

A Study in SILVER



Corflu Silver Con Report

Inside Story A Corflu 25 CON REPORT

I want to thank everyone who made Corflu Silver such a wonderful experience. Intentions notwithstanding, I don't know if I could have turned out something like this without the inspiration I received from all of you.

The report is over 18,000 words, so I'll skip the wordy preface and foreword. I hope you enjoy what follows as much as I enjoyed writing it for you. — Arnie

CORFLU SILVER

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VFW is free by request — and you may get it anyway. It can be downloaded at efanzines.com and LasVegrants.com. No Southern Belles were wrung out during the production of this fanzine..

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Corflu Zed in 2009!

Chapter One

Fandom Rears Its Head

The ringing jolted me out of bed. I was on automatic pilot as I staggered out of the bedroom and across the dining room to the phone on Joyce's desk.

I picked up the phone. At first I thought it was a hang-up, perhaps some toner sales person with a bad sense of timing. Then I heard the raspy breathing and then the raspy voice that went with it said, "This is a warning! Do not write a Corflu con report!"

The click that ended the call came as no surprise. The mysterious caller had delivered his message and left.

I stood there, the portable phone in my hand, stunned.

I had not even started my report, yet I already had one negative response.

"As Ghu is my witness, I will write and publish my con report," I vowed. I may have also vowed never to go hungry again, because I'd just started a weight reduction program, but that would not have been as dramatic.

Knowing my con-going style, I planned to distrust my memory in writing this subjective account of Corflu Silver, held April 25-27, 2008 at Las Vegas' Plaza Hotel & Casino. So much for critics who claim that I never mention any of the official facts of the convention. I'd tell you how wide the aisles were, too, if we had any aisles.

One reason I don't dwell on all that stuff that con-runners like to read about is that I don't go to many conventions with green rooms and other accouterments of the con-running hobby. The cons I attend – limited to Corflu these days – are more in the old style and also are essentially social occasions. The program and the special events are fun, but their primary purpose is to draw together all the fans to allow for new interactions.

Instead of my memory or, as in past years, my



handwriting, I made notes on a small digital recorder.

The truth is, my handwriting has deteriorated so that even I can't reliably read it. I realized this several con reports ago. The revelation came when I reviewed the opening chapter, which was based on my scribbled notes, and discovered that the convention it described wasn't the one I actually attended. Wholesale misreadings of my own handwriting had produced a con that, while interesting, had nothing to do with the one I'd attended. I abandoned that con report rather than rely on what I had in my notebook.

I never tape conversations, but those who saw me whispering into my fist may be relieved to know that I wasn't talking to an imaginary friend inside my hand. I like to maintain credibility and I glory in my reputation for scrupulously realistic reportage of fan events.

For me, one of the toughest things about writing a Corflu report is figuring out where to start. I usually go in chronological order, but it's often unclear where the beginning lies. I've noticed that a lot of fanwriters have the same problem. They often start with their decision to go to Corflu and

log several pages of narrative before even getting to the Core Fandom World Convention.

My situation is a little different this year. The decision about whether or not to go to Corflu Silver was pretty much made for me when Joyce requested the con during her memorable phone call to Corflu Quire. Titles notwithstanding, I knew more than a year ago that I'd be on the hook for the convention.

I don't think a full account of everything that happened to me in the last year would make a good preamble to the material about Corflu Silver itself. You'll just have to imagine the planning, the spade work and the complaints by Hope Leibowitz for yourself

Joyce and I went to the con hotel several times in the last month or so on behalf of Corflu Silver to test the restaurants and pay various fees and deposits. That also killed any chance for one of those elegiac passages in which the sight of the con hotel and a few chance encounters with other arriving fans transports the author to a higher plane of bliss.

And just to round off things, there's not much to say about the trip to Corflu Silver, either. The journey to the Plaza Hotel is short, unremarkable and largely devoid of fresh experiences. Joyce takes great pains to avoid auto accidents, run-ins with police and other colorful possibilities, so there's not much potential for Thrilling Prose between the Launch Pad and the consuites.

Honestly, I'm not sure where my work-a-day life ended and my transport to Trufandom actually started. One minute, I was the Internet's beloved wrestling columnist The Kingfish Arnie Katz, and the next I was enveloped in the spirit of Core Fandom. Little by little, day by day, Corflu took over my waking thoughts. By Wednesday (4/23), it felt like a case of Corflu Fever.

Although we'd heard from Lloyd Penney and Rob Jackson earlier in the week, Corflu got serious on Wednesday. Alan White came over in the late morning to assemble the FAAn Awards certificates and make some "Corflu" signs. Alan had playfully made up a few signs with bizarre misspelling like "Clorfu," but he used only the correct one to make the signs. I always enjoy his whimsical creativity, though I wish he was more open to

the blandishments of Corflu. Alan seems exactly the kind of creative, friendly and intelligent fan who enjoys these get-togethers, but he has quite a bit of resistance to anything that isn't kind of formal and commercial.

I also spoke with newly arrived Don Anderson in the afternoon. I've known Don since I joined SAPS while still in high school. Though we'd both attended NyCon 3, this would be our first in-person meeting.

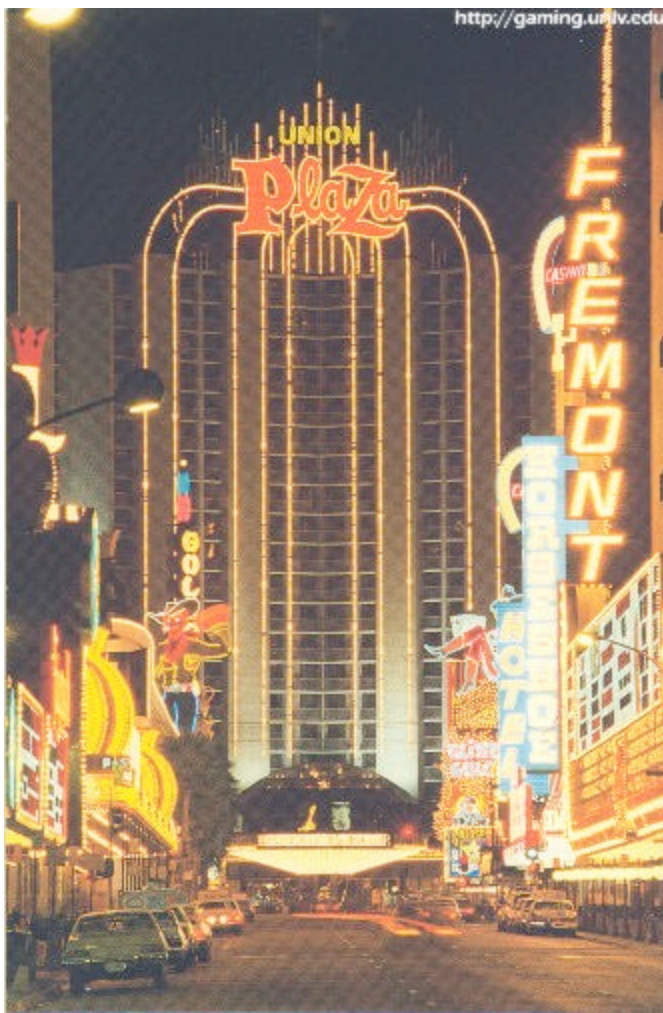
Don needed some tonic water for medicinal purposes. I gave him a few suggestions and the promise of help if my ideas didn't work out. (They didn't, so Joyce got the tonic water on one of her shopping trips and brought it to him at the hotel.)

Ross Chamberlain came over in the early evening to loan us his dolly. He also got to see the Corflu Silver tee-shirt with his illustration. With some help from James Taylor, Joyce had located a very good shirt-maker, so I think the results pleased Ross. For those who haven't seen it, it incorporates the famous fannish cartoon characters of many other fan artists in a Vegas scene.

While Ross tarried to socialize, Ken and Aileen Forman and JoHn Hardin pulled in to the Launch Pad's driveway. The Formans drove all the

Ken Forman was among the first, and most welcome, to arrive in Las Vegas for Corflu Silver.





The Plaza, site of three Vegas Corflus, may not be with us if there's a fourth. It looks like the grand old place will fall to an Implosion before too long. The owners of New York's Plaza are reportedly about to build a hotel of that name on the Strip.

way from Flippen, AR, a trip of 1,200 miles and two centuries of progress, and picked up JoHn Hardin in Kingman, AZ.

Seeing three of my favorite people, two of whom I hadn't seen for well over a year, made Wednesday very special. For such an unlovable guy, I've certainly made some terrific friends.

Although I don't expect to ever lure Ken and Aileen from their bucolic bolt hole, JoHn plans to return to Vegas in the fairly near future. This news put me in an even better mood, because I miss hanging out with him and also consider him a big plus for the Vegrants.

Su Williams, a local hermit fan whom we like very much, made a rare appearance to see Ken and Aileen.. She has always been very close to the Formans, so her visit was keenly anticipated.

Unfortunately, Su couldn't be enticed to Corflu. She's increasingly reclusive. A Vegrants meeting is too large for her comfort, so Corflu would be much too crowded. She's missed at Vegrants, too, but is a longer shot to return than even the Formans.

Joyce prepared a big dinner with dual main courses of pot roast and lasagna. Ross kibbitzed for a while and then went home to his wife. Su had already eaten dinner, but the rest of us made pretty good inroads into the food. Joyce said that we couldn't leave leftovers, so we gave it the old fan-nish try. I thought about the great trenchermen of my acquaintance, John D Berry and Ross Chamberlain in younger days, and did my best.

Ken asked about Corflu, so I gave him a verbal progress report and brought him up to date on who was, and wasn't, coming to Las Vegas. Money woes seemed unusually prevalent this year; several fans I know canceled out at the last minute due to budget tightening.

Ken reciprocated by telling me about life and times in Flippen. He said that he'd decided to get rid of the two goats he has tended for a little while. He described making various types of cheese out of goat's milk, but he admitted that the mozzarella turned out pretty badly.

When Su informed him that authentic mozzarella is made from the milk of the water buffalo, Ken expressed disbelief. He tried to spin it a couple of different ways. Though he was very persuasive, Su's credentials as a research librarian eventually carried the day.

Su related an experience she'd just had talking to school children as part of a program to promote reading. The teacher of the remedial English class had his heart in the right place, but his idea of what might tempt these indifferent students into becoming readers was a bit fussy and old-fashioned. Su tried to explain that a magazine about extreme sports stood a better chance of getting one of these children to read than, say, *Catcher in the Rye*.

We sat around and talked through the evening, but Aileen and Ken were really beat after such an exhausting drive. First Aileen and finally Ken began to fade. All of us were headed for sleep by 11:30. I told myself we were husbanding strength for the arduous party days ahead.

Chapter Two

The Morning Before the Night Before the Night

I decided to check the mailbox before heading to Corflu. There's usually not much besides bills and ad circulars, but it wasn't a good idea to let mail accumulate.

I hurried down the driveway to where the mailbox stood, near the intersection of the driveway and the sidewalk.

*I had only walked about half the distance, when I heard Joyce's voice. "Take out the recyclables!" she called from the front door. I heard a muffled **whomp!***

Or should I say, "used to stand," because what was left of it was lying in the dirt.

The Vegas wind suddenly carried a chill or maybe it was the sweat that suddenly beaded on my forehead. If Joyce hadn't assigned a chore, I might have been lying in the dirt beside the mailbox.

*Now I knew that they meant business.
So did I.*

I got up about 5:30 AM and immediately went to work on posting some new stories on ProWrestlingDaily.com. It was the fannish thing to do, despite appearances to the contrary. By starting early, I knew I wouldn't have to work when the other four awakened and started the fan chatter.

Sure enough, I got in several hours at the keyboard before the rest bestirred themselves.

They all drank coffee – I'm a Diet Coke guy – as Ken tried to figure out the exact dimensions of the labels provided by the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce so he could print out the ID cards to slip into the badge holders. JoHn surfed the net for the Avery site, but found only a confusing welter of products for an amazing range of label sizes,

none of which conformed to the dimensions of the badge holders we had.

