

INTERMISSION #169

E-zine by Ahrvid Engholm, ahrvid@hotmail.com, for EAPA & N'APA and others queuing for gas. I hope have time for @SFJournalen on Tw/X...RSN. If you have a fanzine, lets swap ads! Typos? No, it's just we don't discriminate. Any spelling will do! Late July '26.

Editorially: Ukraine Is Winning with New top Brass

This has to start with very sad news: Lars "LON" Olsson has passed away. Obit below. A dear friend who also was a sort of staff artist for *Intermission*. LON has been doing art pieces for this zine for many years. As I remember it began with that he spontaneously sent me a jpg. I liked it and asked for more. We'll see if I'll continue with LON art – if so, from the net, eg Froggy Gordon strips.

BTW, your editor has now passed *50 years in fandom!* I found the address to the Scandinavian SF Association (abr SFSF) tucked into a book in a bookshop on Göt Street in the spring of 1976 and wrote for info. I soon had their newszine, #78 of *Fanac*, in the mailbox. It had info about Scancon '76, which I couldn't resist. I was a green, innocent teenager and now I'm an old dinosaur. Time passes fast...

Genre history has been my interest almost from the start. It was Harry Warner who got me hooked. I ordered (from the SF-Bokhandeln) and read his *All Our Yesterdays*, it must have been already in 1978, the same year as my first fanzine. I read sf history in all the books available. Since then I've done quite a lot of history digging. I'm by now one of the Swefans who knows most of genre and fandom history. (But I'm rotten on recent history. Older history is much more interesting. And I don't dig in media-sf: TV, movies, comics, games etc.)

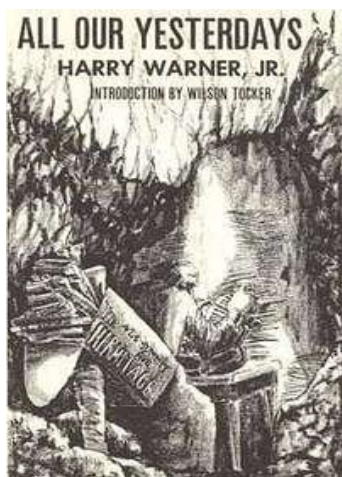
Intermission has become a bit known for its history coverage. I had quite a lot of history also before the History Corner column was formally named. (One thing I thought fun was that Viking Society that in most details worked exactly like Tolkien societies!) If you have interesting sf or fandom history, contact me.

I'm rather satisfied with having unearthed some unique history, like the 1682 magazine *Relationes Curiosae*, the 1945 club *Atomic Noah*, the 1952 fanzine *Vår Rymd* (and interviewing one of the editors!), early works by Polhem and Celsius, numerous things from the Royal Library...

So I'm proud to present *yet another unique find*: an adventure magazine convention from 1890, guested by a major writer (who was also into science fiction). One could argue that the *Golden Hour National Convention* tastes a *little* like an sf convention. AFAIK I'm first with this - beside Smithsonian, of course, my main source - as I haven't seen anyone else mention it. More below.

Another thing I'm deep into is Putin's stupid war against Ukraine. I follow the biggest war in Europe since WWII as close as I can. And a lot has happened lately. Ukraine has major successes while having a domestic political crisis. The Ukrainian defence minister Fedorov and commander-in-chief Syrsky, couldn't get along. The young minister has during his half a year in office promoted Ukraine's successful drone warfare, made Musk close Starlink for Russia, improved recruitment with new types of contracts, improved supply chains, fought corruption. Syrsky is an "old fart" thinking of war Soviet style, having less than optimal respect for his soldiers. Some say Fedorov's fight against corruption has angered the older military establishment that likes to take a little on the side... Syrsky issued an ultimatum: choose him or the defence minister. So Zelensky showed his minister the door, whereupon Ukrainians began huge protests in the streets. They saw how effective Fedorov had been. So Syrsky has now been removed instead, and a new defence minister has been named, a general Drapaty who seems competent and also of a younger generation (Fedorov is said to get another "important position").

Meanwhile, Ukraine has virtually cut off Crimea, including hitting over 200 [!] Russian supply ships in the Azov and Black Seas. Long-range drones are taking out Russian refineries and other energy assets, causing acute gasoline shortages with mile-long queues at gas stations. Lately, Ukraine has



My inspiration half a century ago.



begun targeting Wildberries warehouses (Russia's Amazon), which has huge economic consequences. These warehouses also distribute body armour, optical cables, camou clothing, etc. Lots of small businesses are going bust, as Wildberries refuses to pay damages. And Putin receives less tax revenue to waste on his war. Russian economy slows down. More than 1% of Russians are dead or maimed in the war, ie 1 in 50 males. And more will be mobilised into the meat grinder in autumn, after the fake Duma elections. Putin is desperately selling off his gold reserves, as no one trusts his war bonds, which have been dumped onto Russian banks - most of which now stand on the brink. Russians lack Internet access (instead forced to an FSB-monitored app), have limited access to bank accounts, no gasoline, recurring blackouts, and collapsing medical and social services as Putin diverts funds to his war. Huge black clouds from oil fires hang over Moscow and elsewhere...

Brave Ukraine turns Putin's fascistoid dreams into his nightmare.

--Ahrvid Engholm, ed

Ps. If you do your own fanzine, join the ad swap! (Info at the end.)

LON - Artistic Genius Gone

We have received the shocking news that a giant within Swedish sf circles has clocked out. Lars "LON" Olsson (b. 1938) passed away on Monday the 29th of June. He was 87. (Not wanting to be

pushy I never asked him about his disease, but cancer or heart perhaps?)

Besides being a good friend, LON is of course known for his artistic genius. I first saw Froggy Gordon ("Blixt-Grodon" in Swedish - in the English name I've tried to keep the pun relating to frogs) in the Swedish edition of Sam J Lundwall's *SF - What's It All About*. Later I could follow this great, absurd space hero in the Stockholm University student paper *Gaudeamus*.

Froggy Gordon represents a completely unique kind of humour! LON's creative brilliance can hardly be overstated.

I had quite a lot to do with LON in other contexts. He made the cover for my anthology *Swede Ishes #1*. He often did illos for fanzines. I've made it a habit to run LON in the last roughly 75 issues of *Intermission* where he developed a new style that I hadn't seen from him before. (I wonder whether I should continue, as it's no longer possible to get original illos. This spring when he couldn't contribute as he was hospitalised, I took and colourised Froggy Gordon, with good results.)

