



VIBRATOR 46
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THE VIBRATORIAL

Welcome to the 46th issue of Vibrator, the first one with a Taral Wayne cover. Whatever possessed me, you may well ask? Well despite all the apersions cast on his character, I persist in thinking Taral is a good guy. He was good enough to support me in my recent TAFF aspirations and did not desert me when they all fell through. He buckled down and came up with the goods. What more can any of us ask of ourselves.?Buckle down.

The big issue this month has been relegated to the back page, although not of course to the back page of all our hearts. I have little substantive to say here about Randy Byers. Frankly I am nearly all wept out and feel inarticulate when it comes to threading meaningful words together on this subject. There will be time and words to come, I hope.

Two slugs of travelling reportage here this month. John Purcell asked me for ideas about something TAFF-related and I suggested he deal with his exploits in Paris on his way to Finland, since that might be overlooked otherwise. I'm quite pleased with what he has come up with. At last a a segment of a TAFF report in which no fans are involved.

My own exploits at Novacon are also recorded for posteriority. I did not much enjoy it but I'm glad I went because it cured me finally of any of my own TAFF aspirations. I look forward to seeing who will stand for TAFF next year, but I suspect it will be somebody younger and more sexually active than I am.

Riding on the Metro

by John Purcell

Of all the places Valerie and I visited on my extensive TAFF trip this past summer, Paris – the city in France, not Illinois - offered the biggest problems we had to face. With the possible exception of three days in Cardiff, we were almost always with friends: we stayed with the Skeltons in Stockport (twice!), the Mowatts in Cambridge, the Fishlifters in Croydon (three times!), the Jacksons in Chichester/West Sussex, the Van Toorns in Rotterdam, and then the Benninks in Balkbrug. Naturally we were surrounded by fans in Helsinki during the Worldcon, and Liam Proven was our constant companion during our three-day stay in Prague. Heck, we even met Nina Horvath at the airport in Riga, Latvia, the day after our one-day layover wait for our connecting flight over to Helsinki: she was on the same plane! There were always friends around us, it seemed. For that matter, Cardiff was not even a real problem because we spent the better part of one day at the Doctor

Who Experience (to be written up for an issue of *Exhibition Hall* since Messrs. Garcia and Bacon are also big into Whoviana type stuff), so there were a good number of fans there, making that, er, experience feel like we were attending a Doctor Who Convention.

But Paris? Nope. Not a familiar soul around. Valerie and I were in the City of Lights, left to our own devices in totally unfamiliar territory. We did not know anybody there. The only people we might have been able to stay with in France were Mike and Pat Meara, but they were in England while we were in France, and John and Eve Harvey had already bugged off toward Finland by then, too. A few months earlier I had tried getting in touch with Pascal Thomas and never heard back from him. Besides, he was way the heck down in Toulouse, and our trip itinerary was rather tightly structured. As a result, we were on our own in Paris.

Getting there from London was a snap. By this time Valerie and I were veterans of the London transit system, so we had no problems getting to St. Pancras Station (which we felt compelled to call St. Pancreas) where our Eurail train would depart for Gay Purree. Stowing our gear – a large suitcase, two smaller carry-on suitcases, and two back packs – was a bit of a bother for getting it aboard, but there was plenty of storage space by our seats. I have to admit I could easily get used to traveling Europe by train if they were all like this part of our trip. The top speed was 208 miles per hour, with an average speed of 165 mph, according to the overhead informational sign in our car, which likewise informed us how far below sea level we were - over 65 meters at its deepest point - while rocketing through the Chunnel. The train covered the 250-mile distance in less than two hours, and we arrived at Paris' Gare du Nord Station just after 10:30 PM local time. With the aid of Siri and Google Maps we debated between walking or taking a cab to our destination, which was only three-quarters of a mile away, but it was dark, getting late, plus we were in a strange city. The cab drivers stared at us like hungry wolves, but we didn't want to pay their ridiculous fares (we had been warned about them). So we called for an Über driver, who turned out to be a pleasant middle-aged gentleman who appreciated my wife's first year French, and his rate was very reasonable. By the time we got to our hotel nearly an hour after disembarking the train, we were definitely too tired to deal with anything more than sleeping that night.

Our plan was to spend a total of five days in Paris; six, counting travel in and out of the city. We ended up spending the first two nights in a "hotel" in the Tenth Arrondissement, officially named L'Hotel Jarry Confort, but we renamed it the Hotel Jerry Lewis not only because of the name similarity and we were in France where the late American comedian Jerry Lewis is revered, but because this establishment turned out to be a real joke. It may have been very affordable, but seriously: this joint had no air conditioning, no lift, and our fourth floor room was the size of a broom closet with the smallest bathroom we have ever seen jammed into a corner

niche. The pictures on the Jarry's website were a flat-out lie: the "spaciousness" was pure photo-shopped illusion. Like Abraham Lincoln said, "Never trust what you read on the Internet." Word up, folks: carefully - and I mean *carefully* here - research any hotels you find on Bookings.com. You will not regret the effort. We already knew that most of Europe had yet to embrace the wonders of air conditioning, so we expected the lack of AC, but if we had known of no elevators or things of that nature, we never would have booked a room at this place.



After we – as in me – lugged all of our stuff up four flights of narrow, windy stairs, and figured out how in bloody hell to arrange things so that we could actually move around in this broom closet, we decided to check out our immediate environs by looking out the window. Well, that afforded a lovely view of a brick wall with a narrow alley separating the Jerry Lewis from the next building. To be perfectly honest, we really should not have opened that window for a number of reasons. Granted, we needed to get some air flowing into the room – which, given its size, would not take long – and since it was after midnight we figured it "should" be okay, but we were quite wrong. Not only was the room hot and stuffy, but thanks to this being the hottest summer on record in Europe, so was the Parisian night-time air. No relief at all. On top of that, we were blessed with sewer smell rising up from below. Not even two hours after our arrival in Paris in late evening of July 28th, we were already quite pissed off by the time an Italian couple returned to the Jerry

Lewis from a night out and started arguing quite loudly. They were one floor up and kept us awake another hour before either one of two things happened: the man apologized to his wife – if she really was his wife, as if that mattered, although the thought added another layer of intrigue to their verbal donnybrook – or they both passed out, having spent the last of their wine-fueled energy. We were grateful for the silence, and finally fell asleep ourselves after resolving to demand moving to a bigger and more accessible room.



The next morning, after grabbing coffee from the lobby café and bar, I was able to talk to the manager – who spoke English reasonably well – to voice our complaints and made the room change request. He graciously accommodated us, especially after I said we would be changing hotels if he could not make such a switch (amazing what the threat of lost income can do to get things done), and offered the large top floor room – up two more winding flights of stairs from our broom closet – at the same price. I checked it out first and found it much more to our liking, especially due to the large French doors that opened onto a narrow balcony overlooking the street,

providing a nice breeze and relatively fresh air. I went back down, and brought Valerie upstairs to get her approval. Then I dragged all of our stuff up to room 605, cursing all the way, raining all sorts of ugly thoughts down on the head of the proprietor and his children's children. We eventually got the heck out of there by early-afternoon on Saturday, July 29th to finally enjoy at least some of the sights, sounds, and much more aromatic smells of Paris.

After riding the Metro from the Chateau D'eau Station near Hotel Jarry to the Madeleine Station in the city center, we spent the rest of that Saturday afternoon and evening wandering around some of the streets. That leg of the subway wasn't too bad, but we learned firsthand that riding the Metro back would be a severe memory test because you really need to pay attention to the signs pointing you in the direction you want to go. The main thing to remember when reading these Metro directional signs is that they are labeled by the end points of each route, which you are either heading towards or away from. Sounds simple, no? No, not so simple. First things first, you have to descend through an underground lair similar to the old video game Wolfenstein. You need to go down dozens of stairwells, and in

the 10th arr., it is a smelly descent into the depths of the Parisian underground rail warren. Sometimes the walls were adorned with advertisements of upcoming theater shows, concerts, or art gallery displays. Which station you were at even had better posters, such as the large images of one of Valerie's artistic idols, Salvador Dali. Not surprisingly, the Madeleine and Concorde Metro stations in the First Arrondissement were clean and adorned with high-class wall advertisements, some of these even outfitted with neon lights, while underground musicians filled the tunnels with the sounds of guitars, violins, flutes, and harmoniums. I checked but Filthy Pierre was nowhere in sight.