Conversation turned to the Arkansan lethargy which has reduced these former titans of fanac, Ken, Aileen and the Wilsons, to fannish wraiths. Ken said he'd read a book that identified a syndrome that besets folks in his part of the land called "The Frakes." The ailment is caused by the extremes of climate that keep Arkansans indoors during the sub-freezing cold of winter and the sweltering heat of summer.

"Oh, I get it," I finally said. "It's Epstein Barr for the goyim!"

I spent a couple more hours writing articles



Joyce Katz served as Chairman of Corflu Silver, the second time she has performed that function.



Arnie Katz, Corflu Silver's Left-Hand Fan, is shown wearing his Lucky Shirt.

about an upcoming pay per view wrestling show. When I returned to the dining room, Ken and JoHn had not yet conquered the variables associated with creating the nametags.

Bill Mills came by to share the latest about the Virtual Consuite. After some research by Lenny Bailes before the con, Bill decided to buy the wireless service the hotel offered. He was in excellent spirits, which added to everyone's desire to get to the con and start fanning.

Ken, JoHn and I went over the fanhistory questions for the Big Pond Trivia Showdown. Ken said he didn't like the name, already enshrined in the Program Booklet. I like it, mostly due to the oblique allusion to the "Big Pond Fund" and wouldn't have changed it even if I could.

Some of Ken's questions proved to be real stumpers. I didn't do badly with the questions for the American Team about UK Fandom, but I slipped up several times on questions about North American Fandom. One question that totally fooled me concerned the identity of the pollster who conducted a mid-1940's survey into such arcane as the average size of the fannish headbone. I immediately thought of Jack Speer's IPO Polls, when the right answer was "Art Widner."

We packed the two cars like explorers heading out for an African Safari or maybe a trip to the South Pole. We stuffed the cars so full I am sure we had gear for either one. We were ready for almost anything, especially if the crisis required cans

of soda and beer, piles of tee-shirts and mountains of artificial sweetener. I'll admit that such situations don't often come up, but if one had, we'd have been ready for it.

The dolly, which would save a lot of labor at the other end of the ride, presented a problem. It wouldn't fit in the trunk of either car. Finally, Aileen found a way to wedge it into the back seat of our red chariot. The two-car caravan set out for downtown Las Vegas with the goal of arriving a little before 3 PM. That's when the hotel said we could take possession of the consuites.

A good omen, in my opinion, was that the first fan I saw was Andy Hooper. Knowing my chronic inability to recognize people, Andy kindly murmured his name as we shook hands. Even if I could do better in that regard, Andy's looks have changed so much (for the better, by the way) that I might not have recognized him, anyway.

As we walked from the parking spot in the hotel's toward the hotel's front desk, Art Widner drove past and honked in recognition. Then I saw my oldest friend in the world, Lenny Bailes.

It started to feel like Corflu.

When Joyce and I lined up at the registration desk, now located on the third floor, Aileen and Ken were right in front of us. It wasn't a long wait, made shorter by the company. When Joyce told the desk clerk that we were with the Corflu convention, she actually recalled Corflu Blackjack four years ago. She also liked the fact that Joyce assigned one of the consuites to "James Taylor."

"I love James Taylor!" she squealed. I dampened her enthusiasm a little by telling her it wasn't the singer, though she got a chuckle from the fact that he also has a sister named "Elizabeth."

We opened both consuites. Joyce, for reasons unknown, switched the smoking and non smoking suites. It didn't matter, because the hotel would've permitted smoking in both suites, but we wanted to create a "smoke-free" zone. The change confused everyone for the first hour. (I'm still confused, but let it pass.)

We also had some trouble getting into the rooms. Giving me the right card-key for the room helped immeasurably.

We opened the room with everyone looking

on. I suspect they were hungry. It took a little while, but within a half hour or so, we had the food and beverages going and everyone seemed to be getting into a suitably festive mood.

That cheered me a lot, because I believe that the attitude fans bring to Corflu has a lot to do with how they rate the experience. If everyone is feeling good, the roof could collapse and fans would mostly shrug it off and keep partying. If the atmosphere is downbeat, anything can disturb them.

It didn't take long for 2350, the Main Consuite, to fill with fans, including: Rob Jackson, Bill Burns and Lenny Bailes. Eventually, Joyce drafted everyone and herded them toward the car with its mountain of con supplies awaiting transport to the consuite.

Jolie LaChance showed up shortly after the work party started their mission. She jumped right in and began unloading stuff with a second dolly. I stayed behind this time to talk to Joyce, who showed signs of pre-con jitters.

Ted White, Andy Hooper, JoHn Hardin, Ken Forman and I went to 2040, the Smoking Consuite, to set up chairs and get things going.

What a difference a couple of decades has made in my friends! Once, the first sidebar at the con covered love, sex and romance. Now, it's mostly symptoms. "At least you're alive!" Andy thundered at some he thought were in danger of succumbing to Endless Medical Chat. Although I do want to know how my friends' health is, I have to agree with Andy that too much of such talk can be a mood killer.

As often happens when some of the survivors get together, we talked a little about CollectingChannel.com.

For those who've missed previous references, CollectingChannel.com was a well-funded website that specialized in news and feature articles about collecting and collectibles. In the late 1990's and early 2000's. They hired Joyce to write and edit the site's Front Page and, shortly after, they brought me on as editor-in-chief of the whole site.

Armed with a decent budget, I hired some of the most talented people I knew – a lot of my fan friends. The ones with the best credentials became

editors of individual sections like Sports, Comics, Glassware, Books, Jewelry and Toys. The larger sections also had Assistant Editors. Among those who worked for me at CollectingChannel.com were Ted White, Andy Hooper, Bill Kunkel, Steve Stiles, Bbob Stewart, Aileen Forman, Bill Bodden, Victor Gonzalez, and Tom Springer.

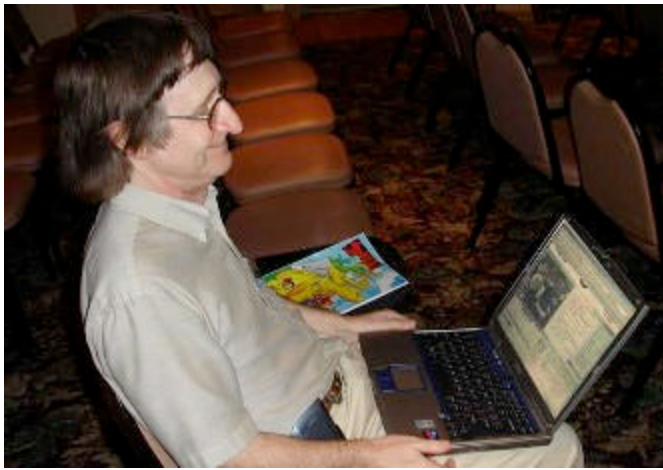
The editorial content made CollectingChannel.com the fourth-largest site, in terms of traffic, on the Internet. Even saddling me with an inflexible, blustering boss who daily alienated my best writers and editors couldn't derail the editorial department. Unfortunately, a company needs all aspects of its operation to work to insure success. Nothing else worked right at CollectingChannel, from the top management to the sales staff.

The two main owners displayed such all-consuming love and admiration for each other that some believed we would soon be attending their wedding in some exotic place with an enlightened view of gay marriage.

The sales staff couldn't have sold half-price kronik to the Group Mind, but it didn't stop them from earning big salaries and burning through the



Bill Mills caught the Corflu spirit in a big way and scored several notable successes at the con.



James Taylor, the Right-hand Man, ran the Main Consuite and so much more at the convention.

investor's money with expansive eliving. One ad guy rubbed salt in the wood by, once a week, sending a memo for everyone with a new virus in it. I soon learned to delete his periodic alibi letters without opening them.

The saga of CollectingChannel.com is the story of the triumph of hubris and egomania over a terrific concept. Six months after launch, two big Internet companies offered well over \$100 million for CollectingChannel. Over-confident, the owners rejected the proposal, despite the fact that the site hadn't earned anything and showed no signs of doing so.

We blazed away with the editorial content and CollectingChannel.com continued to show strong and increasing traffic. Takeover bids kept coming, but they started to trend downward as people took a more realistic attitude about sites with no visible income streams.

Even the owners couldn't ignore reality forever and they finally agreed to sell CollectingChannel.com. Unfortunately, the contract signing was set for the afternoon of the day when the DotCon Depression deflated companies in a matter of hours. The perspective buyer lost most of its value that day and suddenly became incapable of making the deal.

Management had cut editorial salaries and asked me to defer the bulk of my salary in two successive cuts that left me earning less than minimum wage for the last six months of operation. The company started to try to give the appearance of success while trimming the staff. I might've left at that point, but they told me they'd fire everyone

else if I did. What was happening was bad enough; I couldn't bring myself to add to the pain by triggering a mass dismissal.

The owners finally sold out for less than \$5 million to a couple of shifty brothers who never paid them a penny. It probably serves the company right for so easily sacrificing the deferred salaries of employees and promised shares of any sale in an "every man for himself" move.

We did a session of "where are they now?" about some of the main villains, few of whom have subsequently prospered as a result of their incompetence. I felt that the former editors deserved a few minutes of Guilty Pleasure about people who had made their lives miserable.

Bill Mills, sitting next to me, got a call on his cell phone that turned out to be Roc, in her car. "Come straight to the con," Bill told her.

"If she does, we can fix that in a hurry," I quipped. I try to say "Quipped" at least once in every con report.

Back in the Main Consuite, I met Jim Young. Jim and I were neofans at more or less the same time. We'd always got along very well, but I hadn't seen him for over 30 years. (He visited Las Vegas just a few months ago, but I wasn't able to get to see him.)

Jim has retired from his diplomatic career and is writing. He has a book pending at a Leading Publisher. I hope his attendance at Corflu Silver means that he will resurge a little in Fandom. He's certainly an asset.

Ken Forman kept his hands busy making paper *objets d'art*. While some might prefer Ken to switch to knitting so we could at least wear the results, I am just thankful that he hasn't begun emulated another fan who became a compulsive crotch rubber. It did keep his hands busy, but it didn't do much for his standing with the rest of us.

At this point in the con – or should I say "pre-con" since it wasn't due to officially start for more than 24 hours – Ken devoted his paper-folding efforts to the construction of a dragonfly.

Bill Mills lit up when he saw Ken's handiwork. He told everyone in the room about his robot, remote control dragonflies.

Talk of dragonflies ensued. "It's a bird," Andy

Hooper pronounced authoritatively, “but it’s not really a *good* bird.”

Bill had brought the remote control flyers over one afternoon. The metal creatures’ flying technique included a lot of hovering, which made it easier for the operator to keep within RC range of the fluttering dragonfly. Bill’s demonstration showed considerable mastery of the robot dragonflies and he’d brought them to the con to give others a chance to try them on Friday afternoon.

Sadly, the system wouldn’t function surrounded by the steel structure of the hotel – and then the dragonflies (but not the controllers) went missing after the con. Bill was a terrific sport about that, chalking the loss up to simple confusion. Naturally, Corflu Silver replaced the missing items.

The Hugos came up for discussion. While last year’s dreadful design and the generally low quality of nominees and winners in the fan categories took the expected pasting, Andy Hooper dwelt on the bright side – the “Best Fanzine” Hugo for *Science Fiction Five-Yearly*.

No one could argue with the rightness of *that* one, though I regret that Lee Hoffman wasn’t alive and well to reap her long-overdue egoboo. Maybe because she never descended to self-promotion, Lee Hoffman seldom gets her full measure of credit these days. In some ways, she was the most influential fans of the post-WW II era, since her fannish attitude set the tone for the next half-century and is still central to today’s Core Fandom.

Andy showed visible disappointment at the lack of FAAn Awards nominating pins. He felt that by abandoning the pins we had not exalted the awards sufficiently. “Why don’t you just hit them in the face and throw them into the street?” he demanded., Robert Lichtman took issue, too.

I might’ve done the pins, although I don’t like the idea, except that three fans who won them last year wrote to me to say that they didn’t want them. That the three fans aren’t closely associated with each other only made their unanimity on this point seem more telling.