LON previously worked at the Royal Library and helped me researching *Relationes Curiosae*, the SFish magazine from 1682 that I've written about. Later, when I in *Intermission* reviewed a book about the history of Swedish porn, LON told me that he in the 1960s worked for the porn publisher Curt H:son. He gave me photos from their office and some inside info. I covered that in *Intermission* too. Interestingly LON assured us that Curt H:son was a real gentleman!. LON was always kind, almost to the point of being self-effacing, but he was a GIANT! He must have had thousands of illos in fanzines, being a bit like a Swedish Bill Rotsler - but LON was better than WR! Sam J Lundwall wrote (cosigned by wife and daughter) in paper *Dagens Nyheter* July 15:

Our dear Lars Olsson, "Lon," of Stockholm, has passed away peacefully. He was 87 years old and is survived by his daughter Elin, son Erik, and their families. His wife Ulla passed away in 2016.

Many of us remember Lars's comic strip *Blixt-Grodon*, which was published in the student magazine *Gaudeamus* from 1964 to 1987. Even then, he displayed his remarkable talents as an illustrator, humorist and satirist. His wonderful phrasing and boundless imagination entertained us immensely, and we always looked forward to the next issue of the magazine. The strip tells the story of Hilmer Grannas who, often behind the woodshed, transformed himself into *Blixt-Grodon*, the terror of evildoers. This parody naturally brings to mind both Clark Kent, who became Superman in a telephone booth, and, of course, Flash Gordon. Lars drew



LON illoed fanzines, books, did Froggy Gordon strips, etc. "Blixt-Grodon" refers to Flash Gordon. As "Grodon" points to frogs ("grodor") I translate the name of this resourceful, dadaist philosophy hero to Froggy Gordon.



LON



inspiration from everyday events as well as happenings in the wider world. There was so much that readers could recognize from their own lives that we found ourselves smiling inwardly as we read the strip.

He also contributed to other newspapers and magazines, but eventually gave this up to work for many years as a librarian at the Royal Library, where, among other positions, he served as head of the Newspaper Department. Yet he continued drawing throughout his life. After returning home from work and rising from the dinner table, he would often say, "Now I'm going to draw a little fellow."

Lars also enjoyed taking long walks, at first accompanied by his dog, and during these excursions he took many photographs. He had a keen eye for detail, capturing little things that caught his attention and sending the pictures to his friends, accompanied by cheerful comments.

During his final years, heart problems prevented him from taking the walks he missed so much. Instead, at his desk, he created an annual calendar featuring one of his drawings for each month. For several years, this became a much-appreciated Christmas gift. Perhaps unexpectedly, Lars was also a good jitterbug dancer.

HISTORY CORNER

Another early convention

Intermission has earlier written about what may be called the world's first sf convention, the *Vril-Ya Bazaar and Fete*, centered around Edward Bulwer-Lytton's sf novel *The Coming Race*, held in London's Royal Albert Hall in 1891. There's a lot of material about it on the Electronic Interwebnet. eg <https://www.royalalberthall.com/about-the-hall/building-and-history/our-history/the-first-ever-sci-fi-convention>, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vril-Ya_Bazaar_and_Fete or <https://www.mentalfloss.com/history/first-sci-fi-convention-vril-ya-bazaar>

But I just stumbled upon an earlier event, the *Golden Hours National Convention*, held in Brooklyn, New York, March 30, 1889. *Golden Hours* was an adventure magazine. *Smithsonian* writes, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/19th-century-golden-hours-convention-brought-young-readers-together-meet-their-literary-heroes-180968437/> :

...a thick crowd of eager children – estimates say as many as 2 000 – converged on the Palace

Rink in Brooklyn for the inaugural Convention of the *Golden Hours Club*. *Golden Hours*, a popular "story paper" full of adventure stories for young readers, had prepared a jam-packed evening of entertainment for its fans: peppy, patriotic songs descended from an orchestra couched in the music loft. The children were treated to hours of performance from musicians, Civil War veterans, ventriloquists and caricaturists, with the itinerary running until nearly midnight. There were celebrities, too: the author Edward Ellis talked at length to a rapt crowd about "the Indians, of whom the boys have read so much." The kids, noted the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, "were noisy and hearty and were afforded full rein."

The entertainment included musicians, Civil War veterans, ventriloquists, caricaturists, and the program ran until midnight, which may indicate that many attendees were young adults rather than children (who wouldn't be allowed to stay up that late). Edward S Ellis spoke at length about Indians and the Wild West which was a frequent topic in the *Golden Hours* stories.



Two covers of *Golden Hours*. Note "To Mars with Tesla" and there might be an electric discharge on that cover. I find issues at the Internet Archive but they are from many years earlier and I can't download them. Very little other material online about this magazine. (Could US fans close to a well-stocked library help?)



This seems to be the Brooklyn Palace Rink. Prob'ly de-iced for the event. Plenty of room for 2000.

Beside this the magazine had contests, puzzles, Q&A columns and stories submitted by the young readers.

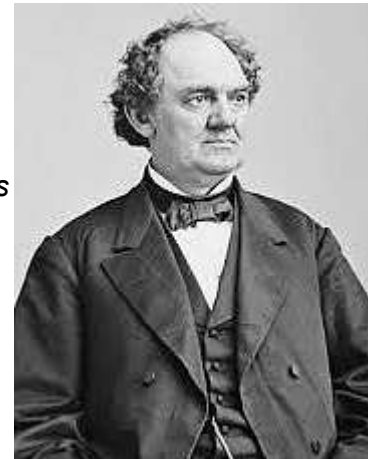
It's more than likely that Golden Hours had some science fiction stories. We read "To Mars with Tesla" on the cover of one issue. Some digging gives us more names: *H Irving Hancock*, "specialized in near-future" eg *The Conquest of the United States Series*, "*Li Shoon*" Serials "evil mastermind who wielded futuristic chemical compounds and advanced machinery", *Edward Stratemeyer* of young inventor Tom Swift fame. The publication was based in NYC. One Norman Munro was the publisher and a WC Dunn editor the first ten years. Stories about futuristic adventures and inventions were very popular, even if the term "science fiction" didn't exist yet. It was after all the era of Jules Verne, and HG Wells, Edgar Rice Burroughs and others were just around the corner. That could make it a little bit of an sf convention...if you stretch it a little bit! They even had guests of honour of sorts:

