to be a lost cause. The big share of the economic pie will continue to go to those re-arranging the deck-chairs, not to those manufacturing them nor to those running the ship on which the deck-chairs are being arranged.

South African Diary (1)

John Foyster

13 May 2000

Travelling business class, I had asked for 'gluten-free' meals. It isn't that I cannot tolerate gluten at all, but rather that my tolerance is on the low side, and rather than face a stream of meals which might go over my threshold in the course of a day I thought to play it safe and eliminate gluten altogether.

Because everything had been done at the last minute (or almost so – I should really be grateful that my airtickets arrived 36 hours before I left, I suppose) there was quite a rush, and having the diet right would be a bonus (best last-minute catastrophe of this trip: getting up to discover that the light-bulb had blown in my office, which is just what you need when you are planning to copy data files at the last moment, and have to leave at 8.00am). As it turned out (leaping back to my original point) the gluten-free diet was a little over-done.

On the way across to Perth I was served a pleasant and quite varied meal, but this was on a trip that only lasted three hours, so it didn't count. But on the flight from Perth to Johannesburg (about 10.5 hours) I was served two gluten-free meals. When I looked at the menu of what was offering the regular customers I was encouraged because the courses were almost entirely gluten-free, so I reckoned I would have some pretty pleasant choices. Wrong! For each meal I was given an entrée which was pleasant enough, but not as attractive as what was offered the regular customers (how much gluten is there in tomato soup? I wondered). And for the main course, while the poor unfortunate regular customers had a choice (for each meal) of chicken, fish, or

steak/beef, I received (a) grilled steak and then (b) a beef fillet. Since I don't normally eat much red meat this was, without doubt, overkill. Can't complain about the effort, though.

At the Perth airport, while waiting for our transport to the international terminal I fell into conversation with two South Africans who were keen to compare Adelaide life with life in South Africa generally. To save on reading time I will merely remark that their political views could not readily be classified as progressive. On the trip across the Indian Ocean itself I was casually slumped in someone else's seat (or would have been if it had been filled); glancing too hastily at the icons which explained which seat was which, I took the window seat and established myself there comfortably. Since I would be travelling one-third of the way around the world I needed a strategy for coping I settled upon trying to get through the movie marathon, which is how I came to see THE WHOLE NINE YARDS, THE MAN ON THE MOON, THE WOG BOY, and SIMPATICO all in one day. These were tolerable rather than the sort of thing one would go out of one's way to see (although Jim Carrey was fine as Andy Kaufmann).

The trip across the Indian Ocean interested me for two reasons. One was that the flight from Perth to Johannesburg is probably the commercial flight which dips furthest south (apart from Antarctic joy flights): I think Sydney/Buenos Aires is probably next. The second was that, as a consequence of a simple continuity theorem, at some point I would cross the track of the vessel on which my great-grandfather came to Australia almost a hundred and fifty years earlier. His diary records some rough weather, as might be expected in the Roaring Forties, and we managed a touch of Clear Air Turbulence ourselves, though the 747 (probably longer than the GOLDFINDER was in 1856) did bounce around only slightly.

The weather was a mixture of clear and cloudy, but the sky cleared encouragingly as we reached the coast of South Africa. From my seat I could see everything quite clearly below, despite a little haze. Crossing the coast a little to the north of Durban, I guessed that the river I could see was the Tugela. It passed through very rugged country (which I probably won't have much chance

to see on the trip) but which was still very impressive from the air. The clouds closed over quickly, before I could see whether we would pass close to Dundee, home of my (very) distant relative Hilton Foyster, whom I do hope to meet on this trip.

The clouds cleared away again as we approached Johannesburg Airport, giving me a chance to notice how similar the land was to parts of Australia (except that they use terracing in South Africa). I also noticed a substantial brown haze near the horizon.