It also speaks to my feelings about the FAAn Awards. There’s a basic difference between the Hugos and the FAAn Awards. Putting aside the

value of the awards and the aptness of the winners, the big difference is that the Hugo structure is designed to produce one winner in each category and, at a lower level, several also-ran nominees.

The FAAN Awards yield lists of high finishers in each category. The winner is mere points ahead of the second-place finisher in most cases and it’s common for the rest of top five or top ten finishers to be fairly close to the category leader, too.

I think the best way to reflect this is with a results booklet, not nomination pins. I’m working on that booklet now and may well ask *you* to write a few entries, too. Such publications have a long and proud fanhistory and I think it’s time to revive the practice.

Fans began to congregate in the consuites for the Vegrants Kick-off Party around the announced starting time. Joyce seemed a little frazzled, so I recruited James Taylor and Jolie LaChance to help get things rolling. Working cohesively with Joyce, they soon had food on the tables and beverages coming out of the ice flow in the bath tub.

I had the pleasure of meeting Don Anderson for the first time in person, though I have known him in fandom for over 40 years. Don was a member of SAPS when I joined in the mid-1960’s and I was glad to see him return to some activity in recent years. He proved to be the same kind, friendly guy he has always seemed to be in his fanwriting.

I hadn’t seen Gordon Eklund in a long time, either. We were youngsters together in SAPS in the 1960’s. Gordy and I both worshipped at the shrine of Calvin Demmon in those days and rattled on for pages and years, each trying to out-Demmon the other. We were, we decided on consideration, talented but derivative. Gordon said that he has retired from his job and is now doing more writing. I knew he probably meant professional work, but I couldn’t resist putting in a plug for *VFW*. I don’t think I’ve ever published a piece by him, despite our long association, and am hoping to redress that in the coming year.

Bill Mills braced himself for his Grand Experiment, The Virtual Consuite, and began to position gear to activate it in the Main Consuite. The discovery that the hotspot licence the Plaza sold him would not produce a signal on the 23rd floor nearly

broke his heart. For it to fail before it even started, and for a reason utterly beyond his control, devastated him.

Curt Phillips, representing the more than three dozen fans in the chat room, called to find out what had happened. I gave him the bad news, but also a ray of hope for tomorrow.

The Miller-Bailes Brain Trust had decreed that it was possible, even likely, that the system *would* work in the meeting room. The Turf Club, which held all Corflu events, including the banquet, outside the consuites, is on the third floor. Since the hotel's business center is also on the third floor, the meeting room would likely be in close proximity to the connection.

I handed the phone to Bill so that he and Curt could meet and the call seemed to cheer up our frustrated audiovisual maven. He vowed to bounce back with a hook-up in time for the Opening Ceremony.

The Main Consuite got crowded, so a group that included Joyce, JoHn Hardin, Teresa Cochran, Bill Mills, Richard Brandt and his new friend (Stephanie) adjourned to the Smoking Consuite.



Robert Lichtman and Michael Dobson renew acquaintances in the consuite.

Stephanie had never before encountered Fandom, but I think she liked it when I told her that she has the perfect female fannish name. "Stephanie is the kind of name that fanwriters give to the heroines in faan fiction stories," I assured her.

Joyce, looking especially pleased, showed off a beautiful hardback copy of a Boris Karloff anthology that Jack Calvert gave her. She'd mentioned somewhere that she'd lost her copy and Jack very thoughtfully bought a replacement that looked even better than the original. That kind of thoughtfulness is to be treasured, as Jack's many fannish friends certainly do.

Steve Stiles, this year's Corflu 50 award recipient, added himself to the party, followed shortly by Dan and Lynn Steffan. Steve was a little subdued when he arrived, though still very enjoyable company. As he left, he announced that he had been in a bad mood, but our energy had cheered him up. That's typical Stiles self-deprecation. To hear him tell it, he's a snarling tiger, rather than an amiable pussycat.

Steve has enlisted in the ranks of artists who want to be writers, a group only slightly larger than the cabal of writers who want to draw. Generally, artists do better as writers than the other way around, Bill Kunkel and Winston Churchill notwithstanding. I anticipate reading Steve's first book.

Ted White reminisced about *Blat!*, which he considers the best of his fanzines in many ways. He also explained the unusual situation that enabled such a large and hefty fanzine. Through Lynn Steffan, Dan and Ted gained access to a mighty mechanical colossus that turned master page into collated and stapled copies of *Blat!* as they watched.

The party had many comings and goings, as these things always do. Soon Ted and Sandra Bond, the two captains for Saturday's trivia contest, were sitting on one of the couches discussing Rat Fandom and the Cretins. I mostly listened, as I often do when the topics related to the period covered by my 13-year Gafia.

Thanks to conversations like this one, I've managed to fill in many of the blanks, but I'm always eager to learn more about those years.

It must've been about 2:30 AM when we turned out the lights.

Chapter Three

Getting Down to Frivolity

I heard the knock at the door. “Who could be at the door this early?” I wondered as I slipped on my clothes. Surely, no fans would visit at our hotel room door so early in the morning, especially after such a late night.

I plastered a smile on my numb face as I went to greet whomever it was with a full dose of Corflu Host Charm.

There was nothing in the hallway except some flaky paint off the walls.

And then I saw it, the box by my door.

“A present from some appreciative Corflu participant,” I said as I lifted it off the floor. “Maybe it’s an expression of gratitude from Lisa Eisenberg or Hope Leibowitz!”

I shook the box a little, and something shifted inside.

On closer inspection, it proved to be one of those “TV boxes.” It looked wrapped, but the top was actually separate from the bottom.

I pried the lip off the box and ---

-- the eyes of a cobra stared into mine!

Joyce and I got up at 7:30 AM, immediately got dressed and headed to the LaunchPad where a lonely cat waited in the front window for his breakfast. Since we were at home, I showered, shaved and changed clothes while Joyce frolicked with Foggy and the wandering pack of cats that clusters outside our back door.

Traffic cooperated and we returned to the hotel about 9:30 AM. We went directly to the banquet office to pay Corflu’s tab. We were supposed to pay on Thursday afternoon, but the office closed a little earlier than Joyce expected.

The Plaza may be decaying, but the staff continued to be friendly and reasonably helpful. The woman in the office accepted the check with a smile and didn’t mention our technical lateness.

Andy Hooper, Steve Stiles, JoHn Hardin,



Roxanne Mills, who supervised te-shirt sales, models Ross Chamberlain’s creation.

Teresa Cochran, Ken Forman and I chatted about the upcoming Westercon, the first-ever in Las Vegas. I felt like the people who won the bid didn’t have much interest in Las Vegas Fandom and I returned the feeling toward the Westercon. The very expensive con hotel is far from anything most fans would recognize as Las Vegas, in Summerlin, and its high room rates and “no smoking” policy will not endear it to many.

I wish Westercon success, but I have no plans to attend. I don’t like big cons and this one is likely to have few of my fan friends in attendance. If some do show up, maybe we’ll throw a party.

Steve Stiles brought up the Hugo, for which he has been nominated seven times. Fandom’s Susan Lucci gives the whole thing a lot more thought than I ever would – or he ever should. If Steve Stiles won a Hugo it would confer more credit to the Hugo than to Steve.

Many fine artists and cartoonists have graced Fandom; Steve Stiles is indisputably one of the all-

time best. He combines a first-rate cartooning style with a first-rate sense of humor. The fact that Steve hasn't won a Hugo is a knock against the award, not Steve,

I judge awards by two criteria: who votes and who won. The Fan Hugos come up short in both departments. The cost of voting keeps many fans from voting, while many who don't really know fanzines feel obliged to cast uninformed ballots. The result is a list of winners that includes a few worthies and a number who really don't deserve serious consideration, much less a Hugo.

The FAAn Awards are superior by both measurements. I hope to see support for Core Fandom's annual honors continue to grow.



Jay Kinney (*left*) and Frank Lunney are two of my oldest friends in Fandom. — and two of the nicest gentlemen I've ever known.

Back at the Main Consuite, cacophony reigned. Ken's nature hike drew a huge crowd, despite the 10:30 AM start. The suite filled up rapidly with fans coming in for a little pre-hike breakfast. Ken has led similar hikes at the two previous Vegas Corflus and this drew the biggest crowd so far. The increased number of Britfen, who are enthusiastic sightseers, has had an effect, but I'd chalk most of the increase up to word of mouth. Ken does these excursions very well.

Of course, I didn't go on the hike. I'm a comfort-loving creature and an indoor sport. I wanted to stick around the consuites, because not everyone went hiking. The wisdom of this lifestyle choice was again confirmed when I found myself sitting with Joyce, Aileen Forman and Sandra Bond.

Time passed and the conversation rolled smoothly onward. I suggested that we continue it over lunch. Sandra and Aileen weren't especially hungry, but they agreed to accompany Joyce and me.

We went down to the hotel's casino floor, where we discovered that the coffee shop had vanished! Joyce and I checked out the Plaza's coffee shop when we went to the hotel to make the pre-convention payment, less than a month before Corflu. The Plaza's coffee shop was never a rock of tradition in Las Vegas — it was radically different in menu, size and location at each of the two previous Vegas Corflus — but now it was gone! In the interim since our test lunch, they'd folded it into the buffet.

It took us a little while to determine this. We circled the outside of the restaurant in search of an entrance that didn't lead to a buffet cashier until we asked the cashier. It made it impossible for Aileen and Sandra to get a soda or cup of coffee while we ate and I didn't really want to pay for two extra buffet seatings, since they weren't very hungry.

The cashier steered us toward The Vegas Club, located across the street (and owned by the same company that has the Plaza). Despite the evident bias, the recommendation worked out fine. Although the food was a little more expensive than expected, it tasted good. The staff was polite, even friendly, which made for very enjoyable dining. I especially liked the way the waitress, hostess and cashier put some real enthusiasm into the phrases

that often seem mechanical and formulaic when said by restaurant workers who are required to say them.

Aileen described the work-intensive meat pie business. It sounds like very long hours for short money. I admire her for making the effort and sticking to it, but I can't help wishing that this fine writer would test her talent more. I think she could be a very successful writer in a number of different fields and I regret that the hands that should be caressing the keys are molding meat pies. I counseled taking retirement a little at a time. "I've been semi-retired since I was 20," I said.

Aileen had just launched into an anti-hiking rant, winning the approval of her three luncheon companions, when she began to feel bad. She has suffered from migraines in recent years and it looked like one was overtaking her. She excused herself to rush back to the hotel to lie down.

The three of us chewed over what could be very exciting news: Sandra is thinking of relocating to the US, at least for a period of time. Naturally, I put in a heavy bid for Las Vegas, but at the moment, Jacksonville, FL looks like the early line favorite.

When we returned to the Main Consuite after lunch, I was very pleased to see Belle Churchill. Ill health has kept her (and Eric Davis) from recent Vegrants meetings, but the outlook for the future is brightening. Eric has changed jobs to one that lets him go home at night, so we're looking forward to seeing them. I introduced Sandra to Belle and they talked about Florida.

After a while, Joyce, Robert Lichtman, Lenny Bailes and I moved to the Smoking Consuite. "If we do this, Ted White will appear," predicted Lenny. We had just walked in the room when we heard the knock and admitted Ted. Happy as I was to see him, I could not help wondering if Lenny would mind also forecasting the arrival of, say, Jenna Jameson or Minka.

Bill Mills and JoHn Hardin came in and we talked about The Storyteller Project. The idea is quite simple: get fans to tell anecdotes, record them and make the results widely available. The idea is to preserve our oral fannish traditions at a time when fewer and fewer of the great old fans remain with us.



Fans relax in the Non-Smoking Consuite.

That we didn't do more about The Storyteller Project at Corflu Silver disappointed Bill. I prefer to look on the bright side. Bill got a couple of stories recorded and we built some awareness.

This Corflu may not have been the right one at which to attempt to launch this rather ambitious

Ted White, as usual, proved to be a party catalyst. Wherever he was, you can be sure there's a bunch of fannish fans.



project. because we both had so much else to do at the con..