But back to above ground Paris, with its incredible architecture, history, and art. Everywhere we turned was a visual treat: Art Deco designs adorned building trims, cornices, balconies, and roofs; statues were strategically placed in gardens or surrounded major buildings, such as the Grand Opera; in fact, throughout Paris the architecture of all the buildings is remarkably coherent and unified. Most city center buildings date from the 1870s to the 1920s, with older and newer structures mixed in. Yes, the city center of Paris is gorgeous, and we loved it.

It would turn out that most of our time during our entire stay in Paris was spent lingering in the Jardin de Tuileries, which is a huge complex of gardens and statuary surrounded by palaces and museums, all in a massive area that could have contained three football stadiums and their parking lots. It was the perfect staging point for anywhere we wanted to go in the city. At one end of the Jardin de Tuileries is the world famous Louvre, which we were planning on seeing on Monday, July 30th, and at the opposite end is the Champs Elysees, which led off to the Arc de Triomphe, which likewise was on our must see list. Without a doubt, this is the Paris the world should know and appreciate. Needless to say, we enjoyed the rest of that Saturday immensely, returning refreshed and full of hope to the Hotel Jerry Lewis just before midnight.

Now, it needs to be stated here that the difference between the First (the city center where the Louvre and the Jardin de Tuileries are located) and Tenth Arrondissements (where the Hotel Jerry Lewis is) is literally like day and night. The First is clean, with lots of art galleries and museums, with clean airy streets lined by architectural delights, plus the clean gardens were lovingly landscaped with flowers and sculptures, and thousands of tourists (especially giant groups of Chinese) wandered aimlessly about, and did I mention that the First Arrondissement is clean?

But we were not staying in that area. Nope. Our garret room was back in the Tenth, so after a day of earthly delights, we returned with our spirits lifted and full of hope for a better night's sleep.

Well, Saturday night at the Jerry Lewis Hotel was an improvement over the previous night, but not by much. During the day the management failed to install air conditioning or a proper lift, plus late night was even noisier. The reason for this was

that even though the rancid sewer smell was gone, now we were in a bigger room facing the street; to get fresh air in, the windows opened out street-ward, which meant this time we were kept awake by loud, drunken or stoned young Parisians prowling the sidewalks well into the wee hours. It actually sounded like a gaggle of gurgling grungy punks had gathered directly in front of the Hotel Jerry Lewis. We Were Not Pleased.

Two nights of this was more than enough. So we spent that very late Saturday night/very early Sunday morning researching on our cell phones, despite the weak free WiFi link the Hotel Jerry Lewis provided, for a better Parisian hotel, preferably in a nicer part of the city. After a couple hours of searching Booking.com – well, we got a three-bar signal for that, so you work with what you have - and reading through the websites of a bunch of hotels, we found one of note that was right down in the First Arrondissement, Hôtel Opéra Richepanse. It was a posh 4-star hotel that had everything we desired: air conditioning, an elevator (sorry: a lift), a spacious room (almost 800 square feet, making it half the size of our house in Texas), a king-sized bed, in-room coffee service and bar, a 50-inch HD television, a huge bathroom with shower and tons of clean, fresh towels, there was a first floor restaurant with full buffet breakfast included in the price of the room, etc. And the really, really awesome selling point about the Richepanse was its location: we could walk to the Louvre, the Jardin de Tuileries, the Arc de Triomphe, a slew of museums, plus *two* nice Metro stations – the Madeleine and Concorde – were all mere blocks away from the Richepanse, providing access to even more museums and sights, including the grand dame of Paris, the Eiffel Tower.



The Hôtel Opéra Richepanse is directly behind that little yellow car right-center here.

This hotel room was pricey – a few hundred dollars a night – but we had our personal credit card, so Valerie and I looked at each other, sighed, and said, “Fuck it. We deserve to treat ourselves right. After all, when are we ever going to see Paris again in our lifetimes? We’ve got the available credit, let’s do it.” So we reserved our new room and checked out of the Jerry Lewis early Sunday afternoon,

and once again dragged all of our luggage off to the Chateau D’eau Metro station to find civilization at the Rich Pants hotel. (Yes, we re-named that place, too. With a name like Richepanse, it would have been rude to not rename the hotel.)

However, the problem was it was almost 5 PM by the time we attempted to board the Metro, and apparently it did not matter that it was Sunday. Every single #4 subway train car heading toward our destination was packed. I swear, it seemed half the population of Paris was streaming to city center. After four full trains had rattled through, we decided that for the next #4, the first car that stopped nearest to us with any kind of room that could accommodate the two of us and our gear, we would jam our way on.

Sure enough, five minutes later another #4 Metro rolled into Chateau D'eau Station, and lo and behold, a pair of doors opened directly in front of us, disgorging enough passengers to create room for the luggage encumbered Purcells. We quickly grabbed our stuff and leaped aboard. People standing inside drew back to give us some extra room if they could, which was greatly appreciated, but as Valerie and I jostled into position my back was slammed by one of the train doors as they began to close! I tumbled forward, smashing my right shin into our biggest suitcase, while the train doors bounced back a couple feet, then tried to eat me again when I attempted to stand up. Down I went a second time. Some passengers tried pushing the doors apart with minimal results, but just enough to extricate myself from the death-dealing mandibles of the train doors so that they could close properly. Who would have thought a French Metro train would try to eat a respectable American TAFF delegate? How rude!

I struggled back to my feet. "Are you alright?" Valerie cried out, yanking her suitcase and bag protectively to her side.

"I think so," I shakily replied, restacking the two suitcases in front of me, and readjusted my backpack. "Whew!" I whewed, looked at my wife and gave her a goofy smile. "That almost made me homesick for the New York City subway." A couple people chuckled at that, but most of the other passengers who had witnessed this literal subway attack stared blankly. *Saracens*, I thought. *Bloody unfeeling Saracens!* The only good thing about this was that we were getting off two stations down the line, at Madeleine. Once there, it was much easier getting off – the doors stayed open a lot longer here (better clientele in the First Arres.? Metro paid their electric bills here?) - so we disembarked, rearranged everything yet again, and began the long trek up stairway after stairway, ascending towards the light. "Son of a bitch!" I bitched. "Don't they believe in elevators in Europe? Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, but this is ridiculous!" Valerie toiled on wordlessly, concentrating on not passing out. It took us over twenty minutes, counting rest breaks, to climb this subterranean Mount Calgary, burdened by our Samsonite crosses. Our legs felt the strain, and my right shin began to ache.

Finally we emerged into sunshine and fresh air. Valerie and I plopped down onto a bench, grateful for surviving the ordeal. Unfortunately, we still had to walk to the Rich Pants Hotel, but a quick check on our cellphone directional apps showed that

we were only – *only!* – two and a half short blocks away. By now my right shin was quite sore. Rolling up that pants leg revealed a really nice bruise forming. Gingerly touching it, I breathed a sigh of relief that nothing felt broken or chipped. Just a nice purplish-red memento that would last for a week or so.

“We can do this,” I said, unrolling my jeans to cover and protect my wounded leg.

“Fucking hell,” Valerie panted, her eyes closed. “Give me another ten minutes at least.”

“Not a problem.”

