

THE COMPACT ELLA PARKER



The Compact Ella Parker

by Ella Parker

Edited by Rob Hansen

Copyright © 1959-1972 The Estate of Ella Parker

Foreword, editorial notes and commentary, and arrangement of this collection copyright © 2022 Rob Hansen.

Ansible Editions ebook first published in August 2022. Updated February 2025 to add “Afterword: The Secret Life of Ella Parker”.

Cover: artwork by Atom (Arthur Thomson) from the cover of *Compact* #1 (March 1963) edited by Ella Parker.

Ebook ISBN 978-1-913451-89-9

Ansible Editions

94 London Road, Reading, England, RG1 5AU

ae.ansible.uk

This free ebook is exclusive to the unofficial TAFF website at taff.org.uk. If you enjoy reading it, a donation to TAFF is a fine way to express your appreciation.

Contents

[Title Page](#)

[Foreword: Rob Hansen](#)

[Before *The Harpy Stateside*](#)

[January 1960: London Brawling](#)

[February 1960: Joy Clarke](#)

[March 1960: Introducing SFCoL](#)

[April 1960: Countdown to Eastercon](#)

[April 1960: Not an Eastercon Report](#)

[April 1960: Hello and Farewell, Don Ford](#)

[July 1960: The Main Event](#)

[August 1960: Slow Burn](#)

[September 1960: Late Summer Madness](#)

[September 1960: BSFA](#)

[November 1960: Hyde Parker](#)

[March 1961: The BSFA Tug of War](#)

[March 1961: We Had a Convention!](#)

[April 1961: A West Kilburn Microcon](#)

[April 1961: On APAs](#)

[July 1961: Autobiography](#)

[After *The Harpy Stateside*](#)

[January 1962: Back in Blighty](#)

[January 1962: On Books](#)

[February 1962: John Glenn](#)

[April 1962: Conventional Wisdom](#)

[March 1963: The Big Move](#)
[March 1963: On the Matter of TAFF](#)
[March 1963: Through New Eyes](#)
[June 1963: Light and Dark](#)
[September 1963: Duperrollinatomsfcolellaparkerdocious](#)
[October 1963: At Fifty Eight in Sixty Three](#)
[November 1963: JFK](#)
[December 1963: Appreciating Atom](#)
[April 1964: The Bard, the Harp, and the Eastercon](#)
[April 1964: Hwyl Jr](#)
[June 1964: Opinions](#)
[1972: Lowdown on Liftoff](#)

[Remembering Ella](#)
[*Prolapse Memories*](#)
[William Dunbar House](#)
[Her Secret Vice](#)
[Afterword: The Secret Life of Ella Parker](#)
[Images and Links](#)

Foreword

Rob Hansen

For those of you not already in the know, my name: Ella Anderson Parker. I came into fandom just three weeks before Easter in 1958; which makes it easy for me to keep track of my fannish birthday, should I want to for any reason. I have edited and published a genzine, *Orion*, since 1959, on an irregular schedule. Published the *Atom Anthology*, have attended all British Conventions since, including the one in '58. Attended the SEACON in 1961, and currently belong to only two organisations (if you discount OMPA): The Science Fiction Club of London, and The British Science Fiction Association. I am, in fact, a founder-member of both these bodies.

Maybe I should explain my reasons for titling my OMPAazine as I have. *Compact* is the name of a soap-opera type programme on British TV. It is a mushy look at life in an office, though no-one does any work that I can see, of a monthly “slick” woman’s magazine. It is renowned for the gossip that goes on eternally. So as I, if I’m renowned for anything at all, am renowned for my habit of talking endlessly about things of no importance, it seemed to be just the title for me.

– Ella Parker, *Compact* #1 (March 1963)

OMPA – the Off-trails Magazine Publishers Association – was an Amateur Press Association, UK fandom’s first. Since she doesn’t mention it above it may be that Ella hadn’t noticed that “OMPA” appeared in the name of her zine – though cover artist Atom certainly had – but from the second issue onwards this was sometimes rendered as *cOMPAct* in its pages. Parker began publishing fanzines when, with assistance from Bobbie Wild and Sandra Hall, she put out *Orion* #21 in February 1959, having taken over the title from previous editor Paul Enever.

Parker and her brother Fred, who had both been raised in a Scottish orphanage, were at this point living at 151 Canterbury Road in London’s Kilburn. The site of many a fannish gathering, it was better known in fandom as “The Penitentiary”. It’s been suggested that the origins of this name are obscure, but it’s not that difficult to unpack. Parker pens are a venerable brand of fountain pen over here, so “Parker’s Pen” as a name for

Ella's home is a pretty obvious bit of wordplay. And since, among other things, "pen" is short for "penitentiary"...

Usually described by visitors as a flat, and sometimes by Ella as her house, the original Penitentiary was located over a butcher's shop and appears to have actually been a two-storey maisonette. There's a detailed description of the place in the Bruce Burn appreciation of Ella Parker at the end of this volume. Oddly, even after the Parkers had moved out and it was boarded up and scheduled for demolition, the old Pen had one last role to play in the story of British fandom, as Peter Weston explained:

One weekend Cliff [*Teague, a fellow member of the Brum group*] thought he'd drop in on one of Ella Parker's meetings in London. Somehow he'd found her address in a magazine – but it was out of date. He hitched down and found only an empty, derelict property. Ella had been rehoused in a tower block of flats. Undeterred, he broke in. Inside he found several fanzines which had arrived after Ella's departure; they were *Inside* (Jon White), and *New Frontiers* (Norm Metcalf). Both were half-size sercon zines which, when he gave them to me back in Birmingham, were to have a tremendous influence on my own fanac and were prime factors shaping my early *Zenith*.

[*Ken Cheslin's Les Spinge*] made me realise that quite ordinary-looking people could aspire to bring out a magazine, while *Inside* and *New Frontiers* gave me a target to aim for. They, and Damon Knight's *In Search of Wonder*. [1]

Zenith would later be renamed *Speculation* and go on to be the leading UK fanzine of the 1960s. This would result in Peter Weston being the decade's most well known UK fan. The most well known, but not the most important. In my opinion that title unequivocally belongs to Ella Parker. She published fanzines, organised conventions, hosted meetings and parties in her home, was in at the birth of the British Science Fiction Association (she was member #17) and at various times its Secretary and editor of *Vector*, chaired the second UK Worldcon, and was the focal point around which London fandom revolved for much of the decade. For all this and more Ron Bennett pushed for her to be the first recipient of the Doc Weir Award. That she never won it then or in subsequent years seems amazing now. It's possible that Ella's blunt, unadorned, and often undiplomatic way of expressing her opinions on fannish and other matters of the day counted against her. This would be unremarkable now but got adverse reactions from some locals and from antipodean fans in particular,

people such as John Baxter and Mike Hinge (see *The Harpy Stateside*), who at that time may not have been used to women being so assertive. Another reminder that the past is a different country, and that most of us are better people now.

When Dave Langford first suggested this collection I wasn't sure that Ella – never the most prolific of fanwriters – had written enough to warrant such a volume but, happily, I was wrong. Taken together, the pieces she produced are the best account that we have of London fandom as it was in the first half of the 1960s. They also offer an interesting look into the larger fannish politics and convention issues of that period.

In 1961, Ella attended that year's Worldcon in Seattle and spent several weeks travelling through the USA. *The Harpy Stateside*, an account of that trip by her and others, is available as an Ansible Editions ebook. That being so and this being, essentially, a companion volume, the material herein has been gathered together under the headings “Before The Harpy Stateside” and “After The Harpy Stateside”. I've included a couple of pieces by her great friend Arthur “Atom” Thomson as Appendices for reasons that I hope will be obvious.

As always, most of the pieces reprinted herein have been lightly edited, many retitled, and a few cobbled together from shorter items. My thanks to Pat Charnock for heroic proofreading, and to Dave Langford for turning all this into a book as well as for his usual wise advice.