I expect the idea to develop over the next year or so, probably in concert with The Virtual Fan Lounge and its successors. Some ideas take off like rockets in Fandom, but it's more common that fans require a little time to warm up to something new before giving it their attention. I'm a patient fan, more or less.

The uncanny physical resemblance between Frank Lunney and Jack Calvert came in for some comment. They have been proven to be two separate people, much as Es and Les Cole, but there is Something Strange afoot. Probably a lot of stoned fans.

The Mike McInerney Memorial Pipe is a venerable fan tradition that has brought solace to fans for the last 40 years. As the legend goes, one need only fill the Mike McInerney Memorial Pipe once and the Spirit of Trufandom will keep it full.

Not all such discoveries are so pleasant.

Someone in the Smoking Consuite made a much less salubrious discovery – the Anti-Fannish Pipe. After packing it as full as humanly possible with contemporary smoking mixture, the fan in

question found that one puff emptied it, despite an impressively large bowl.

It is, in fact, the diametric opposite. Whereas the Mike McInerney Memorial Pipe is like a Bag of Holding in *Dungeons & Dragons*, the bowl of the Anti-Fannish Pipe is a tiny Black Hole. No matter how much is stuffed into the bowl and no matter how big the bowl appears to be, it's only good for one toke.

Nic Farey made a very strong (and extremely favorable) impression on me when I met him for the first time on Thursday. One of the others who'd also met him for the first time at this Corflu asked about his background. Of particular interest was his distinctive accent.. A minority felt he sounded Australian, but it's a mixture of cockney and Maryland.

That led Ted White to wonder how long Nic has lived in the US. No one was sure, but we didn't have to ponder it for long. The question still hung in the smoky air when Nic Farey came through the door!

"When did you come to the US?" Ted lost no time in asking.

Nic looked at us, a little suspicious about our motives. "Why do you want to know?" he asked.

"It's the tie-breaking question in the Nic Farey Trivia Contest," I explained.

"What were some of the other questions?" Nic wanted to know.

I feigned a loss of short-term memory. "I don't remember," I said, "but there was a lot of cussing involved."

At around 3:00 PM, Joyce announced that the meeting room, the Turf Club on the third floor, was now ready to open. She asked us to close down the two consuites and encourage everyone to meet down there.

I started to shoo people out of the Smoking Consuite, but my fan friends began arriving faster than others left. A party erupted and I decided to leave the room open for another hour.

That turned out to be a good idea, because the one-room experiment proved less than a hit when two of the three scheduled attractions didn't turn out well. Something about the room frustrated Bill Mills' plan to let fans try his remote control ro-



Steve Stiles (left) came to Corflu on the wings of The Corflu Fifty. He's talking to Lenny Bailes, my closest friend since age four..

botic dragonflies and the room wasn't conducive to The StoryTeller Project, either.

Those two things tanked, but the third succeeded spectacularly. Vindicating the theory advanced Thursday night, Bill Mills got The Virtual Consuite up and running. And when he built it, the fans did come to see what was happening in the meeting room and to talk about them with each other in the chat room.

Bill Mills deserves big egoboo for researching, implementing and running The Virtual Consuite. I consider The Virtual Consuite a landmark in Core Fandom history. It is not just an intriguing flourish; it represents a fresh creative platform and a significant expansion of the scope of our fanac.

The Virtual Consuite, and its post-convention successor The Virtual Fan Lounge, use the uStream system to establish a channel (page) that includes both a chat room for written communication and a video player that can show slide shows or live video feeds.

This set-up provides Core Fandom with 24/7 real-time chat for the first time. The Virtual Consuite had a lively chat session going regardless of what was happening at Corflu Silver. The Virtual Fan Lounge has displayed the same characteristic. There are bound to be more fans in the chat room when there's a live video feed, but you can probably find fans there a good deal of the time.

The Virtual Consuite gave fans who couldn't make it to Corflu a way to participate, to soak up some of the excitement and fannish spirit. If the Virtual Consuite re-appears at Corflu Zed, I have a hunch we'll have a better handle on interacting with it, but it was still tremendously exciting to know that as many as 40 fans congregated online while 84+ of their fellow fans got together in Las Vegas.

The Virtual Fan Lounge is also important as an arena for original audio and video programming by and for fans. I am currently working on a bi-weekly, half-hour show. If I can do it, then pretty much anyone can – and I hope many will try.

I believe it's in the best interests of Core Fandom as a whole for us to center our activities on one channel (a video feed and a chat room). Doing so creates maximum synergy among the resources we have and makes it convenient for fans to drop

in for chat and programming.

Bill Mills deserves a crack at developing the idea that he pioneered with The Virtual Consuite. He's not well known to many Core Fandomites but he is a long-time fan who has become our brother in the last year or so. He (bill@billmills.net) is open to suggestions and offers of programming, so I think people who want to do content will have the opportunity and artistic freedom to do so.

I've preached patience to Bill and now to everyone. We have done the equivalent of publishing *Cosmology*. It took 20 years to get from that fanzine to *Quandry*. It won't take anywhere near that long to get from The Virtual Consuite to wherever this innovation takes us, but it will take some time.

The system, uStream, is still basically a beta test that gets upgrades and improvements just about every day. It will certainly have features in six months that it doesn't have now. Eventually, the whole shebang may move to another system that suits us even better.

What we have is a good start. uStream is a simple system, ideal for introducing the idea, but less than perfect for exploring the concept to its limit. There's no doubt that the chat room controls could be more flexible, like an AOL chat room, and permit fans to upload video and audio content to the channel without having to assume at least temporary control of the entire system.

We may find that a pay service yields a better system. In that event fans who use the system may be asked to make small donations, somewhat in



Art Widner is one of my favorite fans to see at Corflu. I was glad it brought him to Vegas for the first time in a while.



Nic Farey, whom I met in person for the first time, made my Corflu a lot more pleasant and won great popularity among the Vegrants. We recognize Our Own.

the vein of Public Television. Hopefully, this will be minus the mind-numbing pledge drives.

It's almost impossible to predict how The Virtual Fan Lounge will develop in its first year or even in what direction. I know what my goals would be, but those will be just one input out of many Bill Mills receives as he pilots this project through a year of changes and surprises.

The key cards hadn't worked very well right from the start, but I chalked that up to my own clumsiness. At least I did until Joyce decided to re-open the consuites for a while to give people who wanted to do something other than sit in the Turf an alternative.

When I tried to unlock the doors, however, I found that all of the several keys to the Smoking Consuite I carried didn't work. I tried each several times, but nothing would make the three key cards

open any of the three doors to the Smoking Consuite and its side rooms.

Thus began my odyssey. First stop was the Main Consuite to collect all the key cards I could find. I went back down the hall and tried all the cards in each of the three locks. None opened any of the doors.

Since the cards had no identifying marks, which is normally a good thing, I quickly lost track of which ones went to which set of consuite doors. So I went back up the hall to the Main Consuite and tried keys until I found the ones that worked that room. I redistributed those to the fans who needed them.

I told Joyce about the problem. She called the desk in her capacity as convention chairman. I offered to go down to the front desk and get the new set of key cards, but they insisted that Joyce appear in person.

That's when she resorted to the "I'm a pathetic old crippled woman" strategy. The desk clerk caved and I found myself going to the third floor, showing two forms of identification and obtaining the keys.

Finally, I took the new key cards back to the Smoking Consuite to make sure they worked. By the time I finished all of that, I had to get back to the Turf Club to prepare the official start of the convention.

Steve Stiles had many positive things to say about his job in the book store. Evidently, it is run by reasonably sane people who don't act like they just escaped from the zoo. My experience, all ten days of it at Barca's Book Exchange directly across from Brooklyn College Graduate School, was both short and unpleasant.

Mr. Barca loved to fire people, something for which he had an awesome talent. By the time I re-joined the ranks of the unemployed, I was the most senior employee except for the owner's brother-in-law. Not that anyone should've envied his longevity. He was a downtrodden man and Mr. Barca's perpetual whipping boy. Mr. Barca was a master strategist when it came to setting up his brother-in-law for embarrassment and humiliation. I don't know whether this oppressed person bore it stoically to the bitter end, hung himself in the scandalously filthy bathroom or split Barca's head open

with a carton of text books.

Mr. Barca preferred to motivate through fear. He achieved this by working the pungent phrase “You wanna work here?” every time he paused for breath in a conversation with his minions. He used it the way some people do “Umm” or “you know” when they suddenly find themselves at a temporary loss for the next sentence. This approach to management kept the workers in a constant state of high-stress agitation.

My firing? I was a victim of circumstance (woo-woo, woo-woo, woo-woo). As I put a load of text books onto a shelf in the method prescribed by Mr. Barca, a pretty coed came up to me and asked where she could find a particular volume she needed for class.

As it happened, I was holding the book in my hand at the time she asked. I handed it to her.. I’d barely collected a smile from the student when the little ball of hate known as Mr. Barca barreled through the store, bellowing, “You’re fired!” as he rushed at me.

He came right up to me, so close he had to crane his neck to look me in the eye from his 5’6” or so. “Do you know why you’re fired?” he screamed in a way that drew the attention of every customer and worker in this very large store. “Do you want to know why you’re fired?”

Honestly, I didn’t really want to hear about it, but he rushed on as though he had my enthusiastic request for such an explanation. It came down to his conviction that only he had the right to actually help a customer. Handing over the text book had violated his sacred principle of indifference to patrons and so I had to go.

Which I did. Even my parents, noted believers in the Work Ethic, told me I was nuts for staying as long as I did. I don’t think I ever went back to the store, even as a customer. I think I was afraid that somehow, through an incredible chain of unlikely events, that Mr. Barca would re-hire me just for the pleasure of tossing me out again.

Nic Farey revealed that he, too, is a wrestling fan. He isn’t very interested in WWE, which is typical of many long-time fans, but is fairly enthusiastic about TNA. My own taste runs in that direction, though my job requires that I closely follow WWE.



Nic Farey rocks out on his “Werewolves of Fandom!”

I’ve never been afraid to speak publicly, to get on stage and broadcast my thoughts and opinions to a (it says here) rapt audience. Certainly, the pleasure of addressing all my friends in Fandom far outweighs any potential nervousness. The same boundless confidence that fuels my fanwriting makes talking to a room full of Core Fandomites no more challenging or threatening or stressful than bantering with a half-dozen Vegrants in my office on meeting nights.

Yet at Corflu Silver, I learned Real Fear. It wasn’t the part where I spoke, but the physical presence of the stage that I found intimidating.

The floor of the Turf Club is richly carpeted in a brownish-red with an ornate, sculpted pattern. It’s getting a little frayed, but it does give the room a plush appearance.

Unfortunately, the folks who designed this room for the Plaza decided that everything in the room should be covered by this distinctive carpeting — and that included the stage.

Showing commendable, if misguided, attention to detail, the interior designer responsible for the Turf Club demanded that the pattern be fitted to the floor and the stage with the same exactitude normally reserved for space launches and timing the Kentucky Derby.

The carpet pattern goes up the sides of the stage and over its surface so that the pattern on the stage looks seamless next to the part of the carpet on the floor around the stage. The height of the

stage is sufficient to hide the portion of the carpet between the two matching section as if they'd been loomed like that.

For those who don't know, I am blind in my left eye and legally blind in my right one. So when I do actually see something, I don't have depth perception.

Normally, that's not a problem. There are visual cues that work in many situations and I have had a lifetime to learn them.

Sometimes, though....

This was one of those times. When I looked down, I couldn't see where the floor ended and the stage began. It was just about invisible to me.

I've written in the past about my long, painful war against the large wooden door of the cabinet in the kitchen that is next to the entrance and across from the microwave.

The cabinet door has a life of its own — and it appears to be dedicated to smashing my brains out. My battles with the swinging door have left me with many bumps and bruises and I have forgotten at least three Numbered Fandoms.

I fought against the cabinet door. I developed strategies and tactics that allowed me to gain supremacy over the Wooden Wounder.

The stage in the Turf Club makes the cabinet door look like a level one D&D monster next to, say, an invulnerable griffin that shoots vorpal spikes from its tail.