The keynote speaker was no less than circus mogul PT Barnum, who at 79 years old could still leave a crowd hanging on his every word. "When the rotund form and curly gray locks of the venerable showman appeared inside of the door," wrote the Eagle's correspondent, "the youngsters arose to their feet and cheered and stamped and whistled." The New York Times corroborated, claiming that the roaring and cheers of the assembled children were louder than any circus calliope, and that "Barnum never got a more honest ovation." Giving the children high-fives and handshakes, Barnum waited five minutes for the applause to subside, at which point he did a few magic tricks for the crowd, pulling a half-dollar from one volunteer's nose. When he spoke, it was to advocate for moral living and the importance of good habits, and he warned the children against tobacco and alcohol

Edward Ellis was also there as they were

*...putting PT Barnum alongside Edward Ellis onstage [it] was the 19th-century equivalent of saying you'd have Stan Lee and George R R Martin appearing together at Comic-Con... Ellis was a titan of Gilded Age youth literature, and his 1868 mechanical man novel *The Steam Man of the Prairies* is often considered to be the first American work of "edisonade," a modern term that refers to stories about clever, young, steampunky inventors. In Ellis' story, characters described only as an "Irishman" and a "Yankee" stumble upon a teenager who has ingeniously built a steam-powered robot of sorts to pull a carriage for him. (Adventure!) The robot, cutting-edge and thoroughly alien, is ten feet tall, stout, and vaguely menacing with a tin stovepipe hat and a glowing coal furnace in its stomach.*

The author of a sort of robot connects the event to science fiction! Ellis wrote more sf, like *Land of Mystery* (1889), *Monarch of the Air* (1907), *Flying Boys in the Sky* (1911), *the Dragon of the Skies* (1915). The



PT Barnum. Did magic tricks on this event.

Golden Hours Club had 10 000 members - as a sort of early SF League... - and their convention was repeated in 1891 in Philadelphia, but then stopped, as far as we can find out. Here's Smithsonian again:

*The late 19th century was a fertile period in America for popular literature, in large measure due to the rise of pocket-sized dime novels and weekly illustrated "story papers" of serialized popcorn fodder that plainly and spryly catered to the public taste, asserting the newly prominent role of the audience as a driver of mainstream American culture... These periodicals were printed cheaply and often, and thanks to their low price and a rising literacy rate they were wildly popular, creating the space for a direct line – from both a writer's and an audience perspective – into modern popular fiction, particularly in the fan-friendly comic, fantasy and sf genres. Hundreds of titles appeared from the Civil War period onward, among them Frank Leslie's *Boys of America*, *Pleasant Hours for Boys and Girls*, and *Beadle's Dime Novels*. *Golden Hours* was one of the most popular story papers, printed weekly from 1888 to 1904 in more than 800 usually weekly issues (it turned monthly the last few years)... The papers featured letter columns by which readers could get in touch with each other just as the LoCols in later pulps. It provided a venue in which children could, for a time, feel independent: grown-up enough to purchase and read their own paper, kids could interact with editors by submitting letters or stories of their own, share a common experience with other readers and even suggest where the story might go next. Children could not only write letters or take part in contests, but submit their own writing for a shot at seeing their name in print.*



Sf story by Edward S Ellis.

The Golden Hours Club was a real, structured organization with numbered chapters. They organized athletic clubs, military clubs, correspondence clubs, and had initiation fees.

The Golden Hours Magazine covered the club activities in its pages, which would be worth checking out (your trusted sf fandom historian has combed the net but found no issues from the period, only a few front covers and at Internet Archive issues from several decades prior). All in all it reminded quite a bit of the later Science Fiction League. It may be worth investigating if anyone establishing SFL had prior knowledge about the Golden Hours organisation.

The story papers (more than just Golden Hours are implied!) were a direct precursor to modern popular fiction, including comics, fantasy, and science fiction. And they had participatory fan culture decades before Hugo Gernsback and SFL.

Yet Another Finncon

It was with the huge Silja Princess ferry I went to Turku for Finncon 2026 (10-12 of July). The Finland ferries of both Silja Line and Viking Line are all monstrous, taking up to 3000 passengers and are full of restaurants and shops - of which the most important is the Taxfree shop! Alcohol taxes are rather stiff in the Nordic area, but the ferries can sell it without taxes, taking the tax cut themselves (which makes the boats quite profitable). An EU rule says that as long as the ferries dock at the island of Åland on the way you can bring in as much booze as you can carry!

I decided I could carry 0.5 l of Koskenkorva, 0.5 l of gin and a 24x33cl carton of beer. (Åland is a Swedish-speaking self-governed island between Sweden and Finland, but belonging to Finland. I skip details. Google info if you want.)

Finncon was housed at Turku university. I've been there before and knew the general direction, but coming closer to where it should be I made some bad navigation decisions and rambled around for 45 extra minutes with a backpack full of beer before I found the place.

But I was early, had plenty of time and the sun was shining.



Main entrance.



Finncon poster found on town.

(The majority of the beer would during the weekend be consumed under that blazing sun – away from the con. I took a pause now and then and went out to follow Roscoe's advice. After all, even the ongoing football World Cup had hydration breaks!)

People had begun to gather and tables



One of several huckster areas.

were being set up as I arrived. It was mainly books, jewellery (glass of course) and misc trinkets. Most books were in Finnish and the hucksters were at four or five different places. I found a place with a fair collection of used English paperbacks, but it was a rather long way from the main entrance, probably 100-150 metres to walk. I came to buy 13 books there, all second hand, most of them the last day when there was sale of € 1 per book. 12 of the 13 were by old classic writers: Anderson, Sheckley, Budrys, Lafferty, Herbert, Dickson, Ballard even...none later than the 70s.