I glanced at my watch. It was a few minutes after six in the evening. If we took it easy we’d still be checking into our new hotel Real Soon Now. So while catching our breath, letting our heartbeats return to normal, Valerie and I looked around and marveled at the architecture surrounding us. We were in a prime shopping and dining district, which immediately put us in a better mood. Delicious tendrils of dinner wafted from the Fauchon Paris restaurant three doors down and lovingly embraced us. Poshly dressed Parisians window-shopped, posed dramatically for Valerie taking photos on her new iPhone 7+. A few dozen pictures later, we soldiered on, my leg feeling a bit better as we leisurely strolled down Place de la Madeleine, veered right onto Rue Dupont, then right again on Rue Saint-Florentin, arriving in short order at the automatically opening double doors of Hôtel Opéra Richepanse.

Walking into the lobby was like stepping into the heyday of 1920s opulence. The lobby was pure Art Deco, with potted plants accenting the black marble tiled floor, which contrasted perfectly with the pale ivory coloured walls lined with luxurious couches and comfy chairs; an elegant but simple mahogany coffee table aesthetically centered one section of the spacious lobby. Off on a broad window ledge was a pitcher of fresh lemon water on a tray, neatly stacked clean crystal glasses next to it. I half expected F. Scott Fitzgerald to be sitting in the lobby on one of the divans, nodding to us over his newspaper, welcoming us with a smile.

We approached the light mahogany accented front desk, which looked like it had just been flawlessly polished. When the lovely, young receptionist said in the sweetest French accent, “Bon jour! May I help you?” it was all we could do to not cry from joy. All of our trials and pain had brought us to this posh island of peace.

Oh, heck yeah! This was more like it. Now we could *really* enjoy Paris!



MY NOVACON By Graham Charnock

Arrived in Nottingham. There was a man pimping for taxis on the taxi rank and he opened the door of one for me. The Poacher in Mansfield Street, I told him.

Mansfield Road, he corrected me. Mansfield Street is in Leicester. There was no faulting his geography and I thanked him for saving me a long and expensive journey. And so the cab zoomed off into the heart of the city. Well, crawled at a somewhat leisurely gait, not helped by a series of uncontrolled pedestrian crossings. Well, the crossings were uncontrolled and so were the throngs of Saturday shoppers, none of who seemed willing to give way to taxis, cars, buses or anything else.

We eventually arrived at the Poacher and inexplicably the driver, instead of stopping immediately outside, drove around into a back street. I assured him I could walk the hundred yards back around the corner, and made my escape.

Much carousing was already in progress when I joined the carousers. Ron Gemmell, treated me like the long lost acquaintance I have never been, and thrust a copy of Eric the Mole into my hands. Earlier I had Face-booked him asking him how mortals who weren't at Novacon were expected to obtain a copy. I don't think he



expected me to come a hundred miles or so in pursuit of it.

Eventually I wound up at my own hotel, the Best Western just opposite the hotel where the con was actually being held, and I eventually wound up there as well. Everything about the place was much as I remembered it from the last time I'd been

there in 2010, except now there were even more people I didn't know and didn't feel inclined to converse with. A lot of them seemed to be mimicking US fans by tending towards obesity. That somehow made me even more disinclined to talk to them. Eschewing the programme, which I had just spent £26 for the privilege of attending, I settled down to the real business of the con, which was drinking with what few friends I could still recognize amongst the crowd. I had quite a sociable time with Lennart Uhlin who people assured me I must have met before, but couldn't remember doing so. One new fan I sat and drank with was Ellie Winpenny. Since I'd never heard of her before I assumed she must be one of the new youthful brats who had already featured on one of the convention's programme items itself. She looked amused, bemused, flattered and perhaps insulted by my speculation. She asked me to guess her age and I said 18, reminding her that men invariably

knock off at least five years when asked to do this sort of thing. Turns out she was 48. The water in Glasgow must have something going for it.



Ellie Winpenny, Dave Hicks, Ron Gemmell

I went to speak with Greg Pickersgill whom I had seen disappearing into what was once the book room, but which was now simply labelled as a lounge. Historically we have had our fallings out, but now he was affable enough, and said he generally liked nothing more than sitting on his own and watching the world go by. I apologized for bothering him with my company and took a photograph in which he

gazed into the distance. I always do that, he explained.



Greg Pickersgill

I also spoke to Peter Mabey, since I remembered him complaining on Facebook that no one ever noticed or talked to him. Peter, being 91, is not in good physical shape and is not very mobile, needing a hi-tech walker to get around and I can understand that must be off-putting for fans who may be slightly disablist. He also has bad teeth, but the last thing anybody could accuse me of is

being toothist. I appreciate his Facebook presence however where he shows a keen intelligence, and felt it only right I personally told him so. I told him my name but



wasn't entirely convinced he knew who I was. Why should he? He seemed touched to have recently lost his younger contemporary Brian Aldiss, whom he regarded as a long-time friend. The more time goes on the more I feel I have in common with Peter, confined by my own lethargy and fannish immobility and making only

occasional contact with people, who otherwise recoil away from me in dread. My teeth are okay though.

Back to drinking and Pat Meara showed around menus for the hotel's own restaurant, and a group of us decided to make it our target that evening. It eventually settled down into a party of The Mearas, Rob Jackson, Dave Hicks and Cat, and Tim Stannard. I knew Tim as a old Birmingham fan but had never had much contact with him, so it was pleasant that he revealed himself to be a quite normal and sociable fan and a good conversationalist. It was nice to have a conversationalist around since my own talents in that direction were rapidly departing in a mist of tired alcoholism. He had also worked for a wine importer and so was obviously a bit of a bon-viveur. It was Mike however who caused a small stir by sending back a bottle of red wine because it was 'corked'. The waitress didn't seem to understand what corked meant, but understood well enough that we weren't going to drink it or pay for it. I tasted it and it tasted like any cheap bottle of plonk I pick up for £3.99 in my off license. That'll teach me. I was happy to accept Mike's judgement. If anyone should know when a wine is corked, it's him. When I mentioned this to Pat she remarked that a lot of wine now comes with screw caps rather than corks, but I argued that screw caps don't necessarily keep out air 100%. Maybe I am wrong, maybe I am right.

After dinner there was some enthusiasm for the Pub Quiz item on the programme. The committee had been slightly remiss in actually setting up the pub table environment needed for this though by actually installing tables, so there was some longuer whilst people thronged in the lobby waiting for the event to start. I sat in on Tim Stannard's table where our name was Draughty, because the air conditioners kept toppling our house of cards, which was all part of a very complicated quiz agenda, part of which involved Rob abjectly failing miserably at blowing a huge soap bubble. Don't ask, except that the whole quiz concept turned out to be a bit of a mix of Pointless and Gladiators.

I tired of it soon enough and retired to my hotel about 10.30. I'm sure I would have heard if our team had won in a blaze of glory, but I haven't, so I assume we didn't. I never even got to see how high our house of cards got to.

At the Best (?) Western there followed one of the worst nights of Hell I have encountered. The room next door was apparently occupied by a crowd of women shrieking hysterically and screaming and banging various objects against the wall. I hesitated to imagine what sort of Desperate Fun they were involved in but immediately started constructing a drunken half-awake narrative which encompassed it. At midnight there was some respite when the ladies of the night went out, stomping noisily along the corridor. They returned however at about 2.30 in the morning, and continued shrieking and screaming and banging. Occasionally a male voice could be heard barking through on some sort of amplified walkie-talkie

set-up. God knows what was going on. Even my semi-dreamstate narrative capabilities failed me at that point. After about another hour or so they went out again. This would be about four o'clock in the morning. I decided they were either a hen-party of policewomen or prostitutes equipped with some very high-tech communications technology. Or maybe even both.

The next morning I had had enough of Nottingham and fandom and left pretty promptly. I had considered standing for TAFF and had even got nominations in line, but this experience convinced me I should not proceed with this. Once upon a time I could cruise endlessly upon alcohol and adrenalin but now it just makes me tired. So. I will be making my apologies to my nominators, and bowing out as gracefully as I can.

