

John Brunner

As most members of Intersection will already be aware, John Brunner passed away on Friday afternoon following a massive stroke earlier in the day. He will be greatly missed by everyone who knew him. We have collected together a number of tributes from friends of John in this special memorial issue of the convention newsletter.

I was introduced to John Brunner twice before I met him at breakfast at Yorcon II. The conversation continued from breakfast into the bar and did not end when we parted company. It never really ended, nor has it now.

Caroline Mullan

John Kilian Houston Brunner wasn't just a famous pro writer to me. He was a friend of mine for 25 years. It began when I read his short story, "Planetfall," collected in *From This Day Forward*. I was a budding composer, and I thought, "This would make a wonderful short opera!" Of course I wrote to ask his permission.

John wrote back in friendly terms and said he would like to see me have a try; the idea excited him. We corresponded for months and discussed music (about which he knew a great deal), liberal and radical politics (about which he knew even more), anything and everything. Finally he happened to come visit Los Angeles, where at a party in his honour he insisted I be treated as an equal among such as Harlan Ellison and Fritz Leiber.

The opera didn't get finished, and eventually I gave up trying to compose, but a choral excerpt was performed at university. I honestly don't recall how often we met in the years after that, but we kept in touch and always found time to hobnob when at the same convention.

I saw John yesterday, fit and feisty, and he asked what had become with the opera. This time I had some news -- the fellow-student who had conducted that university performance was Kent Nagano, now conductor of the Opera de Lyon and the Hallé Orchestra of Manchester. John urged me to send a copy of the tape, we exchanged addresses and arranged to meet later in the con, but....

John, I don't know what other deeds you did, but this fan remembers a genial, generous and wise man who brightened my life with your friendship. I'll be remembering you tonight, and always.

Matthew Bruce Tepper

It was my pleasure to chair the worldcon that honoured John Brunner. The suddenness of his passing makes it hard to think back to 1983, but I recall always having a pleasant time with him during the convention, especially at the rooftop bar overlooking the inner harbour of Baltimore. His generosity after the convention will be something I will always remember.

Michael J Walsh,
Chair, ConStellation.

When a neo fan had met John casually at Helicon, where John was the GOH, he came up to me afterwards with shining eyes and said, "that man is an example to the youth - he's a genuine English gentleman."

John was a gentleman. I am proud and I am honoured that I knew him. He was always courteous to me, even if he was in less than perfect circumstances himself; he shelved his own sorrows to comfort me in mine; he was essentially kind in his dealings with those of lesser calibre than he was himself. I shall miss him.

Chris Bell.

I am very sad to hear of the death of John Brunner, whom I had known for so many years.

He was one of the best, yet most underrated, writers. In particular, he foresaw many of the promises and problems of today's wired world - particularly clearly in his novel *The Shockwave Rider*. He was the first to foresee the computer virus.

I send my sympathy to LiYi.

Arthur C. Clarke

All Irish fans offer their condolences to the family and friends of John Brunner. We regret his passing with much sorrow. He was always a good friend to many fans and will be deeply missed.

James Bacon, representing: the Irish Science Fiction Association, Octocon, Sproutlore, Albedo 1, and all Irish fans

I'm happy to say I have known John for many years. Once, when Margaret and I were first married, John and his first wife Marjorie - whom all remember with affection - came to our house on Christmas Day and spent a pleasant afternoon with us. In fact, now I come to think of it, John, Marjorie, and Sam Youd (John Christopher) were the first SF people ever to speak to me when I ventured to the old SF pub in Hatton Garden. Many a year ago. Too many, alas, for John.

Brian Aldiss

A few words . . .

Forty years or so ago, which seems like the day before yesterday, I met John Brunner. Then he was a young, enthusiastic science fiction fan, full of talent and determined to be a writer. He became an outstanding author who was a fixture at numerous British and European cons, but always at heart a fan. A dozen years ago our paths coincided at the top of SF and fandom when we were respectively Pro and Fan Guests of Honour at the Baltimore Worldcon. I had the greatest respect for him as a gentleman - erudite, debonaire, cultured - a credit to our beloved field. I and all of SF shall miss him hugely.

Dave Kyle
First Fandom

I first met John Brunner at the 1953 convention in Manchester. He would then have still been in his teens. When I first went to London he took

me to hear a Scottish singer he admired. Over the years I have seen him sitting on the floor of room parties happily joining in. When I retired he sent me a lovely book wishing me a happy retirement. I am greatly saddened at this loss.