I didn't even see it coming the first time. It just

jumped out of nowhere. Before I could react, it was upon me and I fell forward. I barely had time to put my arms in front of me to ward off the impact as I landed on my often-injured knees.

This was not just a random clumsy fall. Oh, no. This was the opening shot in a war between Fan and Stage. (Robert Bloch's "The Eighth Stage of Fandom" has taken on a decidedly Lovecraftian cast in my embattled mind.)

The fall shook me up and I knew I'd have bruises and aches, but I also knew I had to gut it out. Core Fandom was counting on me and, as important, I couldn't afford to lose face in front of the contentious stage.

The subtlety of the second assault impressed me. Knowing I would be on guard against a straight-on fall, it sneakily stuck out one corner. I blundered into it as I walked back, the surprisingly sharp edges banging into my already sore legs.

The third and final attack by the stage took my breath away. Literally. In my excitement over the impending Corflu Welcome. I ran into the stage at full tilt and fell really hard. My jaw snapped shut, costing me a front tooth, and I felt the tendons of my left knee twanging dangerously.

I don't know how I got up and continued on with what I was supposed to be doing. It may've been pure adrenalin. Even so, I could barely stand up and it took me a while to get my legs going and I may have spaced out for a moment.

Several people, including Bill Mills and Joyce, took charge of me after that. I went where they told me on shaky legs and did what they told me with a somewhat abstracted mind.

By the time Bill had gone through his part in the intro, "Whose Fannish Line Is It, Anyway?" I was back on track.

Later, we discovered that there was a solid black stair on the opposite side of the stage. I went up and down it about forty times without incident during the rest of the convention.

Still, defense doesn't win the war. It got me three times. I may have to put on another convention there just so I can get a rematch.

Both previous Vegas Corflus had gimmicky lead-ins to the actual Official Welcome and we wanted to preserve that tradition. At one point I thought we might lead with Bill Mills singing his



Marty Cantor (*left*) and Mike Glyer (*right*) came all the way from Los Angeles to chat with each other.

“Going to Corflu Blues,” but that didn’t seem like a good idea once we’d decided to have some music-making after the brief official business.

Bill Mills made a reference to “Whose Line Is It, Anyway?” during a visit. It gave me the idea for a short parody, “Whose Fannish Line Is It, Anyway?” I cast Bill as the moderator and Joyce and I as the two comedians whom Bill would task with an improvisational challenge.

“Whose Fannish Line Is It, Anyway?” went off pretty much as planned. Bill ad libbed his part very well as he led the audience through the bogus selection of a place. No matter what anyone said, he was to pick “conventions” and then set the topic as: “Things you don’t want to hear at the start of a convention.”

Joyce and I alternated shticks. I knew at least one of the two I wrote for her would please Joyce, because it made use of one of her recently acquired scarves. She wrapped it across her face and shouted, “Death to the Free World!”

My best punchline went something like: “Welcome to the first annual meeting of the Cheryl Morgan Appreciation Society!”

After we’d each done two lines, moderator Bill changed the topic to: “Things you’d like to hear at the beginning of a convention.” That’s when Joyce stepped to the podium and launched into her introduction.

I’m unsure why, but Joyce showed a lot more nervousness than usual about both the parody and the Official Welcome. Maybe it was seeing her dream Corflu take shape in reality. Whatever it was, Joyce rushed through the “thank you,” forgetting names and moved on to the selection of the Guest of Honor.

Teresa Cochran picked a name out of the hat. She did twice as well as expected, though, and plucked two of the name slips at the same time. Joyce tossed them back into the hat and Teresa pulled another one.

Thus, Andy Hooper became this year’s Corflu Guest of Honor. Sometimes the fannish Ghods smile and this was certainly such a time. Andy has been a wonderful friend to Las Vegas Fandom, and to Joyce and me, so the Spirit of Trufandom had obviously done her work. Andy took the honor, which has rattled some previous selections, with aplomb. Nothing brings down a con like hav-

ing to listen to some GoH’s self-pity party for two days.

Bill Mills took the stage to begin the musical portion of the program. Vegnants meetings generally have some live music these days, so I thought we should incorporate that element into our Corflu. Bill battled indifferent acoustics and a very rudimentary mic set-up to do an excellent job on “Going to Corflu Blues”. He did a second, with Lenny Bailes backing him on harmonica

Teresa Cochran then joined Bill on the stage for “Four Strong Winds” and “Crying in the Rain.” They did both very well, though Tee had some stage fright until she got into the music.

Before the Official Welcome, Nic Farey had asked if he could do a couple of number. None of us really knew Nic, but our plans were to entice fans to participate in a jam. So in that spirit, we accepted. Had we known what he’d do, we would’ve been jumping for joy.

Nic has tremendous stage presence. He jumped behind the keyboard and began to rock out on “Werewolves of Fandom.” Lenny Bailes I got caught up in the moment and became his Group. Lenny played the harmonica and I did a little singing on the choruses.

The song pumped electricity into the room and Nic kept it going with “Roll Over, Bob Lichtman” on the guitar. The final lines, “Roll over Mark Plummer/And buy Claire Brialey Some Shoes!” got a round of laughter – followed by a round of applause for a great, high-energy performance.

We got another piece of good luck when Art Widner rose to sing a folk song he’d written about



Bill Mills (left) and Lenny Bailes do some nice jamming.

his trip home from the 1946 Pacificon. Hitchhiking home, he'd gotten temporarily stranded in a small town and wrote "Rock River Blues." I was supposed to go open the Smoking Consuite while Joyce got the Main Consuite going, but I just couldn't leave without hearing him. Art sang in a melodious, strong voice that belied his 90 years; a thoroughly entertaining performance.

As I rushed out of the Turf Club, I heard Art sing what he claimed is the very first filk song. Thankfully, there's an audio file available.

Andy Hooper, Carrie Root and Ken Forman joined me in opening the Smoking Consuite. Andy discoursed on the subject of the Corflu auction, which he claimed differs from auctions at all other conventions.

He sees the Corflu auction as a cooperative effort, led by the auctioneer but also involving the audience. Everyone chips in information about the items up for bid, which disseminates a lot of fan-historical knowledge.

Another thing I like about the auction is that it is a mechanism for redistributing our fanzine heritage. The original owners convey the heirlooms to those in the Core Fandom "family" that don't yet have them.

I told Andy that I would have asked him to lead the auction, except that I felt we were already working him to death. He said he would like to be auctioneer, because it would keep him interested in a year in which he didn't plan to do much, if any, bidding.

I immediately named him head auctioneer.

Jay Kinney told me he'd just watched more than 80 episodes of *The Sopranos* and *Goodfellas*. I like both of those, and mob movies in general, so we talked about it. We never quite got around to recruiting nine more friends and robbing a casino, but perhaps next time.

The suite began to fill up as folks returned from dinner. When fans get excited, they get loud, but the hotel detectives showed no interest in either consuite. It helped that there were two other, non-fan parties raging on the 23rd floor pretty much 'round the clock. The one at the end of the hall kept bringing in kegs of beer and the male and female laughter that escaped through the open door

suggested that they were enjoying things that stay in Vegas.

That night, Nic Farey's Usual Suspects Party made fanhistory. After all the cons held at the Plaza, Nic's room party was the first to be closed down for noise. He had a penthouse suite, so the complaint most likely would've had to come from one of the other penthouses. That seems strange, though, since several fans observed that a sizable orgy appeared to be in progress in the neighboring suite.

I sympathized with Nic, who really laid on the lavish hospitality every night and also for me, because Joyce and I had intended to sample his hospitality that evening.

The noise level in the Smoking Consuite climbed the decibel scale until, around 10 PM, I felt the need to retire to one of the two small side rooms to decompress. Maybe I was also a little weary. I sat for a few minutes, felt much renewed and went out among 'em again.

I went to check on the Main Consuite, where the party was going strong. Marty Cantor asked if we could move up the Chocolate Fantasy, because we'd scheduled it for midnight and his bedtime is closer to 7:30. Since he had generously offered to sponsor this treat, we moved it up an hour to 11 PM. Marty said that would make a big difference for him, so I went out to spread the word.

My own interest in the Marty Cantor Chocolate Fantasy was purely academic. I was happy to see how much fans enjoyed it, which is also a credit to James Taylor who shopped for the actual goodies.

I've always been wild about chocolate, pretty much in any form. I like milk chocolate, dark chocolate and the orange-flavored chocolate that comes wrapped in orange foil and breaks into a pile of wedges when smacked against the table.

I ate chocolate every day, often several times a day.

I got so preoccupied with Corflu Silver that I didn't eat any chocolate Wednesday or Thursday. I noticed that some troublesome skin eruptions, and my psoriasis, were noticeable better in just those two days, so I decided to eat no chocolate for two weeks and see what happened.

I am into my third chocolate-less week as I

write this and the results continue positive. I can't say it's easy giving up chocolate, but right now that seems the best short-term course. I watched from a discreet distance as the chocolate dispersed through Core Fandom. Marty really created a special brighter spot on a very festive fannish night.

Marty and I talked about the late Bill Rotsler. Marty wistfully wished it were possible for him to do as he'd done at a Corflu a few years ago, and set up a table with Rotsler illos for the taking.

I know what he means. Seeing all those drawings wasn't like having the man himself still with us, but it gave a lot of fans one more chance to get a batch of Rotsler cartoons.

I still have quite a few, because Bill was tremendously generous to me, but I guess the day will come when the last one hits the page. It's a constant reminder to me to treasure those still living.

The Astral Leauge was an off again-on again thing for Corflu Silver. First came a rush of material about the Astral Leauge and inquires about the availability of a broomstick to conduct the ritual. Then, shortly before Corflu, we got word from the UK that there wouldn't be any Astral Leauge ceremony, because none of the fans involved thought they could actually perform the feats of dexterity.

On Friday night, however, Catherine Crockett said she might try. Then she thought some more and backed out. Maybe. And then, ultimately, she decided to attempt the initiation stunt as did the Charnock kids.

Lenny said The Virtual Consuite has real fan-historic significance, a landmark Bill Mills *kvelled* over. Lenny told me about a couple of incidents involving TVC that showed its immediacy.

One occurred when fans were in the Turf Club before the Official Opening. In the chat room, James Bacon started calling out for Mark Plummer. Lenny saw the comment on the screen and turned Mark around to face the camera. The fans in the Virtual Consuite whooped it up in response. The other involved Graham Charnock, who serenaded the Virtual Consuite on his guitar.

In response to his repeated prodding about the opinions of various con-runners, I told Lenny that

the world of con-running Fandom is sort of like gay marriage. I don't want it for myself, but I honestly don't care how many gay people get married. It just doesn't affect my life and my marriage. In other words, I don't care much how they run their hobby and ask only that they don't tell me how to conduct mine.

Lenny was worried about the possibility of the world science fiction convention suing me for the use of the ordinary fanspeak word "worldcon" in a context that clearly did not refer to any aspect of the science fiction world convention. I told him that I had not used the word in print since the "friendly warning" I'd received, including no longer referring to the world science fiction convention as "the worldcon," either.

As I explained to Lenny, I am not really worried about legal action for a variety of reasons, including the lack of provable damages, the pre-existing use of the word, my readiness to remove the word from publicity for Corflu Silver, the negative PR over suing a fan who clearly meant no harm, and my financial position in a recent bankruptcy.

I added, and Lenny agreed, that Kevin Standlee seems to have a good head on his shoulder. I take his statements in *VFW* and elsewhere to mean that the matter is done. I don't think Kevin and I would agree on a lot of things, but I respect the calm way he tried to discuss the matter.

Lenny also expressed surprise that I would use the quip about "Welcome to the first annual meeting of the Cheryl Morgan Appreciation Society" in the "Whose Fannish Line Is It Anyway?" segment of the opening ceremony. It was supposed to be something you'd hate to hear at the opening of a convention.

I felt what I said was little more than a jocular jab. Surely it's no secret that the vast majority of Core Fandomites would be unhappy to find themselves at such a meeting. It also seemed pretty tame compared to Cheryl Morgan's usual poison pen effusions.