Graham Charnock

AMERICA THE DAMNED

THE HORROR AT TALIESIN

Frank Lloyd Wright's life and career was ostensibly one of America's great success stories. His first job was as a draftsman with the Chicago architectural firm of Joseph Lyman Silsbee. The great Chicago Fire of 1871 had of course provided a propitious environment for builders, planners and developers. Gradually he carved out a niche as a humble, jobbing architect, aided greatly it must be said by various commissions from his own aunts and uncles. At various times he felt underpaid and underappreciated and chopped and changed jobs regularly, always happy to go where the most money was and seemingly not restricted by any ideas of loyalty.

He had experienced the breakup of his family home as a fourteen year old when his own parents had separated, his mother claiming 'lack of affection' as one of her grounds for divorce. It's probably true to say Wright never really learnt how to manage affection and love in his own private life.

On June 1, 1889, Wright married his first wife, Catherine Lee "Kitty" Tobin (1871–1959). His architectural mentor at this time was Louis Sullivan, of the Chicago firm Adler & Sullivan, and it was Sullivan who did his part to facilitate the financial success of the young couple by granting Wright a five-year employment contract and also providing a loan to enable Wright to design and build his first family home. Despite his patronage Wright constantly found himself short of funds. He had a lifestyle which was extravagant compared to his social and economic position and liked indulging a passion for luxuries he could sometimes ill afford. This probably led to some household and family conflicts with his wife. It also led him to practice what would today be called 'moonlighting', working outside the auspices of his

ostensible employer. Sullivan eventually learnt of this alternative career and it led to their final break-up. Not for the first time Wright had demonstrated his essential disregard for loyalty.

A significant development of Wright's career path was his involvement in what has come to be called the Prairie House Movement commencing in 1900 when up to 1910 he produced a series of remarkable and noteworthy design now held in high regard.

Wright had six children at this time, but has been described as 'non-parental'. It is no doubt true he devoted a lot of his time to his practice to the detriment of his personal relationships. He would not be the first success-driven all-American businessman to have done so.

In 1903, Wright designed a house for Edwin Cheney, a neighbour in his district, and immediately took a liking to Cheney's wife, Mamah. It proved eventually to be a fatal connection, but Wright was not one to moderate his underlying desires, and the idea of a new relationship was obviously winning out over the tired and stale one he had presented to his own wife and family for so long.

Eventually Mamah moved to Europe to obtain a divorce from her husband. Contemporaries and prattling townfolk who viewed all this were not surprised when Wright too moved to Europe, deserting his wife and family, and set up house with Mamah. Probably it is worth noting here that Wright seems to have had little control over his own desires. He saw something he liked, with people, and as he had always done with goods and chattels, he indulged it.

Wright returned to America and began to build a new home, Taliesin, in 1911, a name surrounded with various elements of Celtic mythology which I'm not sure Wright ever really understood himself.

In 1914, Wright was again working in Chicago while Mamah remained in Taliesin in Wisconsin.

Mamah had hired Julian Carlton, a male servant from Barbados. On August 15th 1914, Julian, inspired by whatever irrational rage, set fire to the living quarters of Taliesin and murdered seven people with an axe as the fire burned. The dead included Mamah; her two children, John and Martha Cheney; a gardener (David Lindblom); a draftsman (Emil Brodelle); a workman (Thomas Brunker); and another workman's son (Ernest Weston). Two people survived the mayhem, one of whom, William Weston, helped to put out the fire that almost completely consumed the residential wing of the house. Carlton swallowed hydrochloric acid immediately following the attack in an attempt to kill himself. He was nearly lynched on the spot, but was taken to jail. Carlton died from starvation seven weeks after the attack, despite medical attention. The reason for his rampage of course has never been adequately explained, but one can speculate upon some deep-rooted resentment

about his position as an exploited servant in the employ of a rich family, a family that had a beautiful custom-designed house and all the things he had never had.

One can imagine Wright was totally floored by this event, but it is hard to track down any of his public expressions of grief. Indeed there appear to have been none. Instead he moved on once his first wife had granted him a divorce, to marry two more wives, one who died from an addiction and the other who was a ballerina.

Frank Lloyd Wright was obviously a dramatic force in American architecture and remained so even after so many deaths and marriage break-ups. But he seemed immune to personal grief and dedicated to the pursuit of his own self-centred preoccupations, so who can really call his tale a Success Story? Wright died in 1959.

Frank Lloyd Wright was a man who lived through two world wars but seemed strangely immune to the effects of either of them, living in a weird sort of American bubble of self-interest. When he died Wright left behind hundreds of American homes, whose privileged inhabitants, like Wright himself, probably never bothered to look beyond their own enclosed architectural enclaves.

On July 8th, 1959 U.S. Army Master Sergeant Chester Ovnand and Major Dale M. Buis were killed in South Vietnam, being the first two official American casualties of the Vietnam War.

Certainly everything Frank Lloyd Wright had known was about to change. The architecture of America would never be the same.



CAROLINE MULLAN

After a hiatus of some months in which I read no fanzines, I just finished reading *Vibrators* #44 and #43, in that order. And *Banana Wings* #66 (reread) and #67. And an issue of *Lofgeornost* that I had mislaid. And *Novacon* PRs 2 and 3 (which were unusually interesting this year). I'm even up to date on the *Far Isles Quill and Cauldron* for the first time in three years. I am clearly on a fanzine binge. I hope so,

as I clearly have at least one if not two further issues of *Vibrator* around here somewhere waiting to be read.

On the other hand I'm not reading *The New Yorker*, *The Journal of the Chartered Insurance Institute* or *Garden* magazine, just to mention some of the titles represented in the pile of shrink-wrapped magazines on my sofa. Or the links to *New Scientist*, the *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* or *Financial Times* I've saved from in my Facebook feed this week, although to be fair the latter is because I've already exceeded the free articles I'm allowed this month and haven't got round to using my half-price vouchers for the *Weekend* edition. I'm not watching the BBC, though Radios 3 and 4 get a look in; and I do sometimes read articles in *The Guardian* (online) and *The Telegraph*.

In other words, while I have enjoyed vicarious experiences of a number of Worldcons, and feel somewhat informed about the doings of taxi drivers in Vegas, the practices of surgeons, and the uselessness of time travel, I have no idea what's going on in the world. What do do? What to do? Do I have to choose between the microcosm and the macrosocsm? Right now it seems so.

Though fannish perspectives on the events in Charlottesville this year and Nottingham in 1958 do seem to give an insight into the ways history is forcing the present. And Brian and I had a conversation this week about all the ways married (and cohabiting) couples find to avoid actually talking to each other, which might have been informed by your father's fish, and might also have something to do with the mess we are all in.

I ended up at the program item at Worldcon 75 on understanding what we want from Worldcons because I couldn't get into my first choice item at the other end of Messukeskus. I thought the difficulty of coming to that understanding was effectively conveyed, even if not quite in the ways the lecturer originally intended. Having thus performed as my personal exemplar of the con's space-and-queueing problem, and given me something to think about, the failings of the item were completely redeemed when it allowed me to connect with John Douglas, who was sitting with Ginjer Buchanon and others in the little bar just outside that particular room when I came out. John and I were thus able to pick up our decades-long (since Magicon, and last at Loncon), days-thin conversation for another year. I don't think the panel covered that particular thing that we want, and get, from Worldcons.

All of which is a long-winded way of saying thank you for some entertaining reading, and some interesting connections to the rest of my world. More succinctly, thank you for sending me *Vibrator*.

Is this my first ever LoC to you? If so, sorry. I'll try not to make it my last.

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DAVE COCKFIELD

Thanks for another excellent Vibrator. This one saw much usage whilst flying BA to Prague.

It satisfied me so much that I wasn't tempted to buy any of the Marks and Spencer food or drink on sale in the Economy class.

Death seems to be a rather prevalent subject this time around.

One of my favourite songs by The Incredible String Band is "My Name Is Death".

"I am the question that cannot be answered

My name is death, cannot you see?

All life must turn to me

Oh, cannot you see?

And you must come with me

You must come with me."