We landed about forty minutes earlier than scheduled, and got through immigration and customs quite quickly. My taxi driver was waiting for me with a very prominent sign, as promised. (A week earlier, on the same flight, the company sending me to South Africa had another consultant who was delayed by half a day by yet another of the now-infamous minor technical difficulties which have been afflicting QANTAS lately, and the same taxi company had had a contract to pick up that consultant – it hadn't been a good investment for the taxi company.) I had never been met at an airport like this before (usually making my own way around) but it certainly made life easier for me. I got some change at one of the airport banks, the exchange rates being just as gouging as the guidebooks had predicted and we set off for the 40-minute drive to Pretoria. I was able to collect a bit on information on the way (the haze is mostly dust – presumably from the Kalahari – rather than industrial pollution), and we discussed different approaches to fencing fields/paddocks. South African fences seemed to have more strands, and weaker posts, than Australian fences. “These are meant to keep people out as well,” the taxi driver said. “Not if they are serious” I responded, having rolled through a few fences in my earlier years.

As we entered Pretoria I formed the impression that the driver knew which hotel I was to be driven to (and he had the same impression). However, when we drove past the area I thought the hotel was in I did ask the obvious question, and we made a large mid-course correction. I couldn't be sure of what was going on since this part of Pretoria had the usual maze of one-way streets.

When we got to the right hotel the driver decided that he ought to come in with me while I checked that I was in fact booked in at that hotel. I was, but only from the following day – and bookings were effectively full. However the young lady on reception responded favourably to my suggestion that we might agree to change my date of arrival, and I farewelled my driver and clambered up to my third-storey apartment, which had exactly the layout shown at the hotel chain's website. I did the minimum amount of unpacking and went to bed for thirteen hours.

14 May 2000

Although the hotel offered breakfast, it was a high-gluten deal, so I opted out of that. Just before 9.00am I set out down Leyds Street (which I had learned to pronounce from the taxi driver) to try to reach Esselen Street, which seemed like the major nearby thoroughfare which would have open shops. Although it was a cold morning (“brisk” I suppose, would be a better word) there was clear sunshine so it was enjoyable to discover this part of the neighbourhood I would be living in for four weeks. I strolled down Esselen Street (meeting my first beggar, a white woman whose pitch was extremely unconvincing), not spotting the Chinese restaurant I was looking for, until I reach the redlight district (which looked ordinary) just beyond where a Sunday Market was being set up.

Turning back, I focussed on the main task – getting a plug adaptor so that my Australian devices could be plugged in to South African power sources. The Sunday Market was in front of a shopping mall, so I thought the mall itself would be worth a try. The guy in the hardware store was just opening, but he reckoned he had the combination of devices that would set me up (and for only 100 rand sold me this kit which will also meet my needs in Europe, the UK, and Japan. But he couldn't get his printer to produce a receipt, so I took a chance that all would be well (and it is when I plug my Australian device into a European plug and then into a South African plug – don't ask). At the bottom of Leyds Street I popped into a little supermarket to buy some kitchen

supplies, and found it to be a very friendly place – at least based on the conversation with the clerk who hadn't seen before the kind of fingerless gloves I was wearing. I picked up a couple of local newspapers as well, hoping that I might be able to appear to be at least superficially well-informed on local matters when I turned up for work on Monday morning.

I cooked myself a good solid breakfast, read the papers, fired up the laptop, and felt myself very comfortably settled in.

INTERMISSION

I hadn't counted on catching a severe head-cold, which made working in South Africa very difficult for me for the first couple of weeks – and put me way behind in diary keeping (I never caught up).

Having mentioned my great-grandfather (Robert George Foyster), let me introduce about a week of entries from his diary of 1856, covering the period when his ship was arriving near South Africa.

THURSDAY, 22nd May 1856

Today we have the same time as in London, only we have lamps at five o'clock to get our tea. At tea time a large bird was caught with a hook and a piece of pork, called Molly Hawk, measuring about 4 feet across. I am exceedingly sorry to have to note the illness of our Skipper (Captain) he gave himself a rick in the back, by lifting a bag of biscuits, and is obliged to keep his bed, the first mate has now the command of the ship. We have very little wind, and what there is, is contrary.