I don't like skiffy of later decades. When the word processor invaded the desks, prose became, babbling, bloated, authors forgot how to write economical and keep to the plot. Word processors makes words overflow and instead of 200 pages a typical novel is today 4-600 pages. Books are padded with babbling dialogue, meaningless internal monologues, irrelevant subplots... (One of the 13 books was a alternate history from the late 1980s. I now have had time to read it, and wasn't any good. QED!) Another problem with today's sf, the more recent it is, the wokier it gets, probably under influence from our postmodern universities. You write according to populist trends to earn a gold star. The heck with it, I say! In the genre's core is individualism, optimism, hard science, not fuzziness, everything goes and no one is better than anyone else. Read the old, classic writers - they are superior!



The little corner I found for setting up the computer. Hair's a mess. As usual.

I noted that in Finland, just as in Sweden, there are a lot of small publishers who have turned up in droves because Internet and print on demand. It makes it possible to run a publishing business from a drawer in your bedroom or a shelf in your garage. Most aren't very profitable (and don't have to be). And all the books from the young hopeful have very colourful covers. I guess they need that to be visible in the competition, and use AI to do the cover. AIs make good illustrations, if you accept that your hero has six fingers...

Anyway, this was a detour. Before investigating the hucksters I found a place for my baggage, and a table to set up the computer, in a semi-isolated room or alcove behind some of the huckster tables. No one or few wandered into there. Perfect! But wouldn't tweet from the con, unlike earlier, as my SFJ news account is hiatus since last year. It began with being attacked by Microsoft's stupid "account verification" that freezes E-mail. And the unfreezing doesn't work! I had to work hard for three months (sending E-mails by the hundreds, nagging, even faxing to Microsoft's HQ) to get the mail unfrozen. And after while Microsoft's "account verification" *attacked again* and mail was frozen for another three months! While twitter wasn't frozen the general work flow was heavily disrupted (I have other things needing E-mail, it was all a mess). I hope to get back to @SFJournalen Real Soon Now...



GoH panel discussing con theme "Beginnings".



BNF Toni Jerrman by the table for his Tähtivaeltaja. He hasn't lost that much in print media's general collapse, he said, maybe 100 copies. (Out of I guess around 1000).

Over to the program. It had ca 120 items in two houses 50 metres apart, probably 90% of them in Finnish, presented in a nice, but unreadable (for me) program book. In English we had only a short story by GoH *Adrian Tchaikowsky* (can someone explain the twist of his story for me?) and a short essay by guest *Hanna-Rikka Roine*. Guests *Reetta Vuokko-Syrjänen* and *Saija Kyllönen* wrote their progbook contris in Finnish. The remaining program was in English and there were four items in Swedish (which is one of Finland's two official languages; I leave history details but google for more info if you're interested).

I missed the first program, Adrian T talking about writing on Friday. A note on the lecture hall said it was full. It didn't

matter too much. I've probably heard every author writing tip there is already.

I estimate Finncon 2025 had 750-1000 attendees, and I count it this way: the main lecture hall seated 300, it was full once and nearly full a couple of times. Beside these 300 I assume that just as many were outside, following parallel program or glancing the huckster tables, That would make 600, but because some were one-day visitors totals should be a little higher. There were a handful US/UK fans here (at least expat students), at least one German, ca 10 Swedes, some Norwegians and perhaps Danes. If anyone has more exact figures, please let me know!



The masqueraders lining up, about 20 in all. Below right: masquerader in huge hat should have stepped back a little, as he blocked the line of sight through the whole event!

A bit surprising was the presence of Chinese (at least two, could be more) who manned an info table with info flyers in Chinese with parallel English text. That the Chinese turn up on a regional cons like Finncon seems like an attempt by the Communist regime to make an advance into the sf world. But it should be difficult considering the train wreck they caused with the Chengdu con: tampering with the Hugos, moving the con on short notice, fans having difficulties getting visas...



The Chinese don't understand the individuality of fandom that cares deeply about free speech. The fanzine tradition bear witness to this. And they don't understand the sf genre, which relies on freedom of thought. What the Chinese commies want is what sf and its fandom are against. (Except a few who hails the Politically Correct.)

The con closed around 1800 hours each day, so also on the Friday. There wasn't more program so spent the night watching the football World Cup (I think it was Spain-Belgium), something I actually did every con night.

Was rather early there also on Saturday. I listened to the Academic GoH speech by Hanna-Riika Roine, who spoke about science fiction and democracy. She for instance stressed that reading a lot was good for democracy, and I agree. When reading you train your ability to place yourself in the situation of others, and democracy benefits from that. I had to run back and forth between this and another item. I often do this kind of program "multitasking".

It was followed by a Guest of Honour panel about secondary worlds. I thought it was rather boring. Generally I think cons have - I have said this before - far too many panels. All these panels on cons tend to fuse into a grey goo. The panelists tend to say things you've heard before and they speak far too slowly, in fear that someone else will grab the word if they stop. And the audience get



From the talk on history of Finlandswedish fandom. First club in Turku in 1976 was bilingual. In the slide (right) BNF Tom Ölander, Finlandswede and very active.

far too little time to ask questions. Panels should be cut down! One person who speaks, an expert lecturing on his favourite subject, gives much more real content.

I also went to the Swedish program item about Åland's magical beings. Ålanders have basically the same mytological creatures as Sweden: trolls, the house gnome, the "forest rå" (Uncle G suggests calling it "wood nymphs" but I'm not sure), but they also have the sea lady and the "ship rå" (ship nymph?) which I haven't heard of in Sweden. But we instead have "Näcken", who plays the fiddle and lures people to dangerous waters.

Another Swedish program item the same day was a lecture about Terry Pratchett and Discworld. I have unfortunately read very little Pratchett, There is something about a flat world on the back of turtles that collides with my suspension of disbelief. But as I have a deficit in pratchettology it was interesting to fill up the knowledge base.

Saturday I also attended a GoH interview with Adrian Tschaikovsky, of which i don't remember much since I thought he mumbled too much.

It was hard to hear what he said. People on stage should speak up and speak clearly. Or maybe its me getting deaf as I'm an old

dinosaur (I've An event worth further study

been to all

Finncons plus the 1982 King-Con).

About the con, I noted a room dedicated to Finnish fandom history with info on all Finncons, and a too short note about Kong-Con 1982. (I think it deserved more. The persistent Tom Ölander thanks to contacts in *Hufvudstadsbladet*, managed to get a

news telegram out to all

Finnish media!

It resulted in

mentions in 60 newspapers and two TV news programs reporting! It has

never happened again and is worth some attention. Unfortunately the

fanhistory texts were all in Finnish. It

would have been easy to make

translations to English. These days Als will do translationsvvery fast.