I just hope that when death comes to me it looks just like she is in Neil Gaiman's Sandman comics.

Throughout my childhood there was a constant.

Fairground goldfish + Cockfield = Dead fucking goldfish.

Looking back I realise that twice in my life I have seriously toyed with suicide. Once because of total rejection by a woman and then because of unjust criminal charges involving a female member of my staff. In both cases it was the support of friends that kept me going. In the first instance a sort of friendship was eventually re-established and in the second I was totally exonerated and was supported by my employers (Revenue and Customs) to prosecute the lady in question for her false accusations. She was dismissed from work but left for Australia before she could be prosecuted.

Those experiences were 20 years apart and after each reaffirmed my desire for life and no matter how depressed I can get I try to be optimistic that things can only get better.

My mother died at the age of 73 and in her later years was quite fearful of death and discovered religion. I could never understand why. I'm not at that age yet and I'm not religious but I now tend to think of death as something that is inevitable so why worry about it. This is possibly due to the many relatives and friends who have died in recent years. I regret their passing but try to honour them by remembering all the good times together.

My one irrational hope is that I'll be around long enough with my senses intact to finish those series on tv and in book form that continue to hold my interest (Game of Thrones, The Expanse, the Natchez Burning trilogy etc.). Equally it is the same with the cinema. I long for comic book adaptations of Adam Strange and The Atomic Knights and favourite science fiction novels such as Lord of Light, Beloved Son, Liege Killer, and Flow My Tears the Policeman Said. Rather pathetic reasons for wanting to live a longer life I know. I didn't think I needed to mention the more obvious factors of friendships, holidays, and many more pints of good ale.

I don't know if we will be better off after Brexit when we leave Europe but I will miss the ease of travelling there. In the last few years I have visited Paris, and Dijon, plus enjoyed long weekends in Brussels, Berlin, Krakow, and Budapest. I've stayed in both Burgundy and Prague five times. It helps having friends there. One thing that always surprises me is that with the possible exception of Paris these places are so clean and free of litter that you could eat your breakfast off the road. I even remember trips to New Zealand and the USA where litter was a total no-no.

On return to London my first thoughts are always, "What a shithole".

Why are we so bad in England when it comes to polluting our own environment?

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LEIGH EDMONDS

I'm not due to go down to Melbourne until next week but I did the next best thing and went and sat in my blood doctor's waiting room, which seems to be good for at least an hour and a half of good reading time. This time I waited about two hours and ran out of Vibrator to read and had to keep myself occupied with Children of the Lens, which is no substitute I can assure you.

Your opening spray seems rather morbid and unsettling. I can't say that I've ever given any serious thought to suicide (as an intellectual rather than an emotional exercise, perhaps) and I'm not prone to crying. It seems, from reading this and other issues, that your life has been a lot more torrid than mine, and if so you are entitled to these thoughts. Although I've had more than a few rough times I'm afraid my parents burdened me with a rather cheerful and optimistic frame of mind and there's not much I can do about it, though I've tried.

Bill Wright might have his points about the NHS and I know that his experiences of hospital (and all that go with it) has been much less pleasant than mine and this serious business about untreatable infections is, well, serious. Having been saved from dying at the age of eight by the new wonder antibiotics I'd think it a pity to be killed off by some kind of previously beatable infection. I must report, however, that when I recently went for some kind of scan to check for more blood clots (no

new ones thank Roscoe) the technician was a cheerful fellow with a British working class accent. We got to talking and I asked him why he'd come to Australia. He said it was because the NHS was in a shocking state and he wanted to work somewhere better. That may have more to do with funding than with the fundamentals of the NHS, which seems like a good idea to me.

There's lots of stuff about fishing when young, with mixed feelings as a result. I particularly enjoyed Simon Ounsley's long letter about his encounter with fish in plastic bags. His line - 'You go into the fair with coins in your pocket and a song on your lips, and come back with obsessive-compulsive disorder.' My parents gave me an Airfix kit of a Hawker Hurricane for Christmas in 1958 or 1959 and I now have a garage full of unmade scale model kits and another garage half full of made models. I don't know whether to thank them or not. I wonder if a life in which I'd spent all that money on drugs and wild women would have been any better.

I also enjoyed Nic's straight forward recounting of his experiences around 'the shooting'. Not being a local I had not noticed the drift in how it is spoken about. Going back to your cover and that unfortunate visage on it, is it only me who has noticed how once nation states used to reach agreements and make treaties with each other and now they 'do deals'. I'd like to think there was more to international relations than business, but I might be wrong about that these days.

As for Christmas shopping, I don't do it anymore. My family has agreed not to bother any more and most of my friends are so far away that presents are impractical. Our idea of Christmas these days is a slightly upgraded lunch, close the blinds and turn on the air conditioner to keep the heat down, and watch a lot of stuff on the box. Last year we sat through the entire Lord of the Ring extra long boxed set version. It kept us occupied. I haven't figured out what it will be this year.

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JIM LINWOOD

I was interested in your comments on Martin Amis's latest collection of essays. Martin's father, Kingsley, was the GoH at the 1961 LXiCon in Gloucester and brought his wife Hilary and two sons along. Martin was 11-years old and spent most of the time running screaming through the hotel corridors and up and down the stairs to the annoyance of the attendees. A few years later in 1965, Kingdon Road fans cheered when we saw him fall to his death from a brothel window in *A High Wind in Jamaica* – his only film performance. Martin was expelled from his grammar school in Battersea because of his four-month absence, including two in the West Indies, during the making of the film.

I “discovered” Martin when I read his novel *Time’s Arrow*, a time in reverse story that was sadly neglected by the SF community like many ventures into the genre by mainstream authors. I then enjoyed ploughing through his other novels and books of collected essays. He has written several essays on Ballard, including an introduction to a story collection. His best piece was an insightful interview conducted in Ballard’s Shepperton home which appeared in the Observer in 1984 but it is slightly marred by the usual snotty remarks about the Surrey town made by many of Ballard’s detractors: *England’s least conventional writer lives his life against type: in a little suburban semi, among the sculptured hedges, the parked Escorts, and the neighbouring houses with their fond appellations – Fairview, Gladecourt. Here in the deep innocuousness of garden suburbia, James Graham Ballard, the glazed SF stylist, the counter-cultural adventurer, the post-technologist of our modern setting calmly counts out the days.* Shepperton is a lovely little town by the Thames and an ideal place for Ballard to have brought up his children. In an Observer book review in 1976 he put the boot into his father’s old friend Brian Aldiss: *“The Malacia Tapestry is Aldiss’s longest watertread in the mainstream to date, and by now, I’m afraid, the lifeguards are getting nervous.”*

His iconoclastic style reminds me of your own; and that is a compliment – to Martin of course.

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LLOYD PENNEY

It has been a sad morning, with Remembrance Day/Armistice Day/Veterans Day, depending on where you live. Now that a good portion of the day is done, and all outside racing around has been accomplished, I find myself a whole three issues of Vibrator behind, so I will get with it and get caught up, and beg your forgiveness. Every good fanzine deserves response, after all. Here it comes.

2.0.43...Indeed, best wishes of health go to Steve Stiles. I read about further health problems this very morning, and all I can possibly add is this getting old(er) business sucks.

Since the election of Donald Trump, the absolute worst of US society has risen up to smear themselves across the American conscience (and indeed the world’s conscience), and they seem to have Trump’s tacit approval. The Worst President Ever seems determined to stomp across the world, and bully it into submission. And he is only one year into his presidency, which should horrify most people. American emigration to Canada, and other parts of the world, are at all-time highs. I am waiting for Trump to be of no further use to the Republican Party, as they will have done all the damage they can to the US public, and only then okay his impeachment.

A Worldcon report...that's the only way we can do them now, read reports. No more of them for us, but I am glad the world is seeing more Worldcons by staging them.

2.0.44...Oooohh, isn't that cover just lovely? I will have to blast it, though, it obstructs my view of Venus...