Joyce started to fade, falling asleep in her chair amid the din of the Smoking Consuite. People would've stayed another hour, I'm sure, but I closed down the festivities at about 2:30 AM.

Corflu Silver

MEMBERSHIP

Ted White
 Frank Lunney
 Joyce Scrivner
 Rob Jackson
 Murray Moore
 Stacy Scott
 Richard Coad
 Hope Leibowitz
 Pat Virzi
 Colin Hinz
 Chris Garcia
 Art Widner
 Catherine Crockett
 Don Anderson
 Jolie LaChance
 Peter Weston
 Robert Lichtman
 Joyce Katz
 Arnie Katz
 Belle Churchill
 Eric Davis
 Marty Cantor
 John Nielsen-Hall
 Audrey Nielsen-Hall
 Bill Mills
 Roxanne Mills
 Earl Kemp
 Ross Chamberlain
 Jean Weber
 Eric Lindsay
 Teresa Cochran
 James Taylor
 Graham Charnock
 Pat Charnock

Claire Brialey
 Mark Plummer
 Gary Mattingly
 Patty Peters
 Nigel Rowe
 Lloyd Penney
 Yvonne Penney
 Shelby Vick
 Jack Calvert
 Ron Bushyager
 Linda Bushyager
 Dan Steffan
 Steve Stiles
 Elaine Stiles
 Peter Sullivan
 Sue Anderson
 Jay Kinney
 Michael Dobson
 J. Kent Hastings
 Jerry Kaufman
 Tony Parker
 Judy Bemis
 Richard Brandt
 Gregg T. Trend
 Audrey Trend
 John Purcell
 Charles Levi
 Randy Byers
 Mike Glycer
 Ken Forman
 Aileen Forman
 Michael Waite *
 Bill Bowers memorial*
 Nic Farey

Bobbie Farey
 Mary Ellen Moore
 Jack Speer
 Ruth Speer
 Gordon Eklund
 Jim Young
 Bill Burns
 James Charnock
 Daniel Charnock
 Sandra Bond
 Laurraine Tutihasi *
 Elinor Busby
 Andy Hooper
 Carrie Root
 Kathryn Daugherty
 James S. Daugherty
 Bill Bodden
 John D. Berry
 Lenny Bailes
 John Hertz*
 John DeChancie
 JoHn Hardin
 Lynn Steffan
 Lise Eisenberg
 Stephanie Letterer
 Joel Zakem

* - supporting membership
 All others are attending

Chapter Four

Bring on the Program

I heard it before I saw it. The mechanical flyer made a menacing buzzing noise as it homed in on its selected target – me.

The dragon flies had disappeared from the box into which Roc Mills had packed them. Now one whizzed past my quickly ducked head.

An explosion shook the hallway!

Despite the late night, Joyce and I rose at 7:30 AM. Joyce wanted to tend to Foggy and see the feral kittens and we had to get home and back before things started to happen at the convention. I transcribed some notes, wrote a little for the web site and then left with Joyce to buy the cakes for the event scheduled for Saturday at midnight.

The nine cakes, in an assortment of flavors and sizes, weren't heavy, but most were big enough that they needed to be carried separately to keep them looking the way they did when we bought them.

When in doubt – Fan Power!

Joyce called the Main Consuite on the house phone. Soon, we had all the volunteer carriers we needed. They made an impressive train as the line of fans toting cakes snaked through the Plaza. The helpers, who included Ken Forman, Andy Hooper and Alan White, soon had the cakes safely stowed in my room.

By the time we got back, JoHn Hardin and James Taylor had done a great job, again, of setting up the morning breakfast spread in the Main Consuite. The Hotel had changed its policy on actually cooking in the rooms since Corflu Black-jack, but we tried to have as much food as we could for those who wanted to do Corflu on the cheap.

After sprucing up, I went to the meeting room to open the day's official programming. I thanked

as many people as I could remember, because so many did so much, made a couple of announcements and then we went were ready for the morning panel, "Where Are We Going and How Will We Get There?"

I guess "ready" is what they call a "figure of speech," because I thought I did a poor job as moderator. It had interesting panelists – Randy Byers, Andy Hooper, James Taylor and Mark Plummer – and some very good input from fans like Lenny Bailes in the audience, but it didn't jell. It never got past the tired paper versus pixels "debate."

To me, it seems like the debate has ended. More and more, Core Fandom revolves around electronic fanac including fanzines, listservs, web sites and the Virtual Fan Lounge. Most fanzines – and just about all those published more often than quarterly – are already distributed electronically. Even Andy and Randy have started doing .PFDs as well as a hard copy print run.

Despite the hideous cost of a paper publication, fans will still do printed fanzines for the foreseeable future. Print will be used for special publications like anthologies and a few occasional fanzines, but the electronic age is here. We might as well make the most of it.

I'd hoped that the panel would discuss how Core Fandom can preserve its unique and special subculture. Consciously or unconsciously, both the mainstream culture and the culture of All Known Fandom seek to weaken our social fabric so that it is more comfortable for them. Yet without that subculture, we're just a punch of aging partiers.

Some fans worried that Core Fandom is about to end. They cite the advancing average age of its participants, though the average age has decreased as we lose octogenarians and gain fans in their 40's and 50's.)

Andy pointed out that the hobby has simply changed from what it was. It doesn't matter whether or not there are 20-year-old neofans, because that's no longer an aspect of our Fandom.

I seconded his analysis and also observed that the mass recruiting of the 1950's and 1960's is no longer necessary. We used to take in a couple of hundred fans a year and considered ourselves lucky if two stuck around for more than a year or two. Of neofans within a year of when I entered Fandom, only Lenny Bailes, Jim Young and a couple of inactive N3Fers remain.

We're definitely getting fewer newcomers, but they're much more likely to stick. There are always worthy people to nominate for "Best New Fan" in the FAAn Awards, so it's obvious that we pick up a few good fans every year..

Core Fandom attracts more mature individuals who have already experienced many of the life-changing events like going to college, getting a first job, getting married and starting a family. Robert Lichtman pointed out that the average life-span as a fan has risen from three years to something like 20, 30 or 40 years.,,

The need to recruit more was also part of Andy's message, I agree to an extent. Thanks to the Internet, we now have the greatest accessibil-

ity since prozines ran long fanzine review columns. We should make the most of that by welcoming those who seem to want to be part of what we have. Yet I see nothing to be gained by running a campaign that presents Core Fandom as anything except exactly what it is. Recruits acquired that way will quickly learn that it wasn't what they expected and, probably, leave.

There were 19 people online during the panel, most full of comments and even a few questions. I thought it was humorously ironic that so many said, "We love paper fanzines," yet they said it in a brand new medium for fanac, the Virtual Fan Lounge.

We went upstairs after the panel and talked about topics raised by the panel. I spoke with some feeling about the romantic "pub your ish" mythos and the contemporary reality. Fandom built up a powerful, evocative myth about producing fanzines. I contributed to it myself with such articles as "The Trufannish Collating Girl," It made the vast amount of work in mimeographing, collating, stapling, addressing and mailing a little more bearable.

I think when fans wax nostalgic about paper fanzines, a lot of it is rooted in that fannish myth.



"Where Are We Going?" was the name of the morning fan panel. We didn't figure it out.

The reality is that the production of a print fanzine and an electronic one differs almost exclusively in the distribution method. Both are probably prepared with the same word processing/DTP software. The difference is that the editor of the electronic fanzine then dispatches it to efanzines.com and direct email recipients while the paper fanzine editor takes it to the copy shop where someone (for a price) runs off, collates and staples it.

That doesn't mean I don't love printed fanzines, because I certainly do. It's damn hard to balance my desktop computer on my lap when I want to read a fanzine in the bathroom.

My love just has a practical side; I know that Core Fandom would drop dead if it had to depend on hard copy fanzines exclusively. And I have found it better, in the words of the R&B classic, to "love the one you're with" rather than pine for what cannot be.

Shelby Vick, Teresa Cochran, Joyce and I went to the Plaza's buffet for lunch. It wasn't bad, but it was perceptibly worse than when Joyce, the Cochran-Taylors and I tested it a month or so earlier.

As we left the buffet, I saw Robert Lichtman having a quiet meal and felt a little bad. Had we known he was going to go eat when we did, we would surely have tried to disrupt his solitude.

When we went back upstairs, the keys to the

Smoking Consuite had failed again. I just headed to the desk and got three more. Back at the Smoking Consuite, two of the doors didn't work with any of the three cards. The final key wouldn't open the main entrance or the one to Joyce and my room, but it did unlock the third door. That meant we were going to be a pain to Shelby and JoHn, who bunked in that room..

Nic Farey had shown me his daily slide shows of Corflu Silver photos on Thursday and Friday. When I asked about getting a set, with a view toward this con report, he offered to cut a disk -- if I could obtain one for him.

Since I visited my office each morning of the con; nothing could've been easier. I saw Nic before the afternoon programming began and gave him two writable CDs and a jewel box case to protect them.

The noontime party started with Ross Chamberlain, Earl Kemp, Joyce and me. Soon, Teresa Cochran, Ted White, Dan Steffan and Bill & Roc Mills joined to make it a real mid-day party.

More quirks of the hotel came to light when we compared notes about the strange little alarm clock radios found in each room. Ted said his went off at 7 AM and Joyce and I had a similar experience. I ended up pulling the plug to stifle it.

Bill and Roc had an even stranger story of runaway electronics. Their television suddenly sprang to life in the wee hours and they were awakened by cartoon music.



Andy Hooper's "The Price of Pugwash," his latest play, premiered on Saturday afternoon.

The capper was Tee's account of how the indomitable James Taylor went into the bathroom in the Main Consuite – and could not get out again when the handle disintegrated.

Poor James banged on the door for quite a while until the knocks could be heard above the din of fannish chatter. They did eventually go to check on the noise and discovered James' predicament.

I believe it was Pat Versi who began the rescue by sliding a screwdriver under the door. With some cooperation from the fans on the other side of the door, James got the portal off its hinges and re-emerged into the comparative normalcy of the Main Consuite.

JoHn Hardin and I toted a bunch of items from the consuites to the Turf Club for the auction. Along the way, we ran into Sandra Bond and Rob Jackson. The four of us talked about the coming trivia contest. I think Rob had a quiz of his own he wanted to substitute for the one we prepared, but that wasn't a practical suggestion at that point.

First up in the afternoon was the Big Pond Trivia Showdown. This was my attempt to bring something new to the popular, but somewhat repetitive, trivia contests. We created US and UK teams and asked each to answer questions about the other team's Fandom.

Mike Glyer, Robert Lichtman, Ted, White and Andy Hooper played for the USA against Sandra Bond, Nic Farey, Rob Jackson and Mark Plummer. Ken Forman formulated the questions based on several fanhistories and served as quizmaster.

These trivia battles are all in good fun, so I wouldn't want to make the fact that Ken was as loopy as I have ever seen him seem more important than it really was. True, he did ask "Who won TAFF in 1956?" once more than appropriate and he did seem to lose the thread of what was happening a time or two. Still, Ken always carries this sort of thing off adversity with such infectious good humor that no one worried about it much.

The only sour note was a little spat between Ken and Ted, an honest misunderstanding that was eventually bridged. Ken made a mistake and tried to correct it. Ted didn't understand the nature of the correction and felt he'd lost a rightful turn. The

whole thing was a transient flare-up; I didn't detect any echoes during the rest of the weekend.

Andy Hooper's new play, "The Price of Pugwash," concerned the unraveling of an old hoax. The wheels-within-wheels story was suitably complex, yet fairly easy to follow because of the play's unusual format.

The story unfolds through exchanges of emails among the characters, who sat in a line facing the audience. The overall affect was like the dramatized audio books that Bill Mills does so well.

Joyce had to miss most of it. Her legs began bothering her so much that she had to leave the Turf Club and try to subdue the pain. I went to find Joyce, who sat in the area just outside the Turf Club and helped her back upstairs,

Secure in the knowledge that Andy Hooper (head auctioneer), Ken Forman (assistant auctioneer) and Jolie LaChance (cashier and record keeper) would do a great job on the auction, I decided to stay with Joyce upstairs, try to make her comfortable and keep her company.