Rob Hansen, August 2022

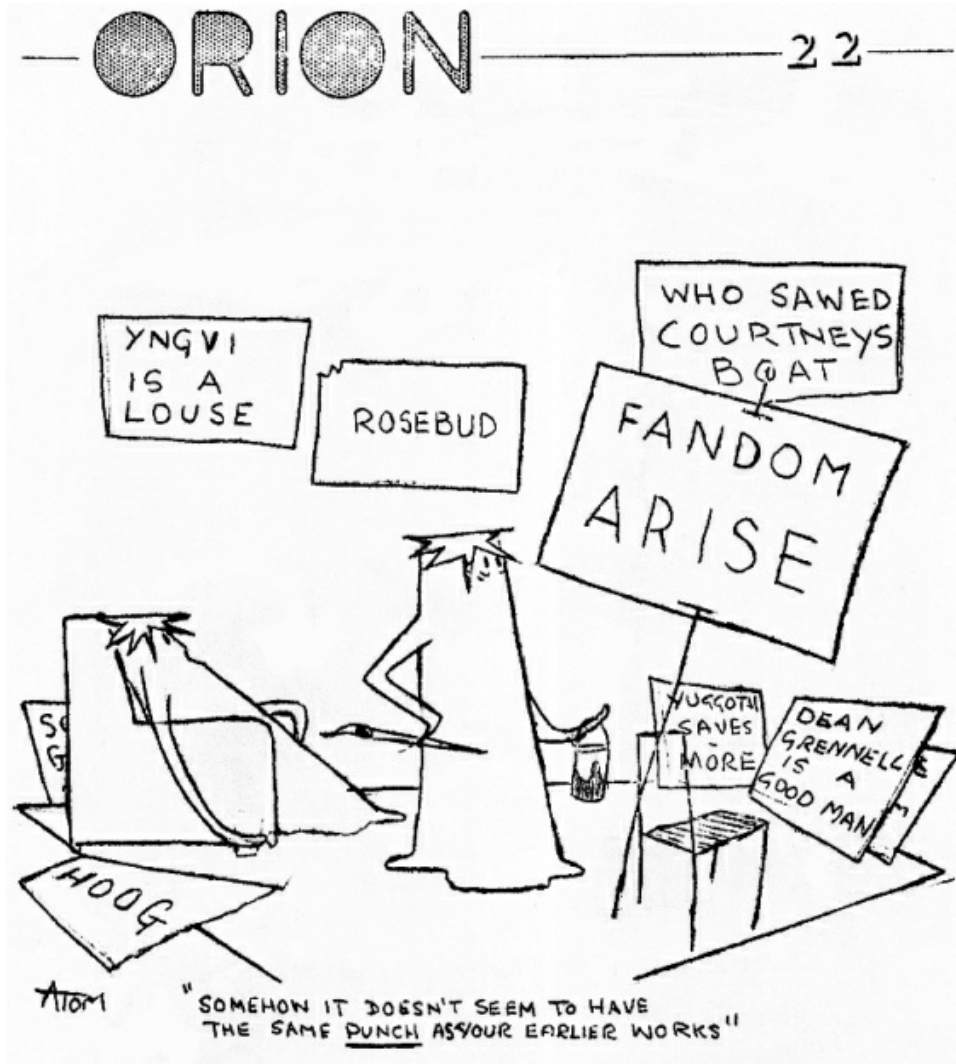
Update

Since this volume was assembled, and the Foreword written, new information has come to light overturning what was always believed to be the situation in regard to Fred and Ella Parker. All is revealed in the Afterword that has now been added.

Rob Hansen, February 2025

[1] *Maya* #11 (August 1976, ed. Rob Jackson)

Before *The Harpy Stateside*



Orion #22 cover by Atom

January 1960: London Brawling

There is nothing in the world makes you so conscious of the terrific rate at which time goes by than publishing a fanzine. The job is done, then mailed out. You look forward to getting some letters written and maybe having some *spare* spare time. Suddenly, you begin counting back, then forward. In another three months there's your next issue due out; and what have you done? Nothing. Panic ensues. You forswear all parties, social evenings in your own home come to a dramatic stop, you become a recluse. You still publish late....

I swear strong oaths that next time all material will be put on stencil as soon as it is received. It never is, of course. But the glow of self-righteousness makes you feel good, while it lasts. All this is true, and yet...

I find it difficult to believe that only three months have passed since I last launched *Orion* on a long-suffering world. (Well, not *much* more than three!)

I know this sounds contradictory but so much seems to have happened since then I feel there must have been at least a year's interval. This has probably been aggravated by the intervening holidays, but they can't account for all of it.

Our new club the SFCoL is thriving. Visitors from out of town appear on the doorstep from time to time and plans are progressing for the Eastercon, which is to be held in London. There seems to be a buzz of fannish activity going on. Nothing of world-shaking importance perhaps, and difficult to itemise, but it sure keeps things humming and makes time pass too quickly. [1]

August was a fine fannish month for London. We had fen from all over dropping in on us, both at the Globe and the White Horse. The earliest of these was Ron Bennett (late July), and the latest, two youngsters from Germany. Sorry, I can't spell their names... I can't even pronounce them. In between? All sorts. Jhim Linwood from Nottingham, the three lads from Stourbridge: Ken Cheslin, Peter Davies, and Mike Kilvert. We gained for ourselves a new member in the London Circle – James (Jimmy) Groves of East Ham, who chose this month to pay us the first (of many, I hope) visits. Dorothy Hartwell came with Alan Rispin, who normally lives in Manchester... that is if he can ever be said to be normal anywhere. We were pleased too that Bob Richardson of Cheltenham dropped in, even though he insisted on drinking orange juice! Later in the month we had a

visitor from what I choose to regard as “outer space” – Dublin. They sent as their representative someone who told us his name was Ian McAulay. There was nothing we could do about that – anxious though we were to help him – so his name is still Ian McAulay. Sorry. I shouldn’t really be rude to Ian. He is directly responsible for *Orion*’s newest subber Johnny Hautz. Thanks, Ian and hello Johnny; welcome to my growing list of friends. [2]

Another visitor from Cheltenham was Peter Mabey, custodian of the BSFA library. We also had the pleasure of seeing among us Jim Cawthorn. He looked to be very busy so I didn’t get the chance of a talk with him. I’d been looking forward to one. Better luck next time.

After publishing *Orion* #21, I received a barrage of letters demanding that I announce some sort of editorial policy for the mag. This I was loath to do. In #22, I did say that there was one thing I held in disfavour and would do nothing to perpetuate. Namely, fannish feuds.

I doubt if there is one of you who doesn’t know the LC [*London Circle*] has been going through a rough patch. Ghod knows, it’s had enough publicity of the worst kind. This is bad enough and I wouldn’t have mentioned it here if it had finished at that. It hasn’t. The break-up of the “officially re-organised” LC has resulted in a backwash of acrimony and downright stupidity that is almost past belief. How often have you heard – and said yourselves – “I’m in fandom for fun.” *This is fun?!*

I despair. Trying to stem the tide of bad feeling which still rages is tantamount to an attempt at beating out a forest fire with your bare hands. I’m not so much concerned right now with who is right or who is wrong – neither faction is wholly one or the other – enough on this touchy subject can be read elsewhere. What I am concerned about is the unhappiness you are all causing to your many friends in fandom. You are not being forced into a show of friendship you obviously don’t feel, but I fail to understand why you can’t just agree to differ and leave it at that. Why be so vindictive? Why harbour spite? Most of the reasons given me for the existing bitterness lie two to three years in the past. Are all of you really so unforgiving?

Where lies the virtue in being in the right and insisting that you are when a lot of this misery could be alleviated by ignoring provocative letters and articles saying you are wrong? Any fire will die when starved of fuel. Please, all of you, won’t you starve this one to death, *now*?

It is no use adopting the attitude of “we’ll drop it when they do”. *They* are saying exactly the same thing. Someone has to make the first move toward peace. The one to do so can only gain respect for at least showing

willing.

Most of you closely concerned in this brawl – for that’s what it has become – profess yourselves interested in the future of fandom and that it should have one. What a glorious example you are setting for your fannish heirs to follow.

If I’m not careful I’m going to gain for myself a reputation of always shooting my mouth off at fandom and its faults. I know it looks and sounds that way and my only excuse for so doing is that I’ve made so many friends among you and there is so much in fandom that is good. Also, believe it or not, I’ve managed to have a hell of a lot of fun. I hate to see my friends wasting precious time in squabbling and keeping old scores alive to the point where plain common sense doesn’t got a look in. I am not a “do gooder.” Heaven forbid. I do enjoy fandom and I’d like to make you all enjoy it too, even if it kills you!

’Bye for now. Don’t cut too many throats. [1]

[1] *Orion* #24 (January 1960, ed. Parker)

[2] *Orion* #23 (October 1959, ed. Parker)

February 1960: Joy Clarke

On the occasion of the birth of Nicola Belle Clarke, daughter of Joy Clarke and Vince Clarke, Frank and Belle Dietz ran appreciations in their OMPAazine of the Clarkes and Sandy Sanderson, the trio collectively known to fandom as “Inchmery” living together as they did at 7 Inchmery Road, Catford. Chuck Harris profiled Vince, Ethel Lindsay wrote about Sanderson, and Ella covered Joy.

What do I know of Joy Clarke? Hmm, that’s a teaser. There’s only about six of her, each one interesting and stimulating to be with. I had been around the London Circle for some time before we met. I’d heard a lot of conflicting stories about the kind of person she was which led me, inevitably, to form some preconceived notions of my own, only some of which were right. The first thing about her you can’t fail to notice is her tremendous enthusiasm. She is interested in whatever is being said to her and – more important – in the person to whom she is talking and she shows it. Joy’s energy is boundless; I always shudder when I go to see her, just in case it should prove to be contagious. I’m naturally indolent myself. She has a phenomenal memory and a talent for organisation – the natural result of a methodical mind.

Joy’s sense of fun is never very far beneath the surface. She can laugh as heartily at a joke levelled against herself as at one on somebody else and she has a lovely sense of the ridiculous.

All of this is going to make Joy sound inhuman if I don’t make haste and admit that she – like all of us – has her faults. You must remember that this is my own estimation of Joy and has been formed after an acquaintanceship of just over eighteen months. She has a temper and it flashes out quick as a dart, once roused. The show of temper is soon over, even if the hurt that caused it isn’t soon forgotten. I don’t think she would forgive easily or soon. But she is every bit as loyal and tenacious on behalf of her friends as she is in her dislikes.

I’ve been told: “you don’t know the *real* Joy yet”. This may be true. I must be honest and speak as I’ve found and I’ve always got on well with her and found her a likeable person. The day she abuses the trust I have in her I’ll have no hesitation in saying so. It won’t appear in the fanzines, though; I’ll write to her or see her about it personally. Til that unlikely

event takes place I'm perfectly happy for it to be known that I'm proud to number Joy Clarke among my friends.

Sadly, just four months after this the Inchmery trio would split with Joy and Sandy emigrating to the USA together and Vince leaving fandom for the next twenty years. This meant that though they were instrumental in forming the Science Fiction Club of London, their membership would be short-lived and their influence on its progress negligible.

– Peals #4 (February 1960, ed. Dietzes)

March 1960: Introducing SFCoL

As Chairman of The Science Fiction Club of London and editor of this, our first attempt at a "Combozine," I am supposed to present us and our aims to you as lucidly and impartially as possible. Never having chaired a club or edited a clubzine before I hope I make out all right.