Ethel Lindsay

I never met John Brunner; I wanted to. His songbook *A New Settlement of Old Scores* was published for ConStellation, the Worldcon in 1983 in Baltimore. Ed Meskys asked his musically-inclined friends to review it for Niekas and I took on the task. I loved it and told the world so. Brunner later wrote to Niekas saying that it was the first review he had seen of the book; he was kind enough to not say what he thought of it. I would have enjoyed seeing him here, to tell him in person how much I had enjoyed it, and how I had even on occasion had the nerve to perform some of the songs; I might even have identified myself as that reviewer. Alas, I never had the chance. Just from reading his lyrics, I felt I knew him and wanted to know more. Those who had the chance are fortunate indeed.

Jeanne Wardwell Hutnik

Many years ago, before I was a confirmed science fiction fan, I picked up a book attracted by nothing more than the title: *Telepathist*. Why did this book give me a significant jolt towards realising that there was more to SF than W.E. Johns confusing "star", "planet" and "asteroid"? Simply because, in this series of linked stories about an inadequate with paranormal powers, John introduced this particular callow reader to the concept that there may be a price to pay for talent. Later the name "John Brunner" became one to look for on a book cover, and I began to appreciate that his brand of socially committed science fiction was something to welcome and treasure. I found myself saying to people enthusing over the latest incarnation of SF's mirror of our times, "Yes, but don't forget that Brunner was doing this 20 years ago". I will continue saying this. But I am very sorry indeed that he is no longer with us.

Andy Sawyer
Science Fiction Foundation Collection,
University of Liverpool.

I met John at Yorcon 2. Typically, he at once treated me as a friend: at Helicon I met a fan in a wheelchair who had travelled from Romania mainly to meet him. Many happy SF memories concern him; the curry outing at Yorcon 3; winning the bid John chaired for the 1984 Eurocon; his appearance at the Brighton Festival, which convinced many of my "serious writing" friends that there was something to SF. (The next event featured a Slovenian poet married to a Montenegrin. It was John who knew how to pronounce her name.)

John never forgot a favour. Fans don't understand how so widely honoured a writer came to be slighted by the publishing community late his career. In the eighties I was reviewing for *Interzone*, who never received review copies of his recent books. As these were among his best, I reviewed them from my own copies. For years after, John mentioned to people that I had done this for him.

I have attended many writing workshops, but John's "Art and Hard Graft of Writing SF" was the most useful. John gave practical and literary advice, geared to the characteristics of the work. My story, which John thought was publishable, only sold recently. Copies will reach the con on Saturday. When John said hello yesterday, I thought it would be nice to give him one when it arrived and see if he remembered it. By some unlovely synchronicity, I didn't mention it in advance, and John never knew about this small success owed to him.

Peter T. Garratt.

My thanks to John for being a cordial guest at Italcon, in Borgomanero, Italy, in 1983. He made the Italian National Convention something special; more so for me, an American student attending an Italian University, who felt just a little lost until John included her in the conversation.

When I met Roelof, the man who was to become my husband, John showed he had a soft spot for romance. At the 1985 Eurocon, in Italy, he admonished Roelof and me to take care of one another; it was an affectionate gesture from a normally more senatorial man. When Roelof and I married in 1988, John's good wishes reached us via a telegram delivered directly to our wedding reception. This attentiveness made us feel like royalty on our wedding day.

Good-bye John. Thank you for your good wishes, which we remember every day. Thank you for sharing with us some of the ups and downs of your own life as an author. They are all memories which inform us, treasures reminding us of your presence. Thank you.

Lynne Ann Morse
(and Roelof Goudriaan, *per scribe*, since he is attending an ESFS meeting—of which you would heartily approve, I'm sure!)

My thanks to John for improving our universe with *Stand on Zanzibar* (of course) and *The Shockwave Rider*, and for expanding my personal universe with instruction in intelligent thinking - he was one of the most intelligent beings I've had the privilege of knowing. His contributions to a succession of conventions informed and delighted new fans and old stagers, and the increasing difficulty of his professional life in the last few years distressed all his friends. John went as he would have wanted, and we're all conscious of how much more tragic it could have been. We are better for him; think on how.

Jack Cohen

I read John Brunner's science fiction when I was young, he helped to set my standards for me. Later I would run into him at conventions and he would spot my CND button and beam with approval, which wasn't by any means the universal reaction. He was a clever man, an engaged, angry voice. He was really interested

in the real future. I'm sorry he's gone, but it was a good way to go—swift and uncompromising. I think he'd have liked that.

Gwyneth Jones.