I'd thought the auction might be a dud for Corflu Silver, because there was almost nothing to sell. Then the generosity of fans kicked in and we suddenly had a very nice selection. I think we eventually brought in about four times as my pessimistic estimate, which really helped offset some of the experiences still awaiting payment.

While most of the fans pored over such tasty items as the 1957 Pacific program book and two copies of *Warhoon* 28, I sat in on an epic dialogue between Ted White, ace horticulturist, and Joyce Katz, a woman who has killed a rubber plant.

Ted gave a lot of good advice, but I still fear for the safety of any plants under Joyce's dominion. She doesn't get along with flora, but she's terrific with fauna. Between the gang of cats and the flocks of birds, she has plenty of animal followers.

Frank Lunney, Ted and I delved into the dizzying plummet of the real estate market. Las Vegas leads the nation in foreclosures and it is extremely hard to sell a house, so the sudden drop in housing values is constantly in the news.

Ted said that he was glad to see things go the opposite way for a change. We explained that a



Andy Hooper (right) headed the auction effort, supported by Ken Forman and Jolie LaChance.

rise in real estate values brings with it a property tax increase. The steep rise makes it hard for people on fixed incomes.

Nic, Shelby, Tee and drifted into conversation about the trivia contest. Ken Forman took the ribbing good-naturedly and admitted that he had not exceeded his expectations as quizmaster. He said that he wasn't going to do any more trivia contests, which I think is a shame. He did very well with the trivia contest at Corflu Blackjack and, besides, he already has one good question nailed down: Who won TAFF in 1956?

Nic said he hadn't expected to successfully answer any questions. I explained that he was there as Sandra's impediment. Otherwise she'd have killed the American team. Actually, Nic got about half of the questions right, which makes him one of the best trivia players in that game who wasn't Sandra Bond.

I went to see what was happening in the Main Consuite and ran into Scott and Luba Anderson, two of my closest friends among the Vegnants. Though they'd been fans for a decade, Corflu and Core Fandom are still pretty much of a mystery to them.

They are planning to put on a convention called Xanadu in Las Vegas in May, 2009. To publicize it and because they are kind and giving, they decided to sponsor a pizza party on behalf of Xanadu. They had already ordered 10, giant pizzas when I saw them and expected delivery to the con-

suite by a little after 6 PM, pretty much what we promised.

We'd done a pizza fest at Corflu Vegas, which had about a dozen more fans than Corflu Silver. We'd served seven one-topping pizzas. The Andersons sprang for ten multi-topping large pizzas.

That should've been enough, but it wasn't. Maybe more people wanted pizza this time.. In any case, it ran out rather quickly as fans descended on the defenseless pizzas and chewed through them like termites through a fanzine collection.

There was still pizza when I went to see how things were going in the Main Consuite. I took two slices and there was still most of a pizza remaining.

Hope Leibowitz was whining about why fans buy pizza when she doesn't like it. Taking into account my chocolate fast, my dieting and my finicky taste in food, I am sure I could've matched her bleat for bleat if I'd wanted to be an insufferable wet blanket, too.

Joyce pointed out that the pizza was a *gift* from Scott and Lubov, something over and above what we'd planned to serve. Joyce also observed that there was a full spread with many other choices.

Ten minutes later, Linda Bushyager steamed up to Joyce with some nonsense about Joyce having called Hope "incompetent." Based on some of the communications Joyce received from her during the year, the label "incompetent" might not be that far a reach, but Joyce didn't call Hope that. I

believe she preferred the term “bitch.”

Even if it had been true, Linda’s wrath was absolutely over the line and indefensible. Joyce told her about the situation. Linda played the “well, Hope says this” game. I don’t blame Linda coming to the defense of a friend she thought injured, but it would’ve been better if she had waited about ten more minutes to consider before she jumped down Joyce’s throat.

Joyce became so agitated that she had a heart episode and had to take two Nitro pills and sit quietly. I had to restrain myself from telling Linda what I thought of her meddling.

John D. Berry spoke with genuine passion about the use of type in fanzines with Ted and Lenny Bailes. John has very strongly held beliefs about the interaction of text and graphics with which Ted and Lenny did not entirely agree.

John felt that having art cut into a one column layout hurt readability. He’s right, of course. I mentioned that, as a magazine guy, it is sometimes reasonable to sacrifice some readability in exchange for greater impact..

Steve told everyone about a Rich Brown memorial that his daughter Alicia hopes to hold over the July 4th weekend. Rich’s friends and relations plan to get together and hold a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* marathon, rich’s all-time favorite show. It’s a very apt tribute, one that would’ve pleased rich.

Passage through Fandom, as through life, is marked by special events or occurrences. Some call them “tent poles,” others “milestones,” but the concept is the same. We chart our course through life (and Fandom) based on memorable incidents that have a deep significance for us even if they might not appear so major to others.

I hit one of those milestones at the Saturday night party. Let me explain...

When I was a young fan and newish member of the Fanoclasts in the mid-1960’s, I quickly learned the phrase, “Want to make a BNF happy?”

I became attentive to this phrase, for it meant that one of the club’s unquestioned stars desired a small favor, usually fetching a soft drink.

I did it gladly. I was young and spry and many of them were oldsters in their 20s or even 30s. It seemed only just to relieve those fannish titans of such minor tasks so they could husband their ener-

gies for the crifanac to come.

The years passed, I gafiated, we moved to Las Vegas and then I returned. Joyce and I contacted SNAFFU and began hosting Las Vegrants. We modeled the club on the Fanoclasts and the Brooklyn Insurgents and I passed on my knowledge of those club’s customs to the new aggregation.

Along with “I take your seat,” and other prime bits of fannish knowledge, I taught them the meaning of “Want to make a BNF happy?” (Ken Forman had a completely different concept at first, but he quickly fell in with the prevailing denotation.)

I noticed, after a while, that my comrades in craziness began to look forward eagerly to he chance to “Make a BNF happy.” As the club grew and evolved, I found myself more and more on the receiving end of this deference. My Vegrants family takes mighty good care of the ol’ Kingfish and I’m perpetually grateful for their solicitude. In this enclave, I had reached a position of eminence comparable to those Fanoclastic Fanghods.

And yet, it is one thing to spend an evening with your local fan family and another to spend that time in the company of The Group Mind (or the Virtual Fan Club, as I sometimes call it.) These are the some of the greatest fans currently walking the earth, many of them with fannish credentials far superior to my modest attainments.

As the conversations bounced back and forth off the walls, Ted White stood up and announced his intention to visit the Smoking Consuite’s small refrigerator.

“Say, Ted,” I began, perhaps a little haltingly. “Wanna make a BNF happy?”

“Sure,” said the fan who pilots the Group Mind through the angry sea of con-runners, costumers, furry fans, gamers and other folks who don’t entirely “get” Core Fandom.

Ted White brought me a Diet Coke. (In the faan fiction version, Ted brought me a Pepsi, but we are dealing with reality here.)

And it was the best-tasting Diet Coke (with no caffeine) I’d ever tasted.

The cakes didn’t fly off the table as fast as the pizza, but they vanished soon enough. But don’t blame me; I’d been staying away from chocolate during the con.

We only made it to 1:30 AM. I guess I’m wearing down a little.

Chapter Five

Ear, Drink & Be Fannish

The dark figure suddenly lurched out of the shadows into the kaleidoscopic multicolored Vegas night.

I froze, an expression of surprise and horror spread across my sensitive fannish face. “You!” I said with more fortitude than I felt. “What do you want here?”

“Write a Corflu Report, Katz,” the husky voice challenged. “Write it if you dare!”

“Nothing can stop the Duke of Earl!” I said as I looked directly into his red-rimmed, boring eyes. Well, I might’ve said something about the 2008 FAAn Awards, but memory is such a subjective thing. I also may have stared at his belt buckle.

I gasped as he pulled the steel blue .38 out of his jacket.

After making the round trip to the LaunchPad and back, we went to the Main Consuite, where Tee and James were doing a great job with the breakfast food,

Marty Cantor, looking a little wan, came to the suite. It was the first time I’d seen him since the Chocolate Fantasy on Friday.

Marty explained that he and John DeChancie stopped at a fast food place in Baker, California, and had both gotten sick. Marty spent most of his time in Las Vegas recuperating while the somewhat heartier DeChancie managed to see more of the con, though I’d noticed he looked pained a lot of the time. Now I knew why.

John D. Berry also contracted a stomach malady, widely believed to result from eating sushi at a barbeque restaurant

The next person met in the Main Consuite was Murray Moore, who’d run the 2008 FAAn Awards balloting and would announce the winners at the banquet. We discussed the presentation, which I hoped would include the naming of high finishers as well as the top placers in each category.



Lenny Bailes and James Taylor sat with me at the banquet.

That out of the way, I went to fetch the FAAn Awards certificates – another fantastic job by Brad Foster – while Joyce opened the Smoking Consuite.

We’d dispensed with a dais at the banquet and instead planed to sit at a table near the podium. I invited several fans, mostly those who’d worked the hardest on the con or who had a special meaning for us, to sit at the table. (In actual fact, several fans took seats meant for others, but everyone was in such a good mood that there wasn’t even a whisper of complaint from the unseated.)

It’s never too early for a party at Corflu, proven again on Sunday morning before the banquet. Fans, led by Bill Mills and Tee Cochran, filtered into the Smoking Consuite. Among them was Nic Farey, who told us that his son would be meeting him in town and that they were headed for a big Vegas show that night.

When I checked back at the Main Consuite, there were plenty of fans enjoying a pre-banquet party, too. I joined a conversation with Robert Lichtman, Jay Kinney and Lenny Bailes, where the main subject was the sudden, worrisome worsening of Andy Hooper’s eye problems.

Andy has suffered from retinopathy, but it suddenly got much more severe on Saturday. He gutted his way through the play and the auction and was preparing to do the same with his Guest of Honor speech at the banquet. Knowing the condition, since Joyce had had a very severe attack a few years back, I could hardly believe how well Andy handled things.

There was a small glitch regarding the banquet, but Joyce took care of it so smoothly that no one really knew about it. The program listed the banquet as 11:30, but hotel catering was told 11:00.

Joyce called and got them to re-set their schedule, delaying a half-hour. The banquet staff didn't completely follow this agreement, because staff communications are no longer what they should be at the Plaza, but they pushed back the starting time enough to prevent 84 fans from getting over-warmed food. On the good side, there was much less of a crush at the entrance to the banquet room, the Turf Club, than at many previous Corflus.

I sat at the head table with Lenny on my left and Ted on my right, my oldest friend in the world and my fannish mentor, and Joyce directly across from me, . And the rest of the table wasn't too shabby, either: Robert Lichtman, Teresa Cochran, James Taylor, Shelby Vick and Jack Speer.

Lenny told us about *The Golden Compass*, a book and movie in which each person's soul is represented by an external avatar that sits on their shoulder. It sounded intriguing, so I'm planned to see the film.

It made me think about the external appendage that many fans are growing: the laptop computer. There seem to be a lot more of these ever-useful machines at Corflu now than at the last one I attended four years earlier.

It's kind of great, actually. I love it when someone (Nic Farey) zooms up to me, flips open his laptop and shows me a slide show of the previous day's Corflu activities, or someone shares a web suite or an audio clip. Like the Virtual Consuite, the laptops add a wrinkle to Corflu and, in a sense, reveals something about the person based on what he or she decides is worth sharing.

After Joyce welcomed the fans, I thanked some

of the many who helped Corflu and introduced Murray Moore. Murray had quite a lot to say and said it fairly well, but it seemed off-topic. He said some perceptive things, like the way attending more Corflus is a good way to increase your enjoyment of Fandom, but I would've rather he concentrated on the awards.

As it was, he didn't mention the other high finishers in each category, some of which were within points of topping one of the lists, and he went on a little long. Murray did a great job of administering the FAAn Awards and certainly deserves his moment of recognition for all his excellent work. But I believe the only long speech should come from the Guest of Honor.