BTW, there was a Finnish sf event in 1969. Some will compare it to a con but I

see the week long event, with a movie every evening, as an sf and popular science festival. Anyway I met someone on Finncon who knew one involved with it and is still alive (I'll try contacting him) Maybe I can get the long article about the sf week (see above)

OCR'd and translated? I hope to have more on the event in nextish! Saturday ended with the fancy dress parade. About 20 entries took part. But for me, dressing up in textiles isn't at all what skiffy



From fanhistory exhibit, 959 (March 23-28) sf festival - in Finnish. Headline "From popularising science to POP art". OCR for translation?

He said he knew one of the 1959 organisers. Get in touch!

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The fanhistory exhibit. English translations would have been nice.

fandom is about. Those masqueraders are attention seekers who deep inside lack self-confidence and want to address it by trying to become someone else. OK, some dresses were fine but I think you can do more sensible things than spending weeks sewing. And I wish the guy with the humongous hat had taken 1-2 steps to the right. He blocked the view for some of us.

Saturday night Finncon usually has a party, with loud music, blinking lights and lots of strange people. I don't know if there was one this year but I usually skip such gatherings. Watched the night's battle Norway-England. Unfortunately Norway lost, but on the other hand I like English football. The Norwegians have this summer decided they are Vikings and sit down on the ground to row.

I was there the reasonably early Sunday. I did a little of prog jumping, listening to a thing for 10-15 minutes, then going somewhere else, then going back or to a third program.

Some prog fragments: GoH reading, Hugo panel, "The Future is Already here". The last was a lecture in Swedish by a futurologist. And I agree: many things



Auditorium, seating 300, full for a GoH event. we just a few years ago would have seen as sf arrived early... A big pandemic, a new big war in Europe, plans for the Moon and Mars with re-usable rockets, Artificial Intelligence, Sweden and Finland in NATO. The alliance is said to look into sf a bit to figure out different weapons and scenarios, the futurologist said. I raised my hand and noted that Flying

Cars are here. There are several working machines, usually having small rotors in four corners or in ring around. Eg we have the Swedish firm's Jetson One: <https://www.youtube.com/@Jetsonaero> It's more like a sky-MC and you can buy it now for 98 grand apiece.

The guest of honour panel talked a bit on how active Europe had become in sf and how many contacts have been made back and forth over the continent. Many have observed how misters Trump and Putin have pushed the Europeans together much more than before, but in fandom I believe this started much earlier. We won't get "European culture" (European are often too diverse) but we can come closer. And AI has lowered the language barriers.

One of the last things I attended was the history of Finland-Swedish fandom. The Finland-Swedes were in from the start. The first sf club, Åbo SF-Sällskap i Turku, was founded in 1976 as a bilingual society. And in the late 1970s I'd say that the most active sf-fan in Finland was the Finland-Swede Tom Ölander. I met him already on Sam J Lundwall's con in Stockholm in 1979 (probably also in 1977 but I have more memories from 1979). Tom always went to the Swedish cons and brought back ideas to insert into in Finnish fandom. Tom helped with the important first semiprozine *Aikakone*.



Signing queue (outdoors) fo Adrian Tchaikovsky.



Photo spread from the fanhistory exhibit. Arrow to Intermission ed.

And I remember getting over to Helsinki in 1980 together with Wolf von Witting just to meet Tom for a weekend. We enjoyed saunas, talk and a tour of *Hufvudstadsbladet* (where Tom worked as a janitor and general handyman). Tom could make free phone calls through the newspaper and used it to call up authors and interesting people all over the world. From the authors he could secure rights to stories for *Aikakone*. And his important role in minding the shop for the Finnish side of King-Con is undeniable.

After a final panel with the GoHs the convention winded down. A couple of award ceremonies I missed: Tähtifantasia Award went to Noidanlanka by J S Merewmaa and the Atorox Award to Hanna-Riikka Roije for the short story "Koneiden Laulku"

Was it a good con, I asked myself as I was getting to the Silja Line terminal. (Actually I didn't but its rhetorically logical to claim you did as you are ending a conrep.) I'd say Finncon 2026 was probably smack in the middle of all the Finncons. I'm glad it was slightly smaller than they used to be. (There

was one in Helsinki with 15000 attendees, 95% of them young girls dressed up as Manga figures... It was unbearable!) I just wish they'd have more in English. The Finns speak about as good English as we do, so it could easily be done. And one could wish for a proper bheer place with cheap bheer. This fannish fuel has become much too dear in recent years - you have to take out a mortgage to order it on town.

The sun was shining on the way back. I watched it until it set in the Baltic. I counted two bheers left of the 24 and deducting a few on the way to Turku, I probably consumed 6 bheers/day during but outside Finncon. But it was unnecessary to come back empty handed. So I got myself another



Closing ceremony. Concom lined up t/o/ b/e/ s/h/o/t.

24x33cl in the Taxfree shop.

As I carried the carton out from the shop, a kid nearby in Swedish exclaimed:

- Dad, don't they like dogs here?*

Oh, Canada - What Have You Done?

We're reached by the news that Canada will join their Commonwealth partner Australia for the Eurovision circus! This move was announced by the Canadian PM Mark Carney himself while presenting a new budget allocating funds to join the European Broadcasting Union and its music extravaganza. Carney has - as many of us - been a bit sceptical of Trump and thus in many ways boosted connections with Europe. Canada is the most European of the North American side, he says. Europe created Canada. (We created the USA too, but not without some skirmishes). And may I point out that the first Europeans in North America were the Vikings, though it didn't last. If it had you'd speak Old Norse now, it would be close to Icelandic...which is incomprehensible.

But I wonder has Canada realised what getting into the Eurovision means? It'll be several weeks every spring of genuine madness! Trust me, I as a Swede I know: we've got that Eurovision bug badly from winning this skit many times. It starts here in February with the first of six selection shows called Melodifestivalen, or Mello for short. Late March or early April we have finally selected the (wrong,



From Swe language prog, about Åland myth'l creatures. Here Trolls.



* Tax means dachshound in Swedish.

usually) song and now the media hype begins. It's a month to the Eurovision week, with twin semis and one final. Social Media explodes! The hypemeter reaches 11.