Many of us in the club are the kind of fan who want activity of some sort. By this I don't mean we are averse to spending an evening sitting around talking and/or drinking, we aren't; but we don't want to spend all our meetings in that way. There were high hopes that when the London Circle was reorganised it would give us the chance for more than sitting in a pub. That we were disappointed in this is old hat and the final collapse of the L.C. gave us the opportunity to do something about it ourselves. Thus was born the Science Fiction Club of London....

Our aims? Nothing very pretentious or ambitious. Only to participate in the kind of fan activity most to our taste. We have plans for the future but these are dependent on us being able to find club premises to which we can invite fans visiting London, and which will house the rapidly growing club library of SF. Until now we have been meeting at Inchmery through the generosity of Vinç Clarke. As our membership is growing beyond the capacity of the room he made available to us we are now meeting at my house, the front room of which is much larger.

Meetings are held on the first and third Sundays of the month. Any fan in London for the weekend on the dates meetings are being held would be made welcome if they wished to visit us.

I suppose by now you are wondering just who the members are of this new club. By an odd coincidence we have in our ranks the majority of those who are active in the London fanzine field, whether editor/publisher/or writer. They are:

Founder Members:

Chair: Ella A. Parker.

Hon. Sec: Jimmy Groves.

Treas: Sandy Sanderson.

Publicity: Joy Clarke.

George Locke.

Ethel Lindsay.

Vinç Clarke.

Paul Enever.
Arthur Thomson.
Chuck Harris.
Ron Buckmaster.
Daphne Buckmaster.

New Members (Joined after the inaugural meeting):

Ken Potter.
Irene Potter.
Don Geldart.
Ted Forsyth.

Hon. Members:

Sid Birchby.
Walt Willis.
Ron Bennett.
Eric Jones.
Norman Shorrock.
Ina Shorrock.

As well as fanzines we have a fair number of camera and photographic enthusiasts among us, to say nothing of a couple of eager beaver types who are impatient to try their hand at a film script. This sounds like fun.

It's a great pity that one of our lads (George Locke) has been pounced upon by the army to do his National Service just as we looked like getting down to some intensive fanning in the club, but he knows how we feel about it. At the last meeting he was able to attend we held a formal "expulsion" ceremony with suitable expressions of regret for the army in their misfortune at being stuck with him for the next two years. There was no shortage of advice to George on the advantages to be gained by signing on for the full twenty years, such as: foreign travel – at the taxpayers' expense – free clothes for the term of his service, suitable occupation to keep him out of mischief and the like. I can't understand why he left the meeting feeling, as he said, "unwanted".

We did much the same thing when Ted Forsyth came to live and work in London. He attended his first meeting as a guest of the club and as part of our business we discussed the desirability of having him become a member. Was there any advantage to us in having him? What had he done in fandom? Where did he come from? And in fact who was he? All this I may add with Ted sitting there trying to look as if we were talking about someone else. From the Chair I asked the members individually, whether

they had anything to say that would indicate Ted's eligibility for membership? Having drawn a blank, things looked pretty bad for him so we asked him if there was anything he could say in his own favour. He upset us thoroughly by admitting he read quite a number of fanzines like *Skyrack*, *Aporrheta*, *Smoke* and *Fanac*; I mean, who reads these things? I then called for a show of hands and no-one moved a muscle. He pacified us by donating to the club funds the not inconsiderable contents of his wallet plus two pints of new blood. This persuaded us that he was indeed a worthy recruit to our ranks. It was a near do though.

I and the rest of the club able to attend the Convention are really looking forward to renewing old friendships and making new ones. If you are attending your first con and see our names in our lapels do come and talk to us.

I hope you all enjoy what we have given you in this zine and will write to me at the editorial address with comments/praise/and/or criticisms. If it proves a success there is the possibility that it will be done on a regular basis. Mainly it depends on your reactions to yet another clubzine.

Have fun.... I shall, and a Happy Easter to you all.

– SFCoL *Combozine* #1 (Easter 1960, ed.
Parker)

April 1960: Countdown to Eastercon

Prior to our EasterCon I thought I'd save some money on postage and have *Orion* ready in time to hand it out to those of my readers who'd be there. The Science Fiction Club of London had decided to put out a Combozine for the Con and had appointed me its editor. There I was bashing away like a blue streak out of hell cutting stencils for both the Combo and O. At times I was in danger of putting the club items in the O box! The firm from which I get my paper took it upon themselves to be difficult about delivery round about then, which meant I could put out either one or 't'other but not both. Naturally, I elected to do the clubzine as it was intended for circulation at the Con, and it wasn't imperative I save on postage, anyway. At least some of the stencils were cut ready for later.

On the Friday – one week from the Convention – I had the dubious honour of entertaining Brian Jordan in my home – I call it “Parker’s Penitentiary”, now you know why. How I entertained him will be made clear to you if you’ll stick around. I had also agreed to do the bookings for the hotel. I had arranged with the hotel manager at which the Convention was to be held, that I would take the bookings from the fen and give them to him in a block. I’d told him to expect around fifty to sleep(!) with about the same number visiting the lounge we would be using for a Conhall. The hotel didn’t have a licence for selling drinks but I was assured there were no objections to our bringing our own in provided they were kept to the bedrooms and our lounge; the hotel would even provide us with glasses! I figured it was best to be honest and told him that in all probability there would be very little actual *sleeping* done over the weekend as we only had this one chance, annually, to meet up and exchange talk and the like. To this he was also agreeable. I suppose I should have been suspicious, because every demand I made on behalf of the Convention was met with the bland promise: “If we haven’t got it we’ll get it for you.” Things looked fine from where I was sitting.

I phoned the hotel on Friday to let them know I’d be down that day with the bookings I had. A woman’s voice said: “I’m the owner, the man you saw was my brother who was standing in for me for a couple of days.” I thought no more about it than that the least the brother could have done was to tell me it wasn’t his hotel. He had assured me he’d be there himself

over the holiday in order to help things run smoothly. As it turned out, he'd lied in his teeth.

When I arrived and had a cigarette well alight we got down to business. How many would we be? When was it for? For how long would we be there? What exactly were we? (All right chum, you try and answer that one!) It transpired that the hotel owner hadn't been advised on any of the detailed arrangements made on her and the hotel's behalf by her brother. This meant that every time I told her about something else her brother had promised would be done or obtained for us she dashed over to the phone and called him to query it. From the expostulations at our end I gathered the brother was unrepentantly telling her: "Yes, that's right, I did say that." When the girl – she wasn't really much more than that – realised how far he'd gone in her name she did the honourable thing and agreed to accept the bookings. We had to make certain adjustments, such as some things she knew or couldn't afford to get in for us. She was anxious for the good name of her hotel to do her best for us and I was only too willing to compromise with her on what I thought the gang would stand for; reminding myself all the time that there was only a week to go before the Convention and we had to have this hotel, there just wasn't time to find another. My pride took an awful beating that day.

Meanwhile, in order to entertain Brian Jordan right royally as was fitting, I had purchased at enormous expense a gigantic ELECTRIC GESTETNER. He was fascinated by the gleaming monster so I kindly but condescendingly showed him how it worked. After having put half a ream of crud sheets through I remarked: "It seems a pity to waste ink needlessly (did I tell you I'm a Scot?) The clubzine is ready and waiting to be run off, we might as well make a start on it." So we did. While putting on the stencil and making margin adjustments I could see his fingers twitching in his eagerness to try it for himself. Perish the thought that I'd be the one to ignore or dampen such enthusiasm. Casually, I asked him if he'd like to have a try at it and, just in time, nipped smartish out of the way as he leapt at it. He was hooked, but good! After making sure he'd got the hang of things and that what was coming out would ensure plenty of egoboo for me in the fannish press, I left him to it and sat me down to cutting some more stencils for *O* and getting some letters written.

This went on right through the Friday and Saturday. On Sunday I allowed him a day off. I was going to see Ethel Lindsay and had promised him that if he got at least ten stencils run off by then I'd take him with me. He slaved. Ted Forsyth, who was living here, came with us too and a slap-up tea Ethel gave us when we got there. Having come out so far we

decided to make a day of it and we finished up at Inchmery. Much chatter there, as usual, and a warm welcome. But, all too soon, we had to leave. I remember, too, this was one of the coldest days we'd had this year, so far. The wind was blowing at what must have been pretty near gale force and when we finally got home we were, all of us, frozen.

Monday followed the pattern of Saturday. Brian at the duper, me at the typer, ending up with an evening's chatter when Ted got in from work (I wouldn't allow Brian to talk while he was at the duper). On Monday night when he went to bed, Brian professed himself very tired. I can't think why. He hadn't been anywhere but had stood by the duplicator all day since about 9 a.m. until 9 that evening. Anyway he announced his intention of having a lie-in the next morning. I had an appointment with the hotel that day to give them the last of the bookings and to make sure all was as it should be. I decided it wouldn't do him any harm if I left him to sleep while I was out, I'd wake him on my return.

When I got to the hotel the owner introduced me to her mother who looked as if she was on the point of leaving – she was putting on her hat. Instead of going out she pinned me with a hard look and remarked: "Miss Parker, I don't like the sound of this party you have arranged for Easter. I don't like it at all. If my daughter takes my advice she'll cancel the whole thing." To say I was dismayed would be to understate the case. I was aghast. I'd already done diplomatic battle with the daughter and we'd reached some sort of working agreement but I could see this old battle-axe wasn't going to be easily persuaded; indeed, she wasn't going to be persuaded in any way if she could help it. I don't know if my face showed that I recognised defeat even before I'd begun fighting, but in spite of all my pleas she stuck to her guns. I must be fair and say that the daughter was on the verge of a right battle royal with her mother, in order to honour her word that she would have us there. The old woman over-rode her on every point. I wondered if perhaps Bobbie Gray could effect some sort of compromise with the old haybag so I asked permission to use the phone and called her. As I wasn't on the BSFA committee I had to let her know what had happened anyway.