FRIDAY, 23rd May 1856

It began to blow hard last night, and today the sea is running mountains high, it is very dull, and we can scarcely walk on the deck. Last night the iron which holds the yard to the mast broke, and today the sailors had to take the main top gallant yard down, to have a new iron. We have now

only two sails up, and they are close furled, the fore and main top sails, I fear it will be a brisk gale before it stops.

SATURDAY, 24th May 1856

I had a very disagreeable night last night, as there was such a very heavy sea, and the water came into my bed; everything that was not lashed was on the move, a large filter made a smash at the Doctor's Surgery, which broke the doors etc, and in the morning some of the "Medical Comforts" (Wine) was missing. Tonight as I was up on deck for tea water, the sea came over fearfully, washed me under the spars, hurt my leg again, and gave me a very unpleasant duck, so that I had to change myself before I had tea. Such are some of the pleasures of emigration. Captain is a little better.

SUNDAY, 25th May 1856

We have had a fearful night and morning, it is blowing a gale, and the ship is rolling awfully, the sea has been washing the deck in grand style; about 4 o'clock this morning, one of our doors being left open, we had our first sea below, it came down like a water spout and rushed into our cabin at least a foot deep, we leaped on our boxes and saw it washing our boots etc, out of our cabin and we could not help laughing, for a time, but after we felt very vexed, one of my comrades got wet in his bed, I fortunately escaped, and lent him one of my dry blankets; we had two more rather smaller ones after this greatly to our annoyance. It is dangerous job to go to the other end of the ship for tea water, or any little thing, so you can faintly see what an uneasy state the ship must be in, for me to hesitate as to which was the best to do, to venture, or go hungry and thirsty. We had no service, I and Mrs. Forrest and daughters had a tune together, and I departed early to bed with rather a heavy heart at the thought of that being the Sabbath, but I rejoiced in being able even here to open

my heart to my heavenly Father, after which I felt much relief. I never before spent such a Sabbath.

MONDAY, 26th May 1856

Distance 220 miles This is our greatest accomplishment in the 24 hours, up to the present time: We got the yard up today, and the sail (main-top gallant sail) is now adding its might to take us on our journey. I am glad to say that the Captain is sufficiently well to come on deck and resume his command. The sea is, comparatively, quiet today, and we are enjoying it. I have not yet got over the cold I caught on the line, my cough is better but now it effects my head, I am almost deaf in one ear, am otherwise, in the enjoyment of good health. I often think of all my friends, and wonder if I shall ever see them again, but I must leave all to Him, who over rules all for good.

TUESDAY 27th May 1856

Distance 204. I have had a busy day today, after getting breakfast I washed some handkerchiefs out, and hung them to dry in the Life Boat. I then got the things up for dinner preserved meat pudding; got the stores out for the week in the morning, and afternoon got my bed and pillow on deck to dry etc. we then had tea, and in the evening I played at chess till late, then had some jam and bread for supper and "turned in". The ship rolls very heavy on account of her having cargo of Iron Water Pipes for Melbourne, which she has in her bottom. Nine weeks out.

WEDNESDAY, 28th May 1856

Distance 197 Miles. We expect to be in the Longitude of the Cape tomorrow, and now we have still between 5 and 6 thousand miles to run which we expect will take us at least a month. Oh! How we long to see and feel dry land again. I sometimes stand and look over the side of the ship at the

mighty deep and wonder if we shall ever get to dry land in safety; then I wonder what I shall do when I get there, if I shall ever again see my dear brothers and friends, especially my dear father, in Old England; and so I meditate till I can bear it no longer, and so I think or do something else.