You can ask your Australian cousins how it is to live through it. They love it, apparently, and it was this fanaticism that originally got the Aussies invited to the show (and once they had a foot in it was hard to get rid of them). Millions of Australians wake up in the middle of the night and turn on their TV. It will be easier for Canadians. Eurovision will be on sometime in the afternoon Canadian time. (I heard that if Canada does a Celine Dion 2.0 and wins, you'll be offered to host the show *in* Canada. Time difference will make it your afternoon, but that should work. Australia would have to do a show in Europe together with a selected local network, due to the unforgiving time difference.)

Canada has just entered a new era. It could be for good. Or worse.

RIP: Sam Neill – The New Year's Knight

A little note honouring actor Sam Neill who passed away July 13, aged 78. It's not because he played in "Jurassic Park", "Event Horizon", "The Bicentennial Man", in some horror and fantasy movies, etc. We honour him because he was a knight clad in iron in *IVANHOE*, from 1982.

Sweden's SVT network showed the film on New Year's Eve already in the year of its production, and showing it around the new year (it's now on New Year's Day) has since become a tradition, as natural as watching Donald Duck on Xmas Eve. About the film "Ivanhoe"? I have probably seen it, but except knights and swords can't remember anything from it. Neither could Sam Neill, he once confessed.

Sam Neill came to hear that those odd people on the other side of Earth (he was born in N Ireland but grew up in New Zealand) every New Year watched this forgotten masterpiece, so around Showtime he began sending greetings to the Swedes, example:

"Every year on New Year's Day, Swedish TV shows "Ivanhoe". Since 1982. No one knows why. Tradition. And they eat pizza.. I am the very, very evil guy, Brian de Bois-Guillbert. Well. So Happy New Year, Sweden. And to all non-Swedes too. And here comes 2024..."

I don't think he was "very, very evil". No, he was our New Year's Knight.



Sam Neill as a knight in "Ivanhoe".



First LoCs from readers, then Ed's comments to latest N'APA and EAPA.

Mark Nelson: Dear Ahrvid, I don't usually report back to you on articles I've read in a newspaper, as Intermission moves more slowly than the news. But reading Intermission 167 caused me to remember two news stories. One, from only a few days ago, from the perspective of this loc, was that NATO is increasingly concerned that Putin will try something against one of the Baltic states. Not a conventional attack, but perhaps a drone attack. As you highlighted, NATO is ill-equipped to deal with drones.

Mentioning drones leads me to the second article. This was a piece, that I didn't read, about how the Taiwanese Government is thinking about training its citizens in how to use drones. Perhaps with the idea of using civilian-controlled drones to help defend Taiwan from attack or perhaps to set up cells to fight an occupying force. (If I'd read the article, I would know for sure).

The use of the word "bug" to mean a flaw or problem in a technical system pre-dates the invention of electronic computers. According to an article I found on the IEEE web-page one of the earliest well-known uses comes from Thomas Edison, who wrote in an 1878 letter:

"You were partly correct. I did find a 'bug' in my apparatus..."

The term "bug" first appeared in his notebooks in July 1876.

Author and engineer Thomas Sloane standardized Edison's terms in his 1892 Standard Electrical Dictionary. He defined a bug as "[a]ny fault or trouble in the connections or working of electric apparatus," ChatGPT tells me: "On 9 September 1947, engineers working on the Harvard Mark II found that one of its relays had stopped working. The cause was literally a moth trapped in the relay."

The operators removed the moth, taped it into the logbook, and wrote:

'First actual case of bug being found.'

The logbook page still exists and is now in the collections of the Smithsonian Institution."

(I read something similar to this approximately thirty-five years ago, so I'll take it as correct). Incidentally, one of the engineers working on the Mark II team was Grace Hopper (1906-1992) who became a pioneer of computer programming. According to Wikipedia she wrote the first computer manual, "A Manual of Operation for the Automatic Sequence Controlled Calculator."

Wikipedia adds that the logbook page still contains "the remains of the moth".

"Investigating it, I learn that this design will give the vessel more stability and speed in really rough seas as it cuts through waves instead of going up and down with them."

Many years ago I heard a seminar. One of the problems mentioned during the presentation was designing a naval ship so that the gun platforms remained "stable" during a storm. This has stuck in my mind because the speaker mentioned that the design of the ship looked very strange. Too strange for the Royal Navy to be interested.

Christopher Booker wrote a book called "The Seven Basic Plots" (2004). You claim that Fantasy has eight plots. This is one more than Booker lists. Does this mean that the field of fantasy is actually more creative than mainstream fiction? Well, no. But it would be amusing if it were true.

The "problem" with magic is not Arthur C. Clarke's well-known Third Law: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." No, the problem with magic in fantasy novels is that any novel in which magic is "sufficiently powerful" requires a form of authorial intervention to prevent the plot collapsing within the first couple of pages.

Cheers,

Ed: Number of "possible plots" varies. Here's 37: <https://www.openculture.com/2020/08/37-possible-stories.html> Heinlein believed there were only three: *Boy Meets Girl*, *The Little Tailor*, *The Man Who Learned Better*. Ada Lovelace is said to have written something that can be interpreted as a "manual" for Babbage's Analytical Engine.

Jim Meadows: Dear Ahrvid, Thanks for Intermission 168 and the quick survey of post-WW2 atomic and spaceship kitsch. It certainly provided a quick injection of pop culture nostalgia. While we had lots of science fiction around my house when I was growing up, I don't remember many items like these, except for the GI Joe figure with spacesuit and space capsule, plus a 45 RPM record with audio of John Glenn's 1962 Mercury orbital flight. That was the thing that actually interested me. Apparently, if I had saved my GI Joe, and better yet, kept it in its original packaging, I might have found someone to pay me a lot of money for it, as postings on eBay suggest.

As for the atomic stuff, my main knowledge of it as a child was my late father's work testing building materials for nuclear reactors at Argonne National Laboratory near Chicago. During the 1960s, he regularly wore a device on his belt meant to detect unsafe levels of radiation that he might be exposed to during testing (I think it was a type of photographic film or paper). While I don't think I gave that much thought, fears of radioactivity still filled my head to the degree that I panicked as a small boy during a visit to his lab. I had suddenly felt a pain in my leg, and was certain it was some kind of deadly radioactive burn. But I had merely sustained a small cut from a piece of metal. Take Care.