Like a lot of us, I've known John, through conventions, for quite a few years. For the last three or four years I've been privileged to know him as a friend. I found him a kind, humorous and incredibly intelligent and cultured man; that's how I'll remember him, not just for his books. I also discovered that he really valued the few people who were able to calm him down when he became uptight; I'm glad that a few times I was able to do that. I'd been looking forward to many more years of his friendship and his superb wit. I'm going to miss him a hell of a lot.

David V. Barrett

I'm in the fan room and looking at a one-page short-story published in the fabled *Slant*, winter '51, by one "Kilian Houston Brunner." As far as I know, that was John's first appearance in print (even though it was in a hand-printed zine) but he went through all the stages of fandom in the 50s, before the writing bug finally took over. His first book was an obscure paperback under the name of "Gill Hunt," but he soon made John Brunner known and respected over the world. He retained links to fandom to the end, and will be sadly missed.

Vine Clarke

There are times when you want to scream at the unfairness of the universe. I saw John at the con Thursday, but put off talking to him until later, hoping for a quiet moment to savour his intelligent and witty conversation.

Now it's too late. But screaming is not going to change anything.

What I'll do instead, and what I think we all should do, is remember earlier encounters with John. One of my fonder memories is of talking to him at the dead mouse party after the Worldcon in the Hague in 1990. 42 nations were represented, and I commented that this seemed to be the final victory for his indefatigable work towards international understanding. His answer was characteristic: We still need most of Asia, most of South America, and almost all of Africa...

That fandom has stayed as international as it has is due to the work of people like John. So let us remember him, not only as an often brilliant writer, a witty speaker, and a sharp intellect—but also as an incarnation of the SF spirit of community—the world would be a better place if there were more John Brunners.

Niels Dalgaard, Denmark

John Brunner was a clever, generous, difficult man and not all that easy to love. The interesting thing is that so many of us did. I'll miss him.

Peter Nicholls

It is all John's fault! During the late 60's I had just started getting back into reading SF. Through a strange chain of circumstances I was attending Eurocon 1 in Trieste, Italy. I was having a grand time and had read John's books. I was impressed by his entrance with his wife on one arm and another stunning lass on the other. After telling John how much I liked his work and buying him a drink (this is the proper way to

introduce oneself to an author), I noted that this was a fun conference. John allowed as it was okay, but to have a really good time I should attend a British con. So I did: Ompacon in Bristol in 1973. I fell in love with cons, fell in love with fandom and fell in love. It was a hell of a weekend! I've kept coming back every since. It's all John's fault! Thanx John. I and others will miss you.

jan howard finder aka The Wombat

I first met John Brunner in 1983, through our mutual membership of SFWA. John was trying to locate a copy of an obscure SF anthology in which he'd got a story published, and he wrote a letter to the SFWA *Forum*, asking if anyone could help. As it happened, I had a spare copy at my home in Penrhynedraeth, and I sent the book to John's house in Somerset along with a fan letter telling him how much I'd enjoyed his stories and novels. Much to my surprise, the great John Brunner wrote back and told me that *he* was a great fan of *my* published work.

At the Worldcon in Baltimore in 1983, I finally got a chance to meet John and his first wife Marjorie. Our friendship was cemented by our mutual love of great books and bad puns. John and I faced off in a bad-pun duel onstage at the 1984 Eastercon, which escalated into three-way pundemonium (John Brunner v. F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre v. Forrest J. Ackerman) at the 1987 Worldcon in Brighton.

I was one of many friends whom John invited to celebrate with him in Italy, on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday. Even then, he had intimations of mortality. For the occasion, I gave him the following poem which is now published for the first (and last) time:

As for birthdays, it pains me to tell
At age forty, a man can XL.
But if, at age fifty,
His goolies might drift, he
Can still lift his glass . . . what the L!

I was with John again a few years later when Marjorie died. He shared with me his thoughts on life and death, and I reminded him that he had written two brilliant SF stories about death: *The Last Lonely Man* and *The Vita-Nulls*. In both of these tales, the living and the dead are joined in a common pool of humanity . . . and those who pass from life to death still remain among the living.

It's true, John. You've gone ahead to light the path for us, but you haven't left the party. You're still with us. And I'm proud to say that you were — you *are* — one of my friends.

F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre

May the road rise up before you,
May the wind be always at your back,
The sun be warm on your face,
The rain gentle on your head
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the hollow of His hand.

A Fan

I met John by driving him to the Cleveland Worldcon in 1966. my first SF convention ever. It was a trip I never forgot, and neither, apparently did he. He reminded me of it the day before he died. He shall be sorely missed.

Norman Spinrad