THURSDAY, 29th May 1856

Distance 234 Miles. As we expected we are in the Longitude of the Cape today, or a little past it. It is a custom (though not in other ships) of our Captain (Stewart) whenever he gets round the Cape, to give, out of his own pocket, a glass of the best pale brandy to every man and woman on board his ship, accordingly we had it served out to us tonight, passengers and sailors, and I can assure you it was a treat. I helped the sailors to sing the "Captain's a Jolly good fellow etc." I put on my last clean pair of sheets, and pillow case, and enjoyed them much.

FRIDAY, 30th May 1856

Distance 100 Miles. We are now 66 days out, and we hope to be there in about 25 days more if we have a fair wind. Oh! How I long for the time, I have no companion, and I cannot be always reading and so the time hangs very heavy now, but I am somewhat stimulated by the hope of better days to come. I do not regret coming at present, as I still think I am in the path of duty. We are going through the water at a tremendous rate, and we expect to have strong winds now all the way.

SATURDAY, 31st May 1856

Distance 245 Miles this is the largest run we have had since we left, you will perceive it is over 10 knots an hour (a knot is rather more than a mile). The life of another pig was taken today, and he now hangs on the Quarter Deck. Tonight I had a shot at one of the Cape birds, I brought him to

the water, but he was not killed quite, but I thought it a triumph, as it was a flying shot, and the vessel was rolling very much. I have been on board ten weeks today. I have seen numbers of small birds today, called Whale birds, or White Martins.

NORMAL SERVICES RESUME

Fortunately the next two weeks were not too bad, and I kept some notes. Here's what I wrote about the last few days in South Africa.

My working hours here in Pretoria preclude much sightseeing (tonight as I got out of her car my local contact Carol said to me "Suppose we start at 7.30 tomorrow morning so that we can go home at the same time as everyone else?"), but last weekend I went down Jo'burg way twice.

I spent most of the Saturday with Michelle Foyster (a very distant relative), Marshall, and their son Aiden (just under three years old). Michelle and I have been corresponding for a couple of years now: in 1500 in a village in Norfolk, England, there were two Foyster brothers, and she is descended from William while I am descended from John, making us, as remarked above, rather distant relatives.

Marshall is a musician turned TV editor, and he was determined that I would enjoy myself. Michelle and I were happy just to talk to one another, while Aiden amused himself beating his father on the head and back with the toy boomerang I had thoughtfully brought for him from Australia.

The weather was so good that the roads between Pretoria and Johannesburg were crowded with other people who didn't want to miss it. In the end all we did was visit a couple of shopping centres before going back to the house Marshall bought about ten years ago. It was formerly a farmhouse and is large (about 10,000 sq. ft.) – so large that Marshall lets out some of the rooms. In addition there are a number of farm outbuildings that Marshall has renovated and let out to other families. The result is quite a large compound, about seven acres in all. As it turns out, this

endeavour has been all that has made it possible for Marshall to afford the house: he began paying for it back in the days when he earned a living as a musician in apartheid South Africa, and his income is now much lower.

Marshall was determined to throw a few prawns on the barbie (Oz-speak, if you believe the advertising) or have a braai (Sarf Efrica-speak), so a couple of hours later we had a vast meal before they drove me back to Pretoria. We have every intention of meeting again.

On Sunday Carol took a golden opportunity to avoid family (mother-in-law) responsibilities and we drove back to Johannesburg, or at least as far as the comfortable northern suburb of Rosebank, which has an excellent flea market. We didn't buy anything there, but I did have an expensive time in a CD shop and a secondhand bookshop. We then ate at a Jewish restaurant (acto Carol) at which point, while consuming a pecan-filled chocolate brownie, I noticed that apart from the waiters Carol was the only non-Caucasian in the restaurant: uh-oh! – ten years ago those signs saying "Right of admission reserved" didn't refer to a dress code. In the week since I have watched out for Caucasian/non-Causcasian couples dining together: the total score has been zero – which I expected in Johannesburg, but much less so in Pretoria.