Nick Farley: Interesting stuff as always – thanks!

Paul I Skelton: OK, I haven't responded before as I should have done. Nor am I doing so properly this time. I find reading fanzines on a laptop to be a pain in the arse. I bought a Samsung tablet purely for this purpose, but suddenly both my old Windows 10 and my new Windows 11 machines no longer fully recognise my notepad. I have never used this notepad for direct internet access. I am an old curmudgeon and set in my ways. So I want to make one quick point in case my sluggardliness makes me yet again not respond. My point is this - according to you Putin is history, yesterday's man. But according to Defence Ministers who are resigning in a huff, we have to spend billions more on defence to protect ourselves from Putin's threat. They imply we need increased taxation to spend on defence, whilst you imply we can decrease taxation so that we can all buy large, high definition TVs to gloat over Putin's demise. I'd love to think you are correct, but I'm concerned that most of these alternative views are held by people with a major background in international politics. Anyway, I'll carry on reading and enjoying this latest issue and hopefully respond further. This has been a place-holder.

Ed: *Putin's war in Ukraine is at a dead end, but he still has a lot of military and may become so desperate that he's tempted to try attacking, say, a Baltic state (to test NATO's clause 5). And even if he has lost much in Ukraine, given a few years he may rearm. But I'm also a bit sceptical to spending too much on defence. NATO and EU is so much stronger than Russia. What's needed isn't more stuff (except for drone warfare, but drones are cheap) but better training, coordination and intelligence.*

Now MCs to first N'APA, then EAPA. I had some mixups editing N'APA MCs, which I had trouble to backtrack. I hope I got the names for comments right, if not I beg forgiveness. The comments aren't Earth-shaking anyway...

Jefferson Swycaffer: I should look out for Sladek's crime novels. ■■ The thing with volcanoes is that they can suddenly get an outbreak and begin sewing out huge amounts of lava, CO2 etc.

Samel Lubell: Donny Trump isn't only the worst US president ever he is also the most self-centered! He made a big military parade to celebrate the US 250 years but also his own birthday. He has commissioned a new set of passports that will have his portrait as well as a 250 dollar bill that will also show his dementia face.

He tried to rename New York's Kennedy Center after himself and so on and so on. Next he'll order the US Engineering Corps to put him on Mount Rushmore, I guess. ■■ Your con-program ideas seems to land on just a lot of panels. I think hey are too many panels. Get someone who knows he subject to prepare a lecture instead. And where is the fun, fannish program?

Kevin Trainor: Yes, I know that a computer originally was someone sitting and adding by hand. ■■ AI should in the long run get better in turning out fiction, but for the moment and in the short term AI fiction isn't good enough (I've done some somewhat extensive testing). AI is best helping you doing research and is also good for roof-reading.

Joseph Gill: Your right about the propeller beanie. I've also researched the origin. It actually began in sf fandom before it became a toy you could buy! My AI Explains: 1947 – Fandom invention: Ray Faraday Nelson improvised the first propeller beanie at a small Michigan SF fan gathering, using plastic strips, coat-hanger wire, beads, and a model airplane propeller. It was worn at conventions and quickly became a humorous badge of SF fandom identity. 1947 1948 – Commercialization begins: Only after it had become a fandom symbol did commercial versions appear. By 1948, "beanie 'copters" were advertised in comic books as premiums (25¢ plus a Tootsie Roll wrapper). Late 1940s–1950s – Mass-market popularity: The TV show Time for Beany (created by Bob Clampett) popularized the propeller beanie with children nationwide, turning it into a mainstream novelty item. ■■ I've written a sort of Swefandom fancyclopedia. I named it "The Fandbook" (Or Fandboken, trailing "-en" is the definite article.)

Mark Nelson: I don't rememeber writing "Jet, a midget sized Negro exploitation mag" or if it appeared in my zine it was a quote from somewhere.

Robert Jennings: Funny inflation jokes... Even funnier comics covers! ■■ Putin's position has become even more unstable now, when Ukraine has destroyed so many refineries that the ordinary Russian can't get any gasoline (or have to queue for days to get just 20 litres) and dark clouds of smoke covers. A Palace coup is the most likely, motivated by the hardships of the general population. ■■ Didn't know Fritz Lang read *Astounding*.

Heath Row: Hm, maybe I should try to run this through an auto-translator, but I don't have time for it right now. (And I should perhaps reply in Swedish!)

William McCabe: Well, I would have like to see the mailing comments you had to *Intermission!* Good to see you back. Since you've complained a bit about health issue, I was a bit worried. Most of us are of the age where health issues may be serious.