It was no go. We were out!

48 hours to the Convention and nowhere to go! That a hotel *was* found you all know by now and I'd like to take this opportunity of apologising to all those who were put to the bother of turning up at the Sandringham only to find us not there.

I got back home around 7:30 in the evening wondering how much of the clubzine Brian had run off or if he was still in bed as there had been

no-one to waken him. Ted was home from work and he and Brian met me at the door of my room. They were very subdued and I thought my face must have warned them of bad news, but it wasn't that. Brian had been working on the duper and my bell rang. He'd gone down to the door and it was a salesman from Gestetners. While Brian was talking to him a fugitive breeze sneaked in round his back and slammed the door shut. Brian, of course, had no key. This had happened fairly early in the day so he spent the day until Ted got home in the shop run by a friend of mine reading through her library.

I broke the news to them about the hotel and that we'd have to get a couple of stencils cut, run off, addressed and mailed, immediately, if not sooner. This cheered them up tremendously. We got the job done in short time by all three mucking in together. After it was done we decided it was time we had something to eat. We were sitting there, minding our own business, enjoying the glow of self-satisfaction induced by a job well and quickly done when the bell rang. I looked at Brian enquiringly, he in turn looked at Ted; we sat there looking at each other, afraid to move, wondering what fresh disaster was impending. Ted bravely volunteered to go down and see who it was. Brian and I didn't think it fair to leave him to face whatever it might be alone, so we all trooped down. I opened the door, screamed, and shut it, quickly. I stood in the hall trembling, my face ashen from the shock I'd received. "What is it?" they both demanded. I gibbered incoherently... it's... it's... Ted couldn't stand any more of this so he advanced stealthily and damn near whipped the door off its hinges he opened it so quickly. I still don't know how he recognised who stood there because I knew they'd never met. It was dark, and the face of the figure at the door was practically hidden under the most raffish peaked cap it has ever been my lot to see. He yelled, "BENNETT!" He was right, too. Ron, our man from Harrogate, it was; only 24 hours earlier than he'd been expected!

We hustled him upstairs quickly, before the folks who lived in the flat (apt.) below mine could see him – they being very respectable people, and sensitive to boot. We plonked him into the most comfortable chair in the place – let's be honest and admit it's the *only* chair in the place – and before he could take his hat and coat off we presented him with a copy of the circular we'd run off giving the details of the change in Con hotels. Perhaps the fact that this was the third such change accounted for his lack of emotion on reading it, he wasn't so much stunned as numbed.

There's a standing joke around the house now about "the Parker early nights". This came about because every night for the full week before the

Convention I would say: “We’re all having an *early* night, tonight.” All being Jordan, Forsyth and me. We invariably got to bed early in the *a.m.*, which wasn’t what I meant at all. Tuesday had to be an early night as the rest of the week was booked to be late. I’d already made my pronouncement before Ron came.

The brag session didn’t break up until Ted came down at 7:30 in the morning. He tells me we looked a ghodawful dissipated trio.

Wednesday was to be my Big Day. It would bring my first meeting with that genial giant, Don Ford. I can’t help it if I sound goshwow when talking about him and I’m damned if I’m going to apologise for it, it’s how I feel.

I’d written to Don as soon as I knew he’d won TAFF [*the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund*] and invited him to a party I wanted to throw for him. I knew I was comparatively unknown in fandom and that I could be called a Johnny-come-lately, also as TAFF delegate his time would be pretty well taken up, so my delight knew no bounds when he wrote back accepting. This predisposed me in his favour before he even arrived in the country.

Brian had finished duplicating the Combozine on the Tuesday night before Ron had arrived, and all it needed was collating. The pages were stacked away neatly, to be done sometime on the Thursday before we went to the Globe. Wednesday was my day for tidying up and cleaning through. Thanks be, everyone had made plans that took them out of the house, thus enabling me to get on with the chores, in the middle of which Alan Rispin arrove. I put him to work doing some odd jobs and if you were to ask him he’d tell you, some of ’em were really odd.

Time now was around 4:30 p.m. and I hadn’t even washed and changed. The deadline for the gang coming back with Don was creeping up on me and I began wondering what impression he would gain if I were to greet him with a smut on my nose and in my shabbiest house clothes. Not to panic. I actually got cleaned up and had time to make and drink a cup of tea before the bell rang. I knew that my crowd were meeting Don and Bobbie Gray at the offices of Ted Carnell and were then going on a tour of the City of London including the Tower. I didn’t think *this* would be them, and besides, I was expecting someone else as well. I opened the door and greeted two fen I’d never met before, Sture Sedolin and *Alan Dodd!* I had no preconceived ideas of what Sture would look like, apart from the fact that he was young I didn’t quite know what to expect. He’s of average height, slender, pale of face and very quiet. He was here for a week and in all that time I don’t think he once initiated a conversation. He answered when spoken to, otherwise he sat with his nose in a fanzine.

Alan on the other hand, I knew exactly how he'd look. He would be fairly short, very slim, with dark hair and a rosy complexion, also quite young and exuberant. I was wrong on every count. Instead, this was someone almost as tall as Don proved to be, well built, round, chubby face and hair that borders on the brown but doesn't quite make it. Quietly spoken and slightly nervous in mien. I was in the process of making tea and coffee for these recent arrivals when the gang trooped in. I looked round just as Don came in the door and I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw him *stoop* to get through it. I'd heard he was tall, but this was ridiculous. The top of that door was miles high, or so I thought 'til then.

My room is large. With the two Alans and Sture it had looked empty. This can only be accounted for by the mere fact that it was tidy for the first time in weeks. I'd become so accustomed to seeing it with crud sheets littering the floor, fmz strewn on any and all flat surfaces, and my typewriter and the necessary adjuncts to an actifanning life lying on the table. This tidiness was painful. Now, suddenly, the place was crowded and most of it was Ford, Man Mountain, himself! He had his beloved camera case, without which he never went far, draped round his shoulders, it was the size of a small suit case and must have weighed quite a bit, if the gadgets he had in it were anything by which to judge, but he carried it with an ease that was impressive. Hats and coats were discarded and taken upstairs by Ted Forsyth. Don came over to where I stood guard by the tea-pot with his hand out-stretched. All he said was: "Ella," but in that one word he managed to convey his pleasure in the meeting, at being here in England. I looked at him with a medley of thoughts going through my head. I was terrifically bucked he'd made it over here, I was grateful to him for finding the time to make this visit to me and my friends, but above all I was proud, not only because I had him as a guest but of all those fen in the States and the rest of the fannish world who had helped in making it possible for him to be here. This for me was TAFF. Something alive and tangible. Who says fandom can't do anything worth-while?

This was a party that began staidly; tea and coffee were the drinks most in demand. Those who hadn't eaten were directed to the kitchen where a large pot of steak and kidney simmered on the stove and told off to help themselves.

Some time during the kerfuffle of greetings and tea-drinking, W.F. (Bill) Temple had put in an unobtrusive appearance and the bottles were broached. Camera bulbs seemed to be popping off all over the place as I stood back surveying the scene to etch it on my memory. Ron Bennett and Alan Rispin had settled themselves in the middle of the room and had a

heavy brag session in progress (I wonder, does Ron take a pack of cards to bed with him?) Sture and Alan Dodd had their heads together over my mail received/written chart which hung on the wall, Brian Jordan and Bobbie Gray were having what appeared to be a very intense conversation, sufficiently so for Bobbie to have put down the copy of *Mad* she'd been reading. Bill Temple, Don and my non-fan brother, Fred were deep in talk. I'd forgotten to relieve Bill of the tin of pea-nuts I'd asked him to open for me and he was absent-mindedly nibbling at them while he talked. Ted Forsyth was having a fine old time grabbing off pictures as opportunity afforded. The party was now "on" and I could relax and have a drink myself. I took my glass and went to sit near Don (where else?), and listened to him talking about Stateside fen and his home. Don has the gift of bringing people to life so they actually seem to walk through his conversational anecdotes about them.

Later in the evening he wanted to go out and phone the con hotel to book a room for that night. I would have liked to put him up, but as it was, both my spare beds were doubling up and the overflow was sleeping on a mattress on the floor. Bill said he'd go out with Don to make sure he didn't get lost. It was hilarious when they got back to hear Bill (who's no shrimp) describe the problems attendant on trying to fit Don and himself into the small space available in one of our London telephone boxes. It transpired that Don also wanted to call Ted Carnell. Bill dialled the number, got Ted on the line, and they went into one of their looong conversations; this was Don's call, remember. Bill managed to cut across the flow of talk long enough to say: "I'd like to introduce you to Don Ford, he's here with me and would like to speak to you." He nearly fell out of the box, and would have done if they hadn't been so tightly wedged, when Ted told him he knew Don well and in fact Don had been staying with him since he arrived in the country last week. Bill was quite indignant.

Around 11:30 farewells were said by those who had to leave, and Don, with his camera case still round his neck, took off for his hotel. Sture had long since disappeared up to bed, but Rispin, Jordan, Bennett, Forsyth and myself sat around talking in a desultory way until about 2 a.m. Having had no sleep at all the previous night we thought that perhaps it would be a good idea to get some now.