I won the 2008 FAAn Awards for "Best Fan-writer" and "Number One Fan Face," which would've made Corflu for me even if there weren't a thousand other reasons to love it. I'd planned to say a few words after receiving the "Fan Face" certificate, but I contented myself with a short, simple expression of my appreciation for the fans' support.

Then, thanks to a spontaneous grassroots uprising, led by the folks in the Virtual Consuite, Bill Mills received a certificate of appreciation.

Curt Phillips spearheaded the idea and, with some Saturday phone calls, lassoed some help in Vegas to get it together. Most of those active in TVL signed the certificate. It would be an understatement to say that this gesture moved Bill.

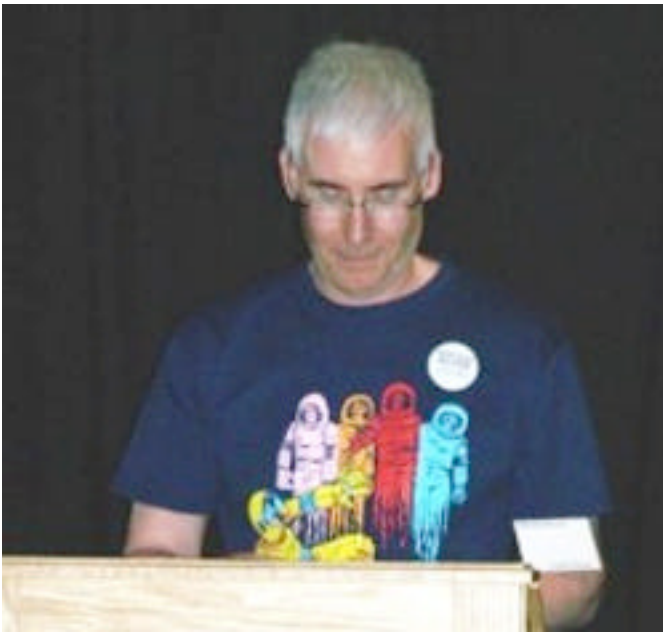
Ted White conducted the election of the fwa Past President with charm, wit and commendable brevity. We were running long at that point and Ted, thank goodness, realized it and styled his remarks accordingly.

Someone nominated Ken Forman. "I have to vote for him, I sleep with him," Aileen called from her table.

"Isn't that compounding the problem?" I shot back.

Dan Steffan won the honor in a four-way race. It is overdue and I think Dan is a fine president in the great fwa tradition.

I know Andy Hooper was disappointed that his eye problem prevented him from doing the speech he'd anticipated, but his easy-going manner, forth-



Murray Moore announced the first place finishers in each of the seven categories of the 2008 FAAn Awards,

rightness helped him carry off the spot with class. I've known Andy for about 18 years and he continues to rise in my estimation.

Andy is not a good fan.

Andy Hooper is a *great* fan. He is the peer of the BNFs of yore. Fans who, understandably, mourn their passing should also exult in Andy's fine fannish career.

.My favorite line from Andy's speech: "We'd rather be here being bored by you than be happy and excited without you here." My only quibble is that I seldom get bored when in the presence of so many fine friends.

The banquet wrapped with the customary presentation of the desire to host the next Corflu. Randy Byers had stepped forward right before the con and everyone welcomed the news that he would be helming Corflu in Seattle in 2009.

Randy claimed he was "just a figurehead," but that's just his modesty. He seems to have a sense of what's needed and I anticipate my return to Seattle, scene of the enjoyable Corflatch.

The out-going Corflu Chairman had some advice for her successor, "Just look frightened and pathetic and someone will do it for you," said Joyce, summing up her con-running philosophy. You know, for someone "frightened and pathetic," she did a tremendous job on Corflu Silver. That

she had some very good helpers should not obscure her extensive contributions. Her coolness under pressure kept little incidents from overwhelming the con, which resulted in fans shrugging off the inevitable glitches and having a great time.

Back in the Smoking Consuite, there was much talk about the significance and impact of Virtual Consuite. Lenny and Bill were friends again, Actually, I think their brief dust-up led to them becoming even better friends.

I'd guess that they will be good friends who occasionally have to rein in each other..

Not unlike Bill and me,
Or Lenny and me.

Lenny was interested in the online transcript. I told him that if I knew Bill, he would be working on it like a madman. "He's a force of nature." Perfectionist.

Tee and Shelby mused about Fandom as family. Shelby lauded the diversity that we embody in the group. Core Fandom is composed of people who have different views on many subjects, but who show overall acceptance of each other.

Ted White got into an examination of some "common knowledge of the history of comic books." Ted challenged Bob Kane's right to the credit for creating and doing Batman. Ted put forward quite a phalanx of facts that suggest that a shop did the art on assignment from Kane, for which he took the largest slice of the money and virtually all the credit.

Nic Farey encouraged Joyce and me to come to that evening's party in his penthouse. Unfortunately, both elevators leading to the room stopped working and Joyce can't climb all those stairs. I really hated to decline the invitation, but Nic was very understanding.

Andy Hooper and Ted White did a post mortem on the play. Andy proclaimed it the last part of a trilogy. He vowed that the next one will be more action-oriented.

The party in the Smoking Consuite rocked on until about 2:30, when Joyce and I sent everyone left into the night with our warmest wishes and greatest thanks.

Chapter Six

The Party Departs

I cleared my throat. The others looked at me, expectantly. I scanned the room with my one good eye and, convinced I had their full attention, got ready to make the announcement I knew would blast shockwaves through Core Fandom.

"I know," I said. I paused for effect, not insensitive to the drama of the situation.

"What, Arnie, what?" they chorused.

"I know the fan who is behind all these threats," I told them.

"You mean at the beginning of each chapter?" asked John D. Berry.

"Yes," I replied. "He has stalked me through every page of this con report, threatening my safety, even my life, to get me to abandon this epic-length con report."

They leaned forward. No one wanted to miss a word of the denouement.

"The fan responsible is..."



Jack Speer has had some health problems this year, but everyone was glad to see him at Corflu.

The lights went out.

Someone screamed.

As usually, we went back to the LaunchPad very early on Monday morning, but this time we loaded up the car with the first round of stuff from the Smoking Consuite and our room. The Plaza may have been decaying before our eyes, but all the rooms were full, so the front desk wasn't feeling very generous about extending the check-out time past noon.

After a stop at the cashier's cage to change Joyce's small bills into larger denominations, we went to the Smoking Consuite to continue the packing. As often happens at Corflu, fans began to collect in the suite and proclaimed a morning party.

Nic Farey gave me the two disks back, this time full of his terrific photos. He and I talked about an article he has in mind that seems right for VFW. It'll appear in #107.

We also talked about our great mutual friend, rich brown. The reminiscences are both the joy and despair of Corflu. I don't like dwelling on the past when the future still beckons, but by the same token, it is impossible for me not to think of rich and Terry and WAW and BoSh and Chuch and LeeH and Burbee and Rotsler and all the others I miss so much, especially at Corflu.

As Lenny left for his trip home, he turned back at the door and said: "This was a really good Corflu, maybe the best ever!" He thus confirmed his place in my fannish heart.

The Formans had to start their trek back to Flippin, Ark on Monday morning due to the demands of work. Before they left, Aileen thoughtfully moved our car into the space hers had just vacated so the line of fannish hodcarriers could more easily fill it with Corflu Silver stuff. It really

helped cut down the loading time, which enabled Joyce and I to make a second round trip quickly enough to leave time for a third.

Joyce brought Frank Lunney, Shelby Vick, Ted White and I to the LaunchPad, along with a lot of boxes. Leaving me to charm and entertain our three guests – maybe not the right tool for the job on my sixth day of nonstop fanac – she roared off in the direction of the Plaza for a *fourth* pick-up at the Plaza. Bill Mills, who'd left the con a little earlier, came over, too.

We talked about many things, sitting there in the living room. We talked of old loves, past cons and the Virtual Consuite.

About 1:00 pm, when I'd just started to get worried about how long the fourth trip was taking Joyce, she and Teresa arrived. The party turned into a work gang, so it didn't take long to put some stuff into the garage and the rest in the dining room for later action.

The new arrivals told us that Tee had ridden home with Joyce to keep her awake. Adrenalin had begun to ebb and she could hardly hold up her head.

Bill Mills evidently had a good time at Corflu, brief flares of frustration notwithstanding. "It was a fanboy's dream," he confessed..

James Taylor joined the group and Bill went to rejoin his wife at home.

The final Corflu Silver Survivors Dinner was at Hush Puppies, a nearby restaurant that Scott Anderson recommended. The SNAFFood dinner

Here are *left to right*) Ted White, Frank Lunney and Jay Kinney enjoying one of those great conversations.



Pat Virzi, who hosted 2007's Corflu Quire, helped Corflu Silver in so many ways.

series had two meals there and we have gone back several times.

Often, large parties have problems getting seated at popular restaurants – and Hush Puppies is always packed. What actually happened, though, is that we breezed through because we were a party of seven and they gave us our own room!

I always enjoy Hush Puppies' ribs, but in I enjoyed them even more than usual among so many good friends. The knowledge that I wouldn't see Frank and Ted for at least a year and not see Shelby for longer than that added to the importance of the dinner for me. And, no, I didn't burden anyone with those melancholy thoughts.

Hush Puppies specializes in Southern cuisine, with an emphasis on catfish, ribs and steak. When three of the party ordered Fiddlers, someone said it sounded like a Batman villain.

"I don't read that stuff," I said with feigned disdain. "I'm against comic book violins!."

Frank Lunney picked up the check. Joyce and I put up a little fight, but we were persuaded to accept the generosity.

All too soon, the dinner ended and Frank and Ted began their home-bound trips

Joyce, Shelby and I were all exhausted and didn't stay up much past Frank and Ted's departure.

Chapter Seven

The Last Embers

Tuesday is a little hazy in my recollection and in my notes. Frankly, I did very little but sleep and write a few things for ProWrestlingDaily.com. Joyce and Shelby were both knocked out and spent the day quietly recuperating until the ever-helpful Bill Mills took Shelby to the airport for his late night flight.

I want to say what a thrill and a pleasure it was to have so many of you come to Las Vegas for Corflu Silver. I wish even more of you had been able to make the journey, but I'm glad so many got to participate vicariously using The Virtual Con-suite.

The lights came back as suddenly as they had gone. I looked around and realized that the scream had come from me.

I looked around the room. The brief blackout had frozen everyone. The renewed light revealed them in various attitudes of fright and surprise (except for one who had taken the opportunity to Cop a Feel.)

Every face turned toward me, more bewildered than ever.

"I know the identity of the person behind the threats and attacks," I said as I turned slowly and surveyed them with my one working eye.

"Tell us! Tell us!" They chorused as one.

"In good time, Trufen, in good time," I countered, warming to my role as the Great Defective.

I passed back and forth a little. It had worked for Basil Rathbone, why not me?

"It is purely a matter of deductive reasoning," I began. Would stroking my imaginary beard be too much? Probably, "There is only one person who knew my exact whereabouts on each occasion. There is only one person with the cunning to set these traps and snares.

"The name of the person trying to stop me

from writing this con report is..."

"Yes? Yes?" they cried, straining forward to hear the denouement.

"Me!"

"You?"

"Yes, me!" I said, "It was all a figment of my wild fannish id. Something unfannish deep inside me wanted me to forget about writing a con report and tried to stop me with menacing, though not actually successful, attacks."

"You did it?"

"But my fannish spirit triumphed over even this insidious internal assault.

"It must be true," said a sage BNF. "I just read it in a fanzine."

And I hope you enjoyed reading this, too. Please let me know if you liked it.

-- Arnie Katz
(4/21/08)

Bill Mills Audio of the Opening Ceremonies
<http://lasvegrants.com/>

Peter Sullivan's Virtual Tucker Hotel
<http://efanzines.com/VTH/index.htm>
A fanzine about the Virtual Fan Lounge

Bill Mills photos
<http://lasvegrants.com/>

Gary Mattingly photos
<http://tinyurl.com/6m2xwz>

Alan White photos: <http://web.mac.com/podmogul/iWeb/Cineholics%20Cultcast/Corflu%20Album.html>
or <http://tinyurl.com/43va6q>