I noticed that there was a branch of *Facts & Fiction* (a chain of bookstores) upstairs, so I dragged Carol up there so that Carol could take my photo in front of it (my consultancy business is named *Foyster Fact & Fiction* – partly as an homage to John Brunner, and partly because I think it helps business). When I got the photos back Carol thoughtfully remarked that I looked like Michelin Man – but we remain on speaking terms.

On Wednesday a report was issued from the Department of Education, reviewing the education structure that had been put in place soon after the ANC government was first elected in South Africa. I glanced through it on the DoE intranet site, and thought it looked pretty sensible (these things were too ambitious, let's be more realistic, etc.). The next day, however, the local newspapers had a field day, getting a few things wrong (claiming that 1.4 billion rand – about

\$US200 million – had been wasted on learning materials, when what the report actually said was that one problem was that while 1.4 billion rand had been allocated for buying learning materials, just under 800 million had actually been spent). And on Friday, when the *Mail & Guardian* began its editorial with “What took place this week at the Department of Education’s 123 Schoeman Street Headquarters ... was profoundly significant”, I must sadly report that they were not talking about my brilliant plan, completed only the previous day, to bring me back to work in South Africa three or four times a year for the next couple of years, but rather to what was later termed (in words in which Sir Humphrey Appleby would have delighted) “a brave and outspoken report”.

Alas, by the time of our meeting with a couple of departmental deputy directors-general on Friday morning, they too had read the newspapers, and were very anxious not to get involved in any activity/project/suggestion which had as much as a chance in a million of not succeeding. It is fair to say that they were therefore unenthusiastic about my plan (which was the plan all the lower-level employees had agreed to go with). We agreed that we would need to consider a number of scenarios for future activities, and I volunteered to develop these over the weekend. Carol’s boss Lulama had to go off to a funeral immediately after the meeting, and looked as though she might easily volunteer to swap places with the dear-departed. Carol is made of sterner stuff, however, and she had a much better plan, which she suggested to me without prompting: “let’s go shopping”.

And we did.

1981-2

Adelaide: Allan Bray's Photographic Record of Science Fiction Conventions

In 1977 Allan Bray attended the first "big" science fiction convention held in Adelaide; DUFF winner Bill Rotsler held sway at a now-demolished hotel at seaside Glenelg in the middle of winter. Allan does not seem to have taken any photographs at that convention.

In 1981, Frank Herbert was Guest of Honour, and the national SF convention, held in North Adelaide, was also attended by GUFF winner Joseph Nicholas, and DUFF reps Joyce Scrivner and Denny Lien. Kelvin Uriah Fanthorpe Widdershins was also a guest of honour. This time Allan did take a number of photographs at the convention, of which a selection is published here.

Later in the year, or perhaps early in 1982, Allan took photographs at "SMOFCON". I was not at that convention, but I think it did take place in Adelaide. A few steamy shots from that convention round out this photo supplement.

John Foyster, July 2000



Guest of Honour Frank Herbert



DUFFER, Denny Lien



DUFFER Joyce
Scrivner and
Leanne Frahm



GUFFER Joseph
Nicholas



Frank Herbert, Michael Tolley, Perry Middlemiss, K U F Widdershins



Just possibly a panel on fan funds

Joyce Scrivner, Leigh Edmonds, Joseph Nicholas (pointing to the secret of his success)