Henry Grynsten: When it comes to rock groups, it's like a human body: after a few years all the original cells have died and been replaced by new ones (except the brain cells responsible for your intellect that don't die until you die). So rock groups may go through members and still be "the same". BTW, you don't mention ABBA. It wasn't a group of four. They had studio musicians who also performed with them on stage. In the classic pictures from Brighton in 1974, you see Mike Watson (one of their regulars) playing bass behind Björn Ulvaeus and behind Benny Andersson we had Ola Brunckert on drums. The rules allows for six on stage, and they used that. To this they had the regular orchestra (the rule still banned backing tracks on tape) which got their Napoleon-dressed director in Sven-Olof Walldoff. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XJBNJ2wq0Y> Among other ABBA regulars we had Janne Schaffer, Lasse Welander and Rutger Gunnarsson. ABBA was really a group of up to a dozen (here I count also the usually three background singers, among them Tomas Ledin, who had a great career on his own and married manager Stikkan's daughter. ■■ "You must agree that natural resources can be overused!" No, I mustn't. "Natural resources are not endless, and some are not renewed" As long as a huge amount of atoms aren't destroyed resources can be endlessly re-constituted! You just need energy and ingenuity. ■■ "We killed off the dodo" Or perhaps *cats* did! But sometime in the future we may take DNA from a stuffed museum-bird and re-dodonise the world. ■■ "So why is there still plastic in the oceans? It has been years" It may be that plastic is added a little faster than it breaks down. ■■ "how can you prevent them from eating the plastics we need?" And how can we prevent rust from eating the metals we need? Simple, you make the surroundings for things you want to keep such that rust, bacteria or whatever don't like it. ■■ "[Wilson] was a scientist and biologist and considered the matter carefully" but was stuck in his since early childhood deeply emotional attachment to nature, as we learn from biographical material. ■■ "No, Sweden went from 4 to 11, and hit 11 in the early nineties" No, that's just counting OECD. With several successful non-OECD countries in eg Asia stats are worse. ■■ "You see what happens when you abandon Socialism!" Here's an interesting video on Sweden's economic history: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wKW4SUjFP8>. The often forgotten part is that the really fast growth came from the mid 19th Century extensive deregulation but later the more socialism policies that came, the slower the growth. ■■ "Thinking...in your view, apparently means not listening to experts" And in your view it means to 100% trust others whatever they claim, not assessing if it looks reasonable...Experts carry biases and agendas and are often wrong - you must make your own plausibility assessment! Even if you're not an expert, you have your own varied, wide database, you have intellect experience and a gut feeling. Don't downplay your ability to think for yourself! ■■ "But you only need small doses over long periods of time to cause lung cancer." No, small doses aren't enough, you need the genetics for getting cancer. Cancer is to large degree a genetic disease (that's why 2/3rds of all lung cancers are in non-smokers). ■■ "Living for decades with a smoker leads to high total exposure." The effects don't accumulate except for very long exposure. Small exposures are wiped out, unless your genetics points to an increased risk. ■■ "Children of smokers show significantly higher levels of smoke-related disease." They don't. I checked those claims and they result from lowering the confidence levels from the standard 95% to as low as 60% (and 50% means the results are random). ■■ "so it's just rhetoric? What are you so upset about then?" That's right, socialism is a lot of cheap rhetoric. Unfortunately, many buy into it and that's upsetting. ■■ "It may be difficult to separate equality from ethics." Not at all. For ethical reasons we support those worse off. The equality dogma instead want that for ALL who are just below average. It's easy to

separate those worst off from anyone below the average. ■■ "They do." No, sir! ■■ "I see AI:s are getting more advanced; however, I don't think that has anything to do with consciousness in itself." I think we'll have the answer within a few years. And we'd better prepare ourselves for conscious AIs and hope they'll be on humanity's side. ■■ "IPCC doesn't claim that. What other people say is those people's opinions." The people I mentioned are IPCC. ■■ "the IPCC has no hypothesis." They do and they push it hard. Even before their official reports they issue their presumptuous "Summary for policy makers" because they think it's important to indoctrinate decision makers as early as possible. ■■ "It made up over 4 % of the federal budget one time" I know, but for one year - but spread out over the whole Apollo program, it was half that. Claiming that one year represents the whole is a clear case of cherry picking. ■■ "erosion is faster than creation of new soil, it doesn't automatically mean that Scania will become a desert." But it does! Erosion takes soil away, by definition, and you get a desert of nothing else adds new soil. ■■ "We've already suppressed smoking in Sweden to under 5 %, perhaps the same could be done with alcohol"...or with fat food or driving MCs or mountaineering or climbing ladders or boating without life jackets or... The urge to nanny people is dangerous! We must stop it. Once and for all, we must accept the personal freedoms including the right to take risks and consume things that may not be healthy in the long run. Bans should be rare exceptions, under the standard: 1. The risk to fight must be substantial (and things we've discussed do not qualify in my rule book), 2. it must be acute (ie follow after a short time), 3. it is casualitally connected. ■■ "We have only intentionally been making alcohol for around 13 000 years" But before that we found berries and fruit that had fermented naturally and intentionally consumed it. That we have enzymes dedicated to breaking down alcohol, points to that we've had a relation to it for probably 100 000s of years. Two enzymes do almost all the work: ADH and ALDH. They evolved long before humans ever brewed beer, so we did come in contact before. ■■ "you think that drugs should be banned and support bans" As most of what we call narcotics means higher risks under 1. (se above) in my rule book. But I'm against bans on "having used" it. Authorities must be banned from invading your body and taking tests. It's a matter of personal integrity.

Garth Spencer: I grew tired of UFOs a long time ago. They haven't been here (BTW von Däniken passed away in April, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erich_von_D%C3%A4niken) and they are not likely to come here.

Distances are too huge ("you may think it's a long way down the road to the chemist's, but that's just peanuts to space") and Einstein rules. However it is quite likely that there are other civilisations and we may find signals from them. That may happen any moment! We constantly get new radio telescope, that are more sensitive, and I believe AI will help us to sift through the signals. In fact, we have already burned into a number of signals that need further investigation. This is exciting, we may hear from ET any moment! But it's also mysterious that we haven't yet - Fermi's paradox, "Where are they?" ■■ BTW, how do you feel about Canada getting into the Eurovision?

Peter Danielsson: Thanks for latest issue. I don't know which program you make *Intermission* in, but if there is a function for several columns (2 or 3 instead of 1) it'd be great. For now it's difficult to read on screen and difficult to print out.

Ed: Comment in Swedish, but I translated it so I can explain why I won't use multiple columns (which my prog OpOff Writer can do, BTW). Most screens have portrait format and typically you see half the page at a time. With one column you only need to scroll once to see the whole page. With 2 columns you must scroll THREE TIMES MORE! (You first view Left column upper, SCROLL, Left column lower, SCROLL, right column upper, SCROLL, right column lower SCROLL to next page.) Avoiding multiple columns significantly reduces scrolling. I use relatively big type for most text, 12p (newspapers often use 9p) to make I easy to read. '

Before we finish, first to my Swedish readers: **Glöm inte Fantastiknovelltävlingen! Bidrag rek max 40K senast 31 aug till ahrvid@hotmail.com samt fantastiknovell@proton.me. Bland priserna SF-Bokhandelsaktier! Det är den äldsta pågående, ädlaste novelltävlingen, nu i 27:e upplagan. (Förresten:**

sponsorer sökes!) And then: **EAPA** could use new **blood**! OE Garth came up with the idea of ad swaps to achieve this (see ad right). *Intermission* of course joins this noble effort. Remember how Robert Heinlein always advocated **blood** drives... If you publish an ad for us, we'll return the favour. (And we're speaking of rather small ads, a little square where you have empty space anyway.) The fanzine sphere has been left behind a bit by other "social media" which often is just short, stuttering nonsense. Longer publications, for people who can read without moving their lips, could use your support! Get into fanzines. It's fun! That's all for now. See ya' in nextish with more exciting sf history!

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