– *Orion* #25 (June 1960, ed. Parker)

April 1960: Not an Eastercon Report

On Thursday Ron was intent on going to see Cinerama and most of the crowd said they would go with him. They weren't coming back home but would meet me in the Globe. Ron first had himself a lot of fun riding the bike he'd bought from George Locke to the station to deposit it in the left luggage office. He's thinking of suing George, for misrepresentation or something, as he says the thing is mis-called a bike. The clubzine was collated and the debris from the previous night's party cleared away. This makes it sound as if hardly anything was done all day, but in fact Brian and I hardly stopped work until time to go to the Globe.

When we got there the place seemed almost empty and yet, on checking up there were quite a lot of us there: Bobbie Gray, Ivor Mayne, Arthur Thomson, Ted Tubb, who had coaxed Iris [*his wife*] into making an all too rare and very welcome appearance, Harry Clements, Brian Burgess, Jimmy Groves, back from his field trip on geology, I believe. Mike Moorcock and Don, Sandra Hall and Uncle Tom Cobley etc. I'd retained the circulars we'd done for those I knew I'd be seeing there and handed them out to the accompaniment of groans and facetious remarks like: "Who split on us to make them throw us out before we arrive?" The evening was well on when the door opened and in came the Potters with two people I'd never seen before. I knew they had the Ashworths staying with them and therefore, this had to be they (brilliant, ain't I?). Mal endeared himself to me immediately by insulting me. Grrrh to you, Ashworth; *Burgess* for TAFF! Spirits were high and flowing freely, it seemed a pity to break things up at this stage so a crowd of them came back to my place for an impromptu party after the Globe had refused to let us stay there any longer; some petty excuse like it was against the law, I ask you! We tried to get Don to come along too but he cried off and went off to look for some night shots of London for his beloved camera.

When we got home, out came the bottles and glasses and whatever I could find in the way of food, which wasn't much. I seemed to have gone back 24 hrs. in time. Here was the place littered with fannish bodies as it had been yesterday, only the faces in some cases were different and, oddly enough, the names too. This time on checking noses we had: Jimmy Groves, Mal and Sheila Ashworth, Ken and Irene Potter, and of course, the

bunch who were staying here. Things were pretty animated for a while and then I did the unforgivable. I just couldn't stay on my feet and keep my eyes open a moment longer. I tried, but I was ready to pass out cold, so I delegated my duties to Ted and disappeared for at least four hours deep and curative sleep.

I staggered back among the company at some ungodly hour feeling all the better for the rest and announced breakfast for those who were interested. I looked round and you've never seen a doss-house such as this in your lives. In my room there's a single bed and on it – hang on a minute, I've got a photo here, I'll check – there's Ron Bennett, Irene Potter, Jimmy Groves, Ken Potter and Brian Jordan! All of 'em fast asleep. They woke gradually and reluctantly while I went upstairs and got breakfast ready. There's never been a breakfast like it in this house before. Neither my brother nor I eat the meal but he broke his rule and joined them that day. They were all back on form and the talk flew from one end of the table to the other. We sat for a while over the cups, smoking and talking before the girls and I got stuck into the washing up. Thanks, Irene and Sheila, it was a relief to get it out of the way.

Things began breaking up about then. A hectic week had come to its end. Ted Forsyth and Alan Rispin set out on safari to find Arthur Thomson's place and were going on to the hotel from there with him. The Potters and Ashworths kindly loaded themselves with the auction material that I'd had sent here and with the help of Jimmy took it to the hotel for me. It seemed so quiet after they'd all gone. Jordan had gone to bed in my brother's room and was sound asleep. I knew he had earned his rest and did my best not to disturb him. If it hadn't been for him there wouldn't have been a clubzine at the Convention; he was a brick. When I did finally decide it was time to get him out of bed I found it was a harder job than I'd anticipated. I managed it by the simple expedient of dragging the bed-clothes off him and leaving him to lie there and freeze. He got up.

I made myself a pot of tea and a sandwich and loafed on the bed for half-an-hour. Brian sat in the big chair drinking MILK and we quietly talked over the events of the past week. It must have been about 4:30 p.m. when we got to the con hotel.

For those of you who think I'm going to give a Conreport here; I'm sorry to disappoint you. Not only haven't I the space, but I'm ashamed to admit I spent most of the time in my room, resting, and entertaining those who tracked me to my lair. I am heartily ashamed, too, that I didn't support either of the auctions, and I really mean that I'm ashamed. I'm always shooting off my mouth about supporting both those fine

organisations, TAFF and the BSFA, and I feel I let both them and myself down, badly. I have no excuse.

The highlight of the Con I did see was the showing by Don of the slides he'd brought with him. In the various Conreports that will be written you will probably see many references made to them, and believe me, they deserve all the praise lavished on them. The sheer beauty of the night shots was breathtaking. Don himself was a raging social success and if he ever allows himself to be nominated for TAFF again, I for one would vote for him. Bless you Don, it was truly wonderful having you among us. Time went all too quickly.

Dave Kyle was another visitor from the States, an unexpected one. He professed himself mightily impressed with the ingenuity we had shown in attempting to prevent him attending the Con by moving the whole shebang, not only to a new hotel, that was clever enough, but to a different district. He hoped we didn't mind too much that he'd foiled us by some clever detective work.

You just haven't lived until you've seen Don chasing a London bus up Oxford Street. We – Ted Carnell, Atom, Jordan, Dave, and myself – were on our way to eat. Don had a sticker in his hand which read; "I BACK IKE." The only logical place for it was, according to him, the rear-end of a bus. I told him that his only chance of getting it there would be if he stood by a set of traffic lights and when a bus stopped at the red he could nip round smartly and put it on. Of course, none of us, not even Don, had a camera with us so this scene is lost to posterity. A bus drew up. Don got behind it and I could see the conductor – who was standing on the platform – craning his neck to see what he was up to. There was a car immediately behind the bus and the driver of it looked really worried because Don was right in his path. Carefully, almost lovingly, he put the sticker on the bus. He was just smoothing it out when the lights changed and the bus took off. Don was determined that this thing was going on to stay and it still wasn't firm enough to suit him, so he ran up the road behind the bus with one arm round it trying for a grip and the other all the time stroking, smoothing the label. The car driver looked fit to burst. He was trying to drive and avoid Don while at the same time leaning forward until he almost came through his windscreen, trying to see what that mad clot in front of him was doing. I laughed so much I got a stitch in my side. Now, if anyone mentions the name Don Ford to me, I see him running up Oxford Street with his arms clasped, affectionately, round the back-end of a bus. It was just right for size, too!

The British Science Fiction Association was responsible for putting

on the Convention again, this year. I hope those of you who attended and enjoyed yourselves won't forget the hard work done behind the scenes on your behalf. Archie, Bobbie and Sandra really worked at it and if you can drop them a line showing your appreciation it would be small enough reward for all they did. I wouldn't have been in their shoes this past year for a fortune. It was most encouraging to see so many new faces there this year. I hope you found so much to interest and amuse you that you won't want to miss out on future Conventions. Next year it's Kettering [*actually it was Cheltenham*] and I hope you have all made a start on saving now so it will be possible for you to be there. I'm looking forward to it already. I shall go to bed and stay there for the week beforehand, though.

Ella was elected to the post of BSFA Secretary at the business meeting.

– Orion #25 (June 1960, ed. Parker)

April 1960: Hello and Farewell, Don Ford

I've heard it said that anticipation is the best part of any treat. Looking forward one is apt to over-emphasise the pleasures to come so that when the Big Day arrives, events fall flat on their face and turn out something of an anti-climax.

When I heard that Don Ford had won TAFF I'll admit to having lost some sleep through excitement. I'd plugged Don in my fnz but this was a public expression of a personal wish. I wanted to meet Don Ford. Now I knew I was to have my wish granted I began wondering what he'd be like. The best place to make an assessment of anybody is in your own home and among your friends. Also, too often one hears the complaint after a convention attended by a BNF that he – the BNF – had been monopolised by his friends and the newcomers didn't get a chance to meet him. This seemed a good opportunity to introduce some newcomers in fandom to Don before the con as well as meeting him for myself and judging whether I'd voted right or not.

I planned a party for him with this in mind and so he wouldn't feel overwhelmed by a lot of strangers I invited Ron Bennett whom Don had already met. Some of the other guests arrived before Don and his escort – Bobbie Gray, née Wild, Ron Bennett and Brian Jordan – put in an appearance. I was in the middle of brewing tea and making coffee for them when the door opened and what seemed like a horde of people streamed into the room. Actually there were only four but to those of you that know him, when Don is one of the four it is apt to look like a crowd. I'd heard he was tall (he had to duck his head as he came in at the door) but, somewhere along the line someone had neglected to mention he was LARGE with it! Don is the only person I know who can vacate a room holding fifty other people and leave it looking half empty.

What to say about him. I don't honestly know what I expected him to be like. I surveyed the roomful of fen discarding outer clothing and Don stood out among them. Privately I thought: if he has a voice to match his build then I'll have met my match at last! He strode over to where I stood mid a welter of tea cups and all he said was "Ella". In that one word he managed to convey his pleasure at the meeting and at being where he was. I particularly liked his handshake. One of my pet hates is the person who

extends a limp hand leaving it up to you whether you take it or not. Don made no pretence. He really took hold of my hand and shook it.... I'm still wearing the plaster as proof!

As more people arrived and the talk grew in volume you could hear Don's voice easily only because of the accent. He speaks very quietly but his opinions are expressed in such a way you know he's saying what he thinks and not what he thinks you want to hear. There was no anti-climax to my meeting with Don. He was every bit as nice as I'd hoped he'd be and if he stood for TAFF tomorrow I'd vote for him again. Inevitably, I didn't get the chance to ask him all the things I wanted to. We met frequently during the convention but, just as inevitably the talks we had were in hurried snatches. There were some comical moments but this is Don's report so I'll leave him to recount them for you... he'd better!