You want the Great British Bake Off back again? Now that Channel Four has it, the two so-called comediennes and Mary Berry have left, leaving Paul Hollywood to continue to stuff his face with sweets. I shouldn't complain, in the spirit of stealing good ideas, the CBC here now shows The Great Canadian Bake Off once a week, and this time, the comedians at the top of things are better known than the judges.

Randy Byers...such a horrible relapse. Only met him once, but still, I cannot think of a worse way to go. I hope there is a chance of a rally.

TAFF has had some great winners recently, and I am hoping that Wolf von Witting will try his hand once more time. Wolf, should you go for the third time, you shall have my nomination.

2.0.45... Steve, you actually cleaned Trump a little bit here. What a windbag he is... Every so often, the wind blows up here, and I consider anything out of his mouth to be Fake News... Trump will bring back dignity to the White House, but only after his departure.

Hallowe'en is a great time for certain fans in the Toronto area, but for us, it has become the usual quiet night where there are no knocks on our door, and that's okay, for there'd be no treats waiting for them. We have some costumes, but there are few opportunities to wear them.

Nic, this must be horrifying to you and all others in LV. The news of utter madness that seems to come from the US with alarming regularity...well, that's what I wish was Fake News, but is all too true. Prayers are not enough. It's just become another mass murder.

I have already started my Christmas shopping. My co-workers think I am either mad or adventurous, or really smart to get it done asap. I will certainly go with the latter. Yvonne deserves every present I can get her, so spreading the cost among a few paycheques is a good idea, too.

Corflu is here, Toronto, in 2018. And, I am still recovering financially from looking for work for two years. And, the last times there was a fanzine convention in Toronto, few people went to either, and I wound up babysitting the consuite both Friday and Saturday nights. And so, I doubt I will be there.

Not the loc I wanted to write, but it is the loc I did write, and it is now yours. Not worth the loc column, so I expect to visit the WAHF file. I hope there will be another issue for December, but in case I am not able to respond to it in time (I once again

have a huge pile of fanzines to respond to), Yvonne and I wish you and the other Charnocks a great Christmas and happy Hogmanay, and 2018 will be a good year, because it couldn't possibly be worse than the year we're winding up. (Okay, now I've thrown down the gauntlet...) Thanks for these, and send me some more, please.

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DAVID REDD

Hello and thanks for the angst, paper edition. Appreciated although numbing in places.

Tasteful cover, indeed depicting an Issue. Another classic. I do hope Steve is doing well. (Also Randy, Taral and others like yourselves with health situations.) *Vib* 45 stays interesting inside too, starting with an upside-down page 27. Well, if Pat proofreads perfectly you have to upstage her somehow, don't you?) You must have great fun devising these variations. Almost your only fun with the issue itself full of death, suicide, depression and Donald Trump.

Anyway, page 27 made me turn urgently to start Nic's piece properly. Oh dear. Words in *Vibrator* lately are reflecting the slow-motion trainwreck of civilisation all too accurately, not good. I mean, the words are only too good. It's the civilisation that's not so hot. A friend stayed in the southern USA this year, and his hosts' idea of giving him a good time was to go touring gun shops. (They were incredulous that he had no interest in guns, and that Britland held so many like him.)

Among the letters, good stuff, except I got worried by David Redd's. Given your current interests, was "Her y Hinsawdd" worth mentioning at all? Is climate change an old-hat topic in the new sleek *Vibrator* of "America the Damned" and pet goldfish? I suspected Joseph Nicholas had killed the topic a couple of years back. In fact, when I checked Joseph's masterly summary in *Vib* 2.0.17 (still an excellent issue), I found his argument strangely sedate in the light of this year's news items:

- Agricultural zones show a 75% decline in invertebrates over 25 years.
- A study of the slight decline in atmospheric oxygen over 800,000 years omits the last two centuries, not to upset the smooth graph.
- Underglacial warming in East Antarctica alone could release enough land ice to raise sea levels by 50 metres. (Goodbye container ports, etc.)
- Carbon dioxide rise is unstoppable for next 30 years, being joined by methane rise.

- By 2050 our oceans will contain more pieces of plastic than fish.
 - Poaching of ivory, rhino horn, pets and forest timber by gangs of up to 100+, driven by affluent Chinese, likely to wipe out large animals in 20 years.
 - Ocean acidification and coral die-off – well, you know that. Songbirds too. Enough.
 - We’re clever enough to exploit our environment, but not wise enough to preserve it. Still.

Why aren’t we (by “we” I mean the better-off, not those already going under) raging about the anthropocene apocalypse? Probably because the global expansion of “America the Damned” leaves people so stressed by unnecessary problems with, oh, train tickets, energy providers, social media etc etc, that nobody can make rational decisions any more. Hence Brexit an’ all. Democracy was always a bit iffy, as old Robert Heinlein muttered, but it’s going under from fake news and pressure to consume. How can we think about survival when we’re too busy juggling luxuries?

Shouldn't have tried bullet points. Took ages to lose the indentation; had to cut and paste in the end. All for random comments only too liable for editorial spiking.

So, closing quickly as eyes glaze over and an urgent school run suddenly beckons... re your backside... your Christmas shopping revelations...

There are other benefits to shopping on Amazon. One, you can happily visualise its frantic wage-slaves scurrying around with their circadian rhythms shot to pieces. Two, you can order Christmas presents delivered directly to the recipients, so you don’t have to pack and send the horrid things yourself.

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PAUL SKELTON

“I demand an apology!” That was how I was going to start this LoC, before I realised that it was really all my own fault. I had written ‘played their tripes out’ instead of ‘pulled their tripes out’ (though I have heard both versions), the latter being the more general and accepted usage, without appreciating that it was a strictly Northern expression meaning ‘to make the maximum effort’. When you put the ‘pulled’ version into Google it does bring back some correct hits, whereas in fact when I tried the ‘played’ version it asked “Did you mean trips?” Thus, given that I was writing about TAFF it is unsurprising that ‘tripes’ was assumed to be a typo, and corrected. So, given the context only you and I will ever know the full (and OK, I admit it, boring story). I mean, it is not as noticeable as, for example, omitting pages, including some pages twice or even printing some upside-down.

All of which brings me somewhat belatedly to my point, which is that none of these printing problems ever beset the .pdf version, so I feel I should remind you again that you do not need to waste postage sending me a printed version when a simple link to the e-zine would suffice. Unlike some of your readers I don't have any trouble printing these off...basically because I don't print them off, preferring to read them on the large-screen tablet that I bought specifically for the purpose of reading e-zines.

Nic Farey notwithstanding, I don't think it's really possible to copyright the word 'actually', with or without a capital 'A', so I checked out Mr. Holmstrom with that nice Google chappie again. It didn't really help. As near as I could understand the various references, which admittedly wasn't very near at all if I'm being honest, I can only conclude that maybe he tried to copyright it, failed, but was awarded a Nobel Prize for 'Chutzpah', or was it 'Economics', or maybe they're the same thing...or if not maybe only Mr. Holmstrom can actually tell the difference. There was something in there though about individual choices having economic consequences so I'm pretty sure that Nic is on safe ground with the fact that if some dweebhead chooses to cut loose with a semi-automatic rifle, the fare for cab journeys will likely increase. Tips...probably not so much.

Actually Nic's piece was a fascinating insight into the fallout from the abomination itself and was far and away the best article he has yet written for you. I suspect my feeling this way might be because on this occasion he wrote about fares which he treated with some empathy, whereas on previous occasions he's frequently told us about fares for which I've gotten the impression he's felt a degree of contempt.

An interesting and enjoyable collection of responses this time, though I would single out Chuck's take on Life, The Universe and Everything (including *Vibrator*). I was particularly intrigued by his mention of Whipchicken Road, which presumably led to Whipchicken Farm, which once apparently had a grass track for some form of stock car racing (see copied & pasted bit)...