Sally Beasley and Eric Lindsay, plotting something



Jane Taubman – I guess there was a masquerade that year

Lee Harding contemplates

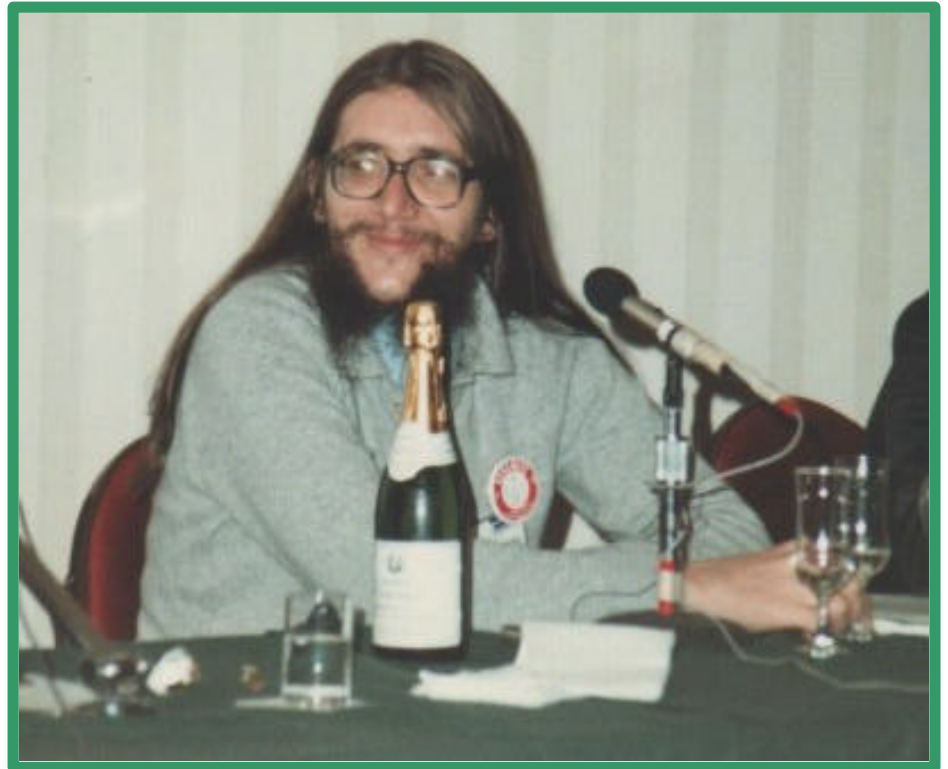




Artist Mike McGann (pre-door)



Paul J Stevens



Leigh Edmonds

K U F Widdershins
pontificates.

At this convention, Frank Herbert said to me “you ought to write more”. At the time I thought he was being encouraging about my fictional efforts, but a glance at this photograph suggests he may merely have meant “use a bigger piece of paper for your notes”.





Jack Herman is relaxed and comfortable – presumably the Business Session is over

Mandy Herriott and, forensic investigation suggests, the right ear of Justin Ackroyd



Gary Mason

Just a bit too exciting for Paul Stevens and Derrick Ashby



SMOFCON – the location?

The building that is suspected of having housed SMOFCON – otherwise unidentified





Peter Toluzzi takes it all in. To his left: Steve Roylance, Sue Pagram. To his right: Cath Ortlieb, Marc Ortlieb, Judith Hanna



Andrew Brown

and

Irwin Hirsh

prove that they're stand-up guys

Gerald Smith in front



Lesser fans make room for Mark Linneman and Robin Johnson

Evidence that this convention was held in summer...



Sean McMullen shows what he's made of; Jack Herman leans ever-so-slightly to his left

Tailpiece

Thanks for reading this far.

If you want a copy of the fifth edition of **eFNAC itself**, send me an email with the subject line reading 'FNAC5' (nothing else required). If you also want the photographic supplement, send another email with the subject line reading 'FNACb5'.

If you are happy to receive all of **eFNAC** as it is published, send an email with the subject line 'FNACp'. To receive all the photo supplements, send an email with the subject line 'FNACf'.

To understand the above instructions, send a \$50 note to the editorial address and receive by return mail a fully-authorized training program and a do-it-yourself pre-authenticated certificate of competency.

Letters of comment with the subject line 'FNAClox4' would be much appreciated – and are likely to appear in the next issue.

Next issue in around a month. Or later.

eFNAC Volume 2, number 4

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Available for the usual. Electronic communication preferred.

Copies available on floppy diskette to those who are not connected.