I know he was popular and he mixed well with all who were there. He obviously loves meeting people and did just that. I like Don and his sense of fun. For all his years in fandom he is still intensely interested in its welfare. I only wish we'd had the chance for a longer talk. [1]

In his post-Eastercon travels the final place Ford visited before returning to London and flying home was Paris.

I knew that Don was due back from Paris on the Thursday too late for the Globe and I suggested, via Ted Carnell, that we meet on the Friday for a quiet chat. He was too exhausted to do more than totter into a pub and fall into the nearest chair. We sat until the place closed with me listening (for a change) to his adventures in Paris in search of pictures to take. "I don't want feelthy postcards, I can take better pics myself." Later we moved to a cafe where the talk ranged from early personalities in fandom to short descriptive sketches of people who had until then been just names to me. Most of them I feel I've met briefly, listening to Don talk.

It was arranged that Ted Carnell should take Don to the airport terminal at Victoria and I'd meet them there and go out to the airport with him to make sure he left the country. I asked Ted Forsyth to get up early on the Saturday and come with me. He did so in the name of friendship or something equally obscure. When we arrived the first person we saw was Ted Carnell sitting there like a zombie. He requested, "Wake me up as you go past, will you?" Don was at the registration counter with his luggage and when he came over I noticed that he looked positively GREEN! They'd had a farewell do at Ted's the previous evening and had been drinking gin until Les Flood arrived with a bottle of champagne! They both looked ghastly. We piled into the coach for the airport, with Ted

Carnell hopping round looking for a spot from which to take his last pic of Don. The last glimpse I had of him was as he entered the coach to take him over to the plane. Still hugging his precious camera case and still as tall and big as when he'd arrived. So! We didn't wear him down after all. I hated to see him go. I remembered frantically all the things I meant to ask him and say to him, thinking belatedly of the many things I could perhaps have done to make his visit here more enjoyable. He took his memories back home with him in his camera but I doubt if they are any warmer than mine of a large, tall, guy, quiet-voiced and from Cincinnati – pronounced Cincinnati – a guy who had the gift of making you feel this was the visit of an old and valued friend rather than a first time meeting. [2]

Ford was 39 at the time of his TAFF trip. Tragically, he would lose his life to cancer only five years later.

[1] *TAFF Baedeker* (1960), Don Ford's
TAFF Report

[2] *Skyrack* #20 (May 1960, ed. Ron
Bennett)

July 1960: The Main Event

Iris and Ted Tubb were going on holiday and asked me if I would “sit in” with their animals while they were away; said animals being Judy, a very affectionate dog, a large friendly cat, and a lovely hamster called Roddy. I would move over there to live during their absence and have the run of the house. Wheels clicked madly into place in my head... this is the chance you need to go off by yourself and get *Orion* onto stencil without interruption, etc. I said I’d be glad to do it. Ted came to collect me and my belongings on the Friday night, and he was prepared to cart the electric duper over there as well, so I could get the whole thing done at one swoop. I knew I wouldn’t get that far ahead so we left the duper where it was. The peace and quiet was wonderful. I got all of *Orion* done with the exception of the lettercol, fmz acknowledgements and my editorial. This was great; I actually looked like putting out an *Orion*, right bang on the promised date. I’ll never learn.

I may not get what follows chronologically correct; it’s a confusion of names, dates and events milling round in my head, but it goes something like this. Iris and Ted left for their holiday on the Saturday, July 16th. I began work on the stencils about an hour after they left, and worked all that day. Sunday there was a club meeting of the SFCoL which was to be held as usual at my house. I took Judy with me and she made a great hit. It was at this meeting that I first learned the firm date for [*US fan*] Andy Young’s visit to London. Arrangements were made for those of us who wanted to meet him to go over to New Cross on the following Saturday evening. Ethel wailed – “I’ll miss him; I’m going to Scotland on the Friday.” I mean, we’d read of Andy, but even I thought it was taking things a mite far to leave London just as he arrived, but Ethel was adamant: to Scotland she was going in spite of our promises to provide her with a bodyguard for the length of his stay among us. I did get her to agree that if I accompanied her – for protection – she would go and see him for a couple of hours on the Friday, before her coach left for the North.

I had had a letter from the Tubbs telling me it was possible they would be home on Saturday instead of staying for the second week. I packed my belongings, tidied up what mess I’d made “just living” so was later than I’d intended to be arriving at New Cross to chaperone Ethel on her visit to Andy. My arrival was the signal for the kettle to go on for tea.

What did I think of Andy? We-ell, you wouldn’t want *that* kind of

talk in *Orion*, now would you? I knew he had a beard, of course, but that was all I *did* know of him. He's tall, but doesn't give the same impression of "largeness" as does Don Ford, maybe because he's a lot thinner. This doesn't mean that Don is fat by any means, but he has breadth as well as height, where Andy has mostly height. The first thing that struck me was HAIR. Masses of it on his head and a veritable bush of it on his face. I did dare him to "come out from behind that hedge," but he wouldn't take me up on it. Something to do with a woman in his life... Jean, I think he calls her, who likes the beard. These first meetings with a fan from the States are always a riot. You want to know all about the part of the States from which he comes, he wants to hear from you about Britain; fan names crop up, what is so and so doing now; is such a 'zine folding? and so it goes on. This was no different. Having arrived on Thursday it was pretty certain that Andy had a good night's sleep tucked under his belt so as the next day was Saturday I stayed pretty late talking after Ethel had left. I know you're going to laugh at this, but a report of these meetings loses any value they may have unless the whole truth is told. I'd been afraid of meeting Andy! No kidding. Ethel had wanted me to be there when she met him because she was too shy to meet him alone; I wasn't shy, just scared. I knew of Andy's reputation for erudite conversation and intellectual attainments. Mine are of the sub-zero quality and as for erudite conversation.... I'm lucky if mine is intelligible let alone intelligent. I was scared I'd bore him to death, it could have sparked off an international incident. I could see the glaring headlines in the papers: "Eminent Astronomer-Engineer Bored to Death!" If it happened that I did bore him, he was too much of a gentleman to let on.

On the Saturday, oddly enough, the thing that most occupied my mind was: should I take Judy with me in the evening or should I leave her at home? Ted and Iris might be home that day. I don't like leaving a dog alone for hours in the house, especially when I know it has been used to constant company. In this instance I decided to chance it as I knew Judy would go mad with joy when they came in. A couple of times during the ensuing evening it crossed my mind whether I'd done right or not. Had they come home?

They had. It was one of *those* evenings. Atom was there with his wife and child; Joy and Sandy, Ken and Irene Potter, Ivor Mayne and girl-friend, George Locke, looking painfully neat and well-dressed in civvies, Don Geldart, Ted Forsyth, Jimmy Groves and me.... oh yes, and Andy. That night saw the birth, in Anglomania at least, of the catch-phrase that reigned in popularity for some time after he left: "within the bounds of

astrophysical accuracy”. This was found to be a favourite saying of Andy’s and we hurled it into the conversation whenever opportunity afforded. Andy and Atom went at it hammer and tongs; some of it was way up there among the stars, lots of it was sheer goon-type back chat. I know he was fascinated by Atom’s ready wit and even readier tongue. Atom was the hit of the evening and we were very proud of him; but then, we always are.

Reluctantly, the party broke up. Buses and trains had to be caught. I was lucky, George had the car with him or I’d have had to walk back to Forest Hill; not as far as West Kilburn, admittedly, but far enough. Before I left I wrung from Andy the promise that he’d come to me for a meal on Tuesday night to meet Ron Bennett who was coming to London for six weeks, arriving on the Monday. He promised.

I could see Iris and Ted were home as the room in the front of the house was lighted. We had a quiet drink together while they told me of their holiday and their disappointment with it. I told them some of the things I could remember of what had gone on that evening, then up to bed. Sunday Ted brought me home where I began making preparation for housing Ron. Knowing how we gab when we get together I took the precaution of having an early night. No, not that kind of an early night, a real one this time.

Bennett arrived.

In those two words it’s difficult to realise the chain which was building of which this was the first link. By Tuesday I had told Ron some of what had gone on among us before he arrived and that Andy would be coming to see us that evening. I’d also mentioned to him that he (Andy) reminded me very strongly of someone he, as well as I, knew. Musing to himself Ron cased what he imagined to be the salient points: “Hmm, he has a beard, tall and thin, well, he must look like Vince Clarke.” Very proud of himself, was Ron; he was wrong. I had told him that Andy was going to the Science Museum that day before coming to the house. Ron busied himself with dreaming up ploys to play such as standing next to Andy beside some showcase with a SF book well in evidence, get into conversation without disclosing who he was and meet him that night at the house. The only thing that prevented Ron doing any of this was the minor detail that I didn’t know at what time Andy would be in the place. I was upstairs in the kitchen when the bell rang announcing the arrival of Andy. Ron called up: “I’ll go,” as if I’d intended coming down all those stairs. I finished the job on hand and went down to the farden. I cocked an enquiring brow at Ron. “John Brunner,” he said, I nodded in affirmation and Andy looked at us wondering whatthehell was going on, but he soon

rumbled as I'd hammered into him just how much he did resemble John.

That was some meal! Well, Ted, George and Atom had turned up.

Atom kept on drawing our attention to the method Andy used for getting the peas from his plate to his mouth. What fascinated Atom more than anything else was the flick of the wrist which threw the pea into his mouth from a distance of two feet (Atom's measurement). This didn't help Andy in the delicate manoeuvre involved of having the pea delicately poised on the fork prior to giving that gentle flick which would land it neatly far back in his mouth – Just as he'd be all set to go Atom would say – “watch this, how *does* he do it?” Andy would dissolve into helpless laughter and, of course, lose the pea. I reckon he lost more peas than he ate that way. Atom had Andy try it in slow-motion so he could solve for himself the trick of the flick; he even went to the length of drawing a small diagram for his own guidance.