Whip Chicken Farm. Not so much a stadium as a somewhat humble field at Crowland in Lincs where pioneering promoters Harold Bozzy Bosworth and Raymond E'Tere set up their stock car fence for two or three dates in the mid 50's. Drivers included some top names like Pat Frost but this embryonic "autograss" venue obviously didn't pay as well as expected and reverted to its original use. After a lot of work Richard Pell found the location on a 1911 map which you can Google if you are interested. Whipchicken road is now an abandoned farm track bisected by the new A16 and the farm itself seems to have vanished into the undergrowth apart from a barn . It's just north of Thornbury Hall but some way from the grass landing strip "Crowland Corner" that we had thought was now operating from the site.

Actually I think Whipchicken farm is supposed to be a secret as it isn't mentioned on any current map but there is a 'Decoy Farm' at the other end of the road,

obviously meant to lure you away. Just in case anyone was thinking of going there to investigate, Lincolnshire County Council raised a 'Temporary Traffic Order for a closure for 'maintenance work' at the backend of August this year. All very suspicious if you ask me. I wonder what Pat Frost would have made of this, eh?

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PHILIP TURNER

Crumbs! What a cheerful start to Vib 45; an integer which I have never found either spooky or distrubing (sic). What we need is something to lighten the mood. How about the attached pub sign, which I created for the cover of one of my handful of vexatiously incomplete novels?

Anyway, here I am, feeling quite virtuous, having tackled all of my outstanding editing, printing and binding jobs. I am also feeling enlightened. I have just been reminded that Volume 11 of Short Stories contains one called "The Piece of Paper That Saved the World". You'd have to go a long way to find a better title than that, IMNSHO.

I am also feeling a little disconcerted, having discovered that an idea which I used as the basis for a book was also used in the Thunderbirds comics in 1967; about 20 years before my story. And also done more concisely; me, 210 pages; them, 6 pairs of centre pages or 12 pages total. From which I conclude that a page of pictures is worth 17.5 pages of words. Make what you will of that.

Am I in danger of outstripping the bounds of a Letter of Comment and writing a Letter of Content instead? And does anyone care? Answers on a PC to the usual address.

As a non-participant in anti-social meeja, was that a misprint in Chuck Connors' contribution? FOMO? Shirley, it should have been FOMF? According to the judgely Lord Levison, pontificating in 2012, "People will not assume that what they read on the internet is trustworthy". How true those words are, even today.

Billy Wright, captain of Wolverhampton Wandereres in the Glory Daze! Where has he been hiding himself? Australia, apparently. Hey, John Shirley, you're not fooling anyone. Vancouver is in BC and the home of the BC Lions. Any fule kno that.

Hello, Robert! In addition to the volume of short stories (above), I was also engaged in parking on a bookshelf, TV Reports #25, which started as episode and film guides with sporting events but has drifted a bit, and The Black Flag Reference Edition Volume 18; a collection of news and views roughly set in this reality.

I am currently working on a for-print version of the Millennium Dome Bombing Saga, about which I had emails from people telling me that the local police knew nothing about it. Ah, the power of the imagination!

Pausing only to offer the hope that Taxi Nic finds himself living in less interesting times, I shall draw to a merciful close.

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ROBERT LICHTMAN

Although the cover of *Vibrator* #45 juxtaposes with the tracking number of the current U.S. president – and is another well-wrought piece of artwork by Steve Stiles – I much preferred having seen the scowling visage of Marvin the Martian on your previous issue than the psychopathic prick currently occupying the White House. I don't know how much TV news coverage of President Forty-Five you have to endure if you watch it, but here we've taken to using the "mute" button on our remote when he comes on and have both gotten very fast at it. He never says anything we want to hear, and we read and hear enough about his latest lunacies from secondary sources.

(EDITOR: As we write his latest effort at displaying brain-dead symptoms consists of retweeting videos from a racist right-wing British group, thus confirming there is in truth a Nazi Leader now in the White House. Meanwhile I get told off by a certain fan for daring as an Englishman to comment on war-mongering US politics, despite the fact that there are several USAF bases on British Territory. Being possessive about your shit, America, is one thing, but constantly spreading it around the globe and expecting other people to clear it up, is another. So is trying to silence or disparage the receivers of American Shit.)

I dimly recall having thought of suicide when I was a teenager, but after getting involved in fandom just before my sixteenth birthday I was sufficiently occupied with interactions with people who were more real and easier to engage with than the majority of my high school peers that those thoughts went away. Yes, "fandom saved my life." Like you, I saw no dead people until my father's passing – and I was much older than you report for yourself, being in my early forties. Also, he had been "done" for the open casket funeral so he only vaguely resembled my recollections. So in a way it wasn't really him. Four years later the same thing happened with my mother, and since then the several funerals I've attended were, thankfully, closed-casket.

Thanks for publishing Dian Crayne's last letter of comment. Because I lived in Los Angeles when she discovered fandom around 1962 and was Dian Girard, remember when she married Bruce Pelz (who published their wedding photo on the front cover of one of his apazines), and enjoyed conversation with her now and then. I lost track of her when I moved to the Bay Area in 1965 and then to Tennessee in 1971. She mentions having been a "multi-apan" in various apas including SAPS back in the '60s, and I was pleased when I rejoined SAPS in 1983 to find her active there.

It only took checking out her zines to learn that “Dian Crayne” was the same person whose writing and presence I’d previously enjoyed. After she dropped out of SAPS, I had a little direct contact with her later via e-mail. It wasn’t until I read the news of her death that I discovered she was just two days younger than me.

I agree with her observation that the speed of contemporary social media detracts from the slower and sometimes more considered pace of discussions that took place in paper fanzines. I miss that, too, and am happy that a frequent fanzine like yours can be a venue for such conversations.

Fred Smith notes that Jim Mowatt’s Helsinki report didn’t go into the program items to any extent, and laments that the distances involved in getting from one to another in the typically huge convention facilities necessary for modern day worldcons tend to mitigate against making much of an effort. He goes on: “Sort of emphasizes the trouble with Worldcons – so many people that you have difficulty finding the fans you know.” My own solution to this at the few I’ve attended in the ‘80s and beyond is to base my activities around the fan/fanzine lounge, where with enough patience and time people I do know will appear – in large part because they make the same calculation. Next year’s is going to be uncomfortably close, in San Jose, and it’s possible that like the last time it was there I might drop in on it. I ventured there a couple times with Dick Lupoff in tow, and did run across a number of people I was happy to see and spend time with – most notably my one and only connecting with Ron Bennett, with whom I’d been corresponding and exchanging fanzines since forever. But I didn’t join then, and I won’t join now – not at the current rate of \$210 for an attending membership. This used to be called “ghosting” the convention. Is that term still in use or has it been superseded by something insulting and demeaning of we who ghost?

I particularly enjoyed Simon Ounsley’s fish tales – an article disguised as a letter of comment.

I see that I’ve confused Paul Skelton with my comments about how inclined I am to leave money in a tip jar – would I be “more likely” if after ordering the food is brought to the table or if I have to go get it myself. The actual truth is that I agree with his comment, “I think it would show outrageous presumption for such an establishment to display a ‘tip jar,’” and almost never contribute to it.

Nic’s column was really excellent. I’ve wondered if and how the Vegas shootings might have affected people I know living there, and his is the only account I’ve seen from a fan’s point of view. I particularly liked reading that there were throngs lined up at the blood bank to donate, and that someone left “a Costco-sized box of energy bars.” Thanks, Nic!

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STEVE STILES

Wow, I didn't make that connection: 45 on Vibrator 45's cover. A happy happenstance! But it's a pity that the art came out a little on the fuzzy side and I can't account for that. I may have to install a newer version of Photoshop.