We settled down to have ourselves an evening's chatter and a couple of drinks. Once again Atom held us spell bound while he entertained us. I know it's frustrating to be told that Atom talked without a report of some of the things he said, but this is an instance of either being right there in the group or sitting apart with note-book missing out on the fun... I sat in.

One by one the party went their reluctant ways. Atom drove Ted home, Ron went upstairs to bed and George, who had to be on parade at 8 a.m. the following morning; stayed talking with Andy and I until about 6:30 a.m. He was going to hitch a ride back to camp and I was doubtful that he'd make it in time; I've learned since that he did. Andy was leaving that day for the Conference which was the ostensible reason for his trip to Europe, but first he had to go all the way across London to collect his baggage. I made him a hasty breakfast (recipe on application) and sent him on his way. He'd be away for three weeks.

Peace? Quiet? Don't be daft!

– *Orion* #26 (November 1960, ed. Parker)

August 1960: Slow Burn

Starting on Friday August 5th, and every Friday thereafter, it will be open house here for all BSFA members living in or near London. The only charge of admission will be the showing of a current BSFA membership card; no charge will be made either for the light refreshments provided which will be tea, coffee, biscuits and the like. You want a drink (alcoholic) you provide your own. Who knows? It may develop into a full-scale BSFA club; if it does it will just happen that way, I've no plans for making it so. I'm doing this only to provide you with a definite meeting point on a definite evening for talk and exchange of ideas. I hope that those of you with plans to visit London at any time will call on me anyway (giving prior warning of course), but it will be fun for you if you could arrange things so that you are here for a Friday evening. If any of you, living in no matter what part of the country, have the facilities for entertaining members living within visiting distance of you would like to do the same kind of thing I'd like to hear about it and we'll print an announcement in either of the publications due out at the time with frequent re-runs in the succeeding issue for the information of new members. But whatever, Friday night is Parker night if you live near enough to get here or are on a visit to Town. See you? From 7 p.m. onward. I'm not extending any personal invitations, this is intended for all of you, no matter if you've been a member from the inception of the Association or joined only last week. You want to come, then come, and I do mean ALL of you.

I'm starting this on a Friday as most of us don't have to go to work or go to school on a Saturday; if it transpires that Friday is inconvenient for too many of you it will be changed to suit the majority but rest assured the change will be well advertised before taking place. [1]

Now that Bennett was staying here there began a trek to my door such as I've never experienced before, no, not even in the week preceding the Eastercon earlier this year.

Ron and I were off to visit the Liverpool bunch for the August Bank holiday. But more of that in some other fanzine. Ron came back on the Monday; I returned on Wednesday. He was out when I got home so thinking to get some rest – and I needed it! – I went to bed, early in the evening though it was. I hadn't been long settled when Ron came in. We were sitting having a cup of tea when the bell rang. Ron came back with a

character I'd never seen before; this turned out to be Tom Porter who had lived in Newcastle but had come to work and live in London. He had *Orion #22* with him and wanted to know why he hadn't received any more... this wasn't the reason for his visit to me, but he just thought he'd mention it. After a couple of hours with Tom who left early, Ron and I had a couple of hands at cards then off to bed he went.

First of the out of town visitors to come was, I believe, Ken Cheslin. Ken had to stay at the Roehampton Hospital for a few weeks and it wasn't all that far from me. Any chance he got to come up he took and sometimes he was able to get them to release him for the weekend. Round about this time we had word that Bruce Burn would be arriving in England from New Zealand on the 27th August. Ron was trying to arrange a reception committee for him at Southampton and the SFCoL were to give him a surprise party at my house. On July 31st the club went on a picnic. Arthur had hired a Bedford* for us and when we returned to London that night I well remember sitting in Arthur's car with him, Ron, and Ken down some dingy back street planning a ploy for Bruce. This was the plan. When the boys got to Waterloo Station, Arthur, who would have checked at which platform they were coming in, would allow himself to be bumped by Ron who would apologise for his clumsiness. As he turned away he'd call to Arthur: "can you tell us how to get to Putney?"

** One of the popular Bedford vans of the 1950s/1960s, the minibus model of which was fitted out with seats. The Liverpool group used the same model to travel to at least one early 1960s Eastercon.*

Arthur was to say: "If you wait a minute while I check the time of a train I can take you there, I have the car outside." Ron would make sure the offer was accepted and arrange with the others to see them another day. Of course he'd be seeing them at the party in the evening, but Bruce wasn't to know that. On the way to Putney Arthur wouldn't speak unless spoken to; it was doubtful that Bruce would even realise the driver was being ignored, he'd be too busy rubber-necking out the windows... we hoped. At first Arthur wanted to lean out and call: "Courtesy of the GDA*," but we discarded that in favour of him keeping his anonymity until Ron brought Bruce to the house that night; he wouldn't use his key but would give a special code ring. Arthur was to open the door and see if Bruce recognised in him the driver of the afternoon. I hoped it would work.

** Goon Defective Agency; see the TAFF ebook The Goon Omnibus by John Berry.*

The Penitentiary was keeping “open house” by now and fen were in and out practically all the time. Various publishing schedules were met, such as OMPA, *Skyrack*, and the different BSFA publications that had to come out whatever else went by the board. The next date for which anything definite was planned was August 24th when Andy was returning from Amsterdam. I’d left a door key for him with a friend of mine as it was likely he’d be in before I got home from work. In fact as I got out of the train I saw them with camera ready primed. Ron had been pretty certain I’d get out of a particular car, but the train had been crowded and I’d gone further down the train so was able to sneak up behind them just in time to hear Ron say: “she must have missed it.” I toyed with the idea of leaving them there and going on home, but my better nature asserted itself and I spoke to them. Andy now has in his possession some very good pictures of Queens Park Station complete with underground train.

We didn’t have many come in that evening, but it was a nice night for all that. We kept Andy talking for hours telling us something of his trip and the people he’d met. My main impression is the amount of time they spent drinking in a dungeon type bar that had been set up for them. I suddenly realised that he wouldn’t be with us for the Burn Party (sounds like Burns night, don’t it?) as he’d be on his way next day to visit IF (Irish Fandom). Pity. [2]

Thursday 25th August 1960 was fairly quiet, which was just as well as Friday was simply murderous. Some out of town fen were coming to London to go with Ron to meet Bruce’s boat at Southampton. Ron had arranged to meet them in the booking hall of Waterloo station about 15 mins. before the train left. For some reason he had taken it into his head to phone the shipping line sometime during the afternoon. They told him the boat would be 24 hours late in docking. This was just great! He couldn’t get hold of me to let me know and I was spending the day fondly imagining I would have a nice cushy evening to myself. I’d go to bed real early with a book or maybe even *Cry* if I had one still unread. I’d be fit then for all the work facing me the next day. As I got out of the train that night I was hailed from the platform on the other track. Looking over I got my first sight of someone who had to be Chris Miller; I’d known he was coming but we’d never met before although we’d exchanged letters. Ron and Ken Cheslin were with him. A hurried conversation across the lines and all was made clear to me. They were on their way to try and catch the others at Waterloo before they’d had time to buy tickets. They would be coming back to my place later. I went home, all my fond imaginings shattered. They trooped in – there’s no other way in which to describe it –

and at the final count we had: Ted Forsyth, Jhim Linwood, Ken Cheslin, Chris Miller, I think Atom was there, but can't be sure, and Bennett. I've got the feeling I've left some out; you must put it down to my bad memory. Ghod knows how or where they all slept that night, we managed somehow. I knew Jimmy went home and Ted took Linwood back with him, the rest stayed here.

Next day, Saturday, was nothing short of hectic. Meals had to be planned off the cuff and then the lads went out while I got squared around for that night's jollity. Ethel, bless her, had come early to give me a hand and we got things done in good time. We had a wonderful Party! This was the first taste of fannish social life for Chris Miller and he took to it like a duck takes to water. Arthur was in good form and played barman to the manner born. Archie (Mercer) had turned up sometime during the day and was right in there punning like mad, Ron and Ted were busy discussing the kind of shots they might be able to get in Southampton.... with their cameras. Ethel was being helpful in every way she could while managing to have a rare old time as well. The Potters had come, but Irene wasn't really fit to enjoy a party and had to be taken home early. That episode is worth an article in itself! Tom Porter had heard there was a party and came along with his portable radio which he listened to on the landing; the noise in the room wasn't conducive to good hearing. Round about 3 a.m. those who were going to meet Bruce had to make a move. They phoned for a taxi and went off in high spirits. This seemed to bring things down to a slower tempo. We sat around talking about fannish matters such as fanzines etc. It must have been 6-ish when we broke it up and found ourselves places in which to get a bit of shuteye.

Next morning we looked a haggard lot as we sloped round putting the fenden to rights, washing glasses etc., and generally hiding any signs of the previous night's high jinks. We didn't want to make Bruce jealous when he finally got here. It must have been about noon when the last of the party left, with the exception of Jimmy Groves who wanted to stay on and meet Bruce after having attended his party an' all.

Archie was the first to come back of the bunch who had gone to Southampton. He was full of the good time they'd had and of the hospitality given them by Jill Adams who lives down there. I'm glad she was able to take part even if not for long in some of the fannish goings on. Enjoy it, Jill? Archie had a train to catch for home and sleep. Fed but unrested he went his way with still no sign of Burn, though Archie assured me he had indeed landed. Remarkably negligent, those immigration fellows. Arthur returned unexpectedly. As he put it: "I've stayed up all

night to meet Bruce Burn and I'm gonna see Bruce Burn!"