I had the usual Outsider feeling in my early teens and, a few years later, considered Colin Wilson's *The Outsiders*, a bible of mine back then (I'm afraid to reread my recently acquired copy of that book for fear that I'll conclude that it actually is a jive-ass shuck). Aside also from the usual hormonal angst thing, there were certain distances between me and my family, contrasting with the positives; my parents were conservative church-goers while I was turning into a little liberal who had severe doubts about religion, particularly Southern Baptists. And my father regarded me as a non-athletic geek, possibly gay, because I immersed myself in reading and art. This never prompted me to thoughts about suicide though; life was too interesting, and besides I fortunately discovered fandom at age fourteen, bringing me in contact with Lupoffs, the Carrs, Ted White, and many other really cool people, some of them my own age, people with whom I could identify with.

Laughing, Crying And Other Displays Of Emotion: Like you, I was out of a job in my mid fifties. More than a job, it was the career I had always wanted, but the comic book field has always been tenuous and Black October 1995 featured a meltdown comparable to 1929's Wall Street Crash. Which happened just when I no longer had to look for work because the work was coming to me, steadily month after month, for the previous 3-4 years. That all changed when the editors and publishers that had been throwing me regular work for all that time simply vanished like snowflakes on salt water. It was then that I discovered that computer programs had replaced all my hard-earned commercial advertising art skills, photo retouching and paste-up and mechanicals work, damn them. Here I was, a 55 year old with no marketable skills and no computer. I didn't cry back then but spent a lot of time in bed for awhile, wishing the world would go away.

When I was a pre-teen, due to family issues and some other ugly encounters with real life, I made a conscious decision to shut down any emotion that might make me vulnerable to pain --"I am a rock, I am an island" was a pretty common attitude among my peers in that time and neighborhood. So much so that I was unmoved when a suicide hit the sidewalk about eight feet behind me when I was on a school lunch break --*splat!* At some point I realized that I was being pretty stupid, a fucking *monster!*, and set about breaking out of that armor as best as I could. Still, there's that thing about Real Men Don't Cry, and maybe some of the armor still remains, maybe I'm a peninsula at least, so I most commonly get easily teary-eyed in the anonymous darkness of movie theaters for those scenes like, yes, when Bambi's mother gets shot to death, or when the lovers are reunited after facing horrendous hardships, or when London bravely endures The Blitz.

When real people I know, relatives, past lovers, friends, die my most common reaction is to grow numb for a while, kind of going through the same stages when faced with one's own impending demise; denial, anger ("Why him/her?"), et cetera, and eventually the sadness and the tears. Spontaneous tears are rarer, but when they hit me it's an explosion, like when I heard the news that my former roommate, Barry Smotroff, a person I'd thought would be a life long friend, had been murdered in his new apartment, or when I learned that Dave Van Arnam, one of my favorite people in my golden New York's Fanoclast era, had died. I had always thought I'd reunite with Dave some day when I finally visited Southern California, and that it would be great, and now it will never be unless there's some big Fan Room up in the sky. Which I doubt.

Speaking of the afterlife, I appreciate all the well wishes I've been getting from fans, which has really been gratifying and good for my morale. Although I've become more uneasily aware of my own mortality, I think I've got good reason to be hopeful that my lifespan will not be cut unreasonably short. As for "the dread scourge of chemotherapy," so far it hasn't been as bad as I feared: the nausea has been uncomfortable but not unbearable and I've been spared the heaves in my first two sessions. As for the vertigo, I just pretend I'm stoned. The actual application of the various drugs through the port embedded under my collarbone (admittedly that creeps me out a little) lasts about five or six hours and is under pleasant conditions – a nice comfortable chair, my own hospital tv, good books, my iPhone to listen to music with (lately Eric Dolphy, The Cocteau Twins, and The Boswell Sisters), and a good breakfast and lunch, plus chatting with pleasant nurses. The day after each chemo session I go back to our nearby hospital (less than a mile away) for a hydration session to make sure I have enough fluid in my system to avoid kidney damage; the main chemical I'm taking is called cisplatin, which is a bitch for that. I also get nausea preventing drugs. Just finished a hydration session today and will have to have another tomorrow. The only drawback about today was that some idiot was listening to a very long Trump speech on his or her tv and I had to turn the volume up on my phone to drown out the bullshit.

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TALES OF A LAS VEGAS TAXI DRIVER

By Nic Farey

THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR

Now isn't that an appropriate title for the December iteration of the gobsmacking

SexToy, especially since it's tincture of pure bollocks.

Not only is this time of year spectacularly unwonderful in the taxi biz, being slower than molasses in a Minnesota winter, but our friends are dropping dead at an alarming rate commensurate with the deadness of mad old Charlie Manson, lovely old Della Reese ect *ad infintum*, inevitably leading award-winning drunkard Charnock (G) to not only wallow in the drunkenness he erroneously claims to be the sole and champion practitioner of, but also to describe this column as "cheery", which it may well be by comparison.

Speaking of wallows, many years ago I wrote something, probably on LiveJournal or possibly in a private convo, which was a dreadfully self-serving "what if" slice of regret, upon which a wise friend observed: "History. There'll be more along in a minute." And of course she was right.

"October 1" remains a topic raised by passengers, wondering whether that's affected business, but given that this is our slack time of year, I maintain that it's difficult to tell. It annoyed me a lot that Mandalay Bay (an MGM property) is citing "the incident" as a reason for laying off a couple hundred people, when all my valet and security friends know that it happens every year. Those who had a bit of seniority (a couple of years in, say) would be top of the recall list when the Cowboy Christmas rodeo hits town (December 7-16) and then laid off again, or possibly held part-time until the madness that is New Years.

The cab companies also cut back, to an extent. Big boys Frias cut their drivers' shift hours and expressly forbid the working of days off, since they know they're just going to be paying minimum wage because the book will be so low. Since the arrival of Fucking Uber, and, more relevantly in my opinion, the decision by the cab companies to flood the streets with up to 1,500 more taxis, our book expectation has taken a drop. Day shift drivers would be looking to get 20 rides and/or \$300 book, which would be solidly average, no long-hauls. My own revised target of late has been 16 rides, expecting something in the low \$200s range, with the proverbial choirs of angels descending if you break \$250. *This* time of year, however, we're looking at 10-12 rides tops, and if you break \$150 it's party hat time. Knowing the love of the reader (J, Unc) for numbers, that translates roughly to \$60 commission (after gas expenses, trip charges & that), \$5 an hour. (Nevada's minimum wage is \$7.25.) Less rides also means less tips, of course, and if you pull in \$40 a day you're doing real well. A lot of drivers are coming in with maybe 6 or 7 rides and barely breaking \$100 book, even the notorious long-haulers are only coming in with \$200 or so.

Lucky cab, assuming last year's policy remains, will offer shift drivers the days off December 22-25, without pay, because this is America. We're also hoping they give us the "gas holiday" for the month of December, meaning that they pick up the tab for all our fuel, rather than the usual (for shift drivers) 50%. I've been on shift now

long enough to qualify for vacation and bonus checks, so I put in to get the former the first payday in December (it'll be a week's pay, averaged over the year), and the bonus checks are paid the last payday, so we'll hopefully have enough for January's rent. I'll end up taking off 8 days or so, since I got the 26th and 27th off as well so we can do our Boxing Day "Waifs & Strays" party.

It's a thin column (unlike most of its corpulent affluent retiree aficionados), but I'll nevertheless wish the reader (Unc, J) the compliments of the season and all that.

To appropriately conclude with a bit of arse news at the arse-end of this, Famous Author(TM) J L Farey, fierce and experienced internet shopper, gets in essential supplies such as HP sauce and Branston pickle by those means. I noticed, however, that the Branston was possibly causing extra soreness in the bumhole. I'm thinking I should probably have it in a cheese sandwich in future.

VIBRATOR BACKSIDE

I'll leave you with a picture which both makes me laugh and makes me cry at the same time.

Deadline for the next issue is probably sometime at the end of December. I don't expect many turkey bones will be left to pick over, but, hey, give it a try. Thanks to Pat for proofreading this, despite her many health problems, the primary one being dealing with the rest of the rampant lunatics in the Charnock household.



Goodbye Randy.
Polaroid by Alison Fairchild