Jimmy finally had to go home and hadn't been gone very long before Ted showed up. He told us that Ron had gone with Bruce to drop his bags off and they would probably be at my place by 7:30. I was loafing on the bed trying without much interest to read the Sunday papers which had so far lain unopened. Right then I felt I couldn't care less if Bruce turned up or not. We'd spent two hectic nights preparing for him; all our ploys had come to naught and I was tired, so it was something of an anti-climax when the room door opened and Ron escorted a bewildered and apologetic Bruce in to us.

We did our best to make him feel one of us. Arthur asked him where the hell he'd been? I, intending to prove that whatever the boys had told him wasn't true and I was so hospitable, gave him a man-sized tot of whisky, and generally fussed round him. He drank it uncomplainingly and it was only weeks after he told me he can't stand the stuff; he prefers beer! Oh well, serve him right.

Nobody stayed late that night – they were all too tired for much in the way of fannish wit or chatter.

[1] *BSFA Newsletter* (First series) #2 (July 1960)

[2] *Orion* #26 (November 1960, ed. Parker)

September 1960: Late Summer Madness

That weekend and the following couple of days the tempo seemed to have slowed somewhat, which means we had an occasional evening to ourselves. It didn't last for longer because Andy Main was coming back from Irish Fandom on the Wednesday and this would be his last visit to us before he returned to the States in time for the Pittcon. We just *had* to have a party. Cor! What a night that was. Nothing elaborate, just drinks and natter, but what natter. This was Bruce's first sample of an English fan gathering. I think he enjoyed himself; I know he's never been the same since, sorta tired and dazed. All the gang turned up for this with the exception of George and Arthur. I managed to coax the Bulmers over who arrived complete with baby daughter.

I'm not saying the Scots have taken over London Fandom, but they seem to be making their influence felt. Andy and Ron were taking pics during the evening as was Ted. Ted was the only one with bulbs for his flash so the other two rode on them for their film. Three cameras on one flash! Talk about synchronisation. It worked too.

After most everyone else had gone, the Bulmers stayed on for some talk. I made tea and we sat quietly listening again to Andy telling how he'd enjoyed himself with WAW and the others. Then the Bulmers too had to be on their way.

I didn't go to work next day as I wanted to see Andy off. It was then he offered to write the report for me, the first part of which is further back. We were sorry to see him go; he'd mixed in very well with our crowd and had become one of us. Need I say more? Except that we'd like to see him again one day.... Jean too.

Things really did seem quiet after he'd gone. Ken Cheslin had gone home the Sunday previous. Ron was leaving on Friday as school was due again. All of a sudden the flat seemed too big for just Fred and I. How he managed to remain as good tempered as he did through it all I'll never know; especially as we had invaded his room any time there was anything on TV we particularly wanted to see. But we paid him back.

Chris Miller was still in London staying with his grandparents but coming to my place in the evenings. Friday being BSFA night he came early as did Jimmy Groves. Ted, Bruce and Don Geldart had gone to see

Ron off at the station and came along later. I was, as usual, loafing on the bed when these three came. They formed a line beside the bed and Ted was first. Handing me a box of peppermint creams he said: "Ron knows you like these and he hopes you enjoy them." I made sounds indicative of thanks, and Don came next with *his* offering. He held out another box of peppermint creams saying: "Ron sent you these, enjoy them." By now I was suspicious, even more so when I saw that Bruce was there with his hand behind his back. That's right, *another* box of peppermint creams. By now I was rolling on the bed with laughter, but more was yet to come. When I looked up the line beside the bed had reformed and Ted and Don made grave presentation of yet another box each, both from Ron, and here was Bruce again. No, not a box but a third roll of Polo mints. Now I was past being able to say thank you or anything else. On that note the evening set off and couldn't be anything less than a success.

The Sunday following the peppermint creams episode was a meeting day for the SFCoL and unknown to me a dirty ploy had been cooked up with the connivance of Bennett, Forsyth and Patrizio. The business section of the meeting had been concluded and I was laying out the vittles when the bell rang. (I must remember to have it removed.) I looked round counting noses to myself and all who were coming had already arrived. Wondering who the devil this could be but quite unsuspecting I watched Ted go down to open the door. As I heard him come back upstairs I looked out the door of the room to see Joe Patrizio smiling all over his face. The surprise was complete. Ted had heard from Joe that he was coming to London for an interview and Ted had told him of the club meeting suggesting he come to my place without letting me know he was expected. Everyone at that meeting knew he was coming with the exception of myself.... He got the job and is now living in London in the same house as Ted.

It didn't take long for twelve hungry mouths to dispose of what I'd got in plus the chicken the two boys had brought with them. They saved my life bringing that in. I just dumped everything there was on the table and let them have at it. There's no room for weaklings at a time like this; if you don't grab you starve. Jokes, puns, the lot went winging their merry way round the company to add any savour that may be lacking in the food. The sudden transition from the sercon to the wildly faanish was a bit startling, but brother, it was good. Irene and Sheila helped out with the washing up afterwards – it seems that every time Sheila comes to my house she ends doing the washing up. Any time you want a reference, Sheila, I'll provide one. You won't like it, but I'll provide one. I went

upstairs and brought the drinks down. It hadn't been intended, but this was obviously going to be a party. We broke into shifting groups and the babble of talk must have been audible for miles, but it hadn't reached the district where lived John Phillifent, who turned up later in the evening unexpectedly. He thought to find the BSFA committee hard at work and here we were having a party; never mind, he stayed with us for a while and didn't take long to get into a heated discussion with some of the others. That was one of the swingin'est parties I was ever at. I knew the Ashworths didn't have long in London so asked them and the Potters up for a meal on Wednesday of the next week. Fools! They accepted. We didn't break up the evening very early on Saturday, it was going too well. But, all good things have to end and I did have the committee meeting to finish the next day. This was also the last time I would see Chris Miller for some time as he was going back home. Chris had been the only one to obey the embargo on visits for the Saturday so missing out on one of the best parties. Sorry, Chris. The meeting closed, Archie and Peter fed, they went back to their respective abodes. Chris left soon after.

I was tired, but the memories I had garnered couldn't be bought for cash.

Digression here. While I was roughing this out yesterday, Sunday, I had a visit from Ted, Joe and Bruce. It transpires that Bruce has taken a room in the same house.

– *Orion* #26 (November 1960, ed. Parker)

September 1960: BSFA

I'd like to pick a small bone with some of our members living in and near London. I warned you that no personal invitations would be sent out to attend the Friday night meetings at my house for BSFA members. This still applies. Some of you have taken me up on it and come regularly, but there are still more of you who, up to now, haven't put in an appearance. We have roped in two new members since these meetings began. Patrick Kearney who, unfortunately, after only two visits has had to go into hospital (I hope this was only coincidence, Pat?) and Phillip Slater who did the same as Pat and brought his membership fee with him and paid on the spot. Until those two did that the record for joining in the shortest possible time had been held by Mrs. Joyce Shorter (Sorry, Joyce. No pun was intended there). Joyce wrote, I answered, she sent her subscription, all in the space of one week or just under, which is pretty good going. We now have another member I'd like to welcome among us: Dr. Ellis Passer of South Africa; he is another who wasted no time at all in joining. Ellis hopes to be in England for a visit in December and I hope he'll be coming along to one or more of our meetings as he promised. You see? It doesn't pay to let Friday pass without attending; you never know who is going to turn up, and I'll lay odds it will be the one week you don't bother to come that some out of town visitor will be here.

At the meeting of Friday Sept. 16th we had the pleasure of Ian McAulay's company; unfortunately this was one week on which the attendance was poor: only Jimmy Groves and Mike Raynor turned up. I know Ted Forsyth would have been here but for the fact he'd gone home for a week to visit his parents. I was most disappointed and I know Ian was too, that more of you didn't come. Ian had been hoping to meet quite a number of you for the first time; the more so as he seldom gets the chance to come and see us.

Chris Miller was another member I met for the first time this Summer. I'd been looking forward to meeting Chris and having some good chinwags with him. It so happened that he was here when most everyone else was too. At least we've met, and as he'll be going up to Oxford soon (work hard, Chris) I'm hoping he'll be able to come and see me pretty often. Alan Rispin was another who dropped in on his way to and from a holiday on the Continent. I don't know who he's hiding from, but he's grown a magnificent beard. If you were trying to fool me, Alan, it was

wasted effort; I recognised you straight away! I had the pleasure of entertaining your Librarian, Peter Mabey, and the Treasurer, Archie Mercer, here for a weekend on the 10th of Sept. Ostensibly they came for a committee meeting, but the Saturday turned into a party with about fourteen assorted members and others, including some I hadn't expected to see again until next year's Convention. It was a riot. John Phillifent put in an unexpected appearance and got the shock of his life, I think, when he saw how many were here; he'd been expecting to find only the committee in session, and here we were having a good time instead!

Joe Patrizio will now be living in London! Joe has got himself a job here and has moved in with his life-long friend Ted Forsyth. (Why don't you all move to London?) With so many of you here now I've got high hopes that the Friday night meetings will be well worth your while attending; I'm even hoping that George Locke – who is serving his time in the army – will be able to wangle an evening now and again. He was here this week, newly returned from two weeks leave in Ireland. And once or twice we had Ken and Pamela Bulmer here for an evening.

This sounds like a roll call of visitors, but I think it might be of interest to you to know that as far as possible I do like to have a personal visit from you – any of you – when the opportunity offers. I don't suppose I'll see any of them again until the holiday season starts up next year.... oh yes, the Convention at Easter. I hope you will all be coming? As many of you as possible, at any rate. [1]

On the following Monday, a Los Angeles fan named Paul Turner turned up unannounced with his family, looking for somewhere to stay.

I said they could stay with me. Well, what else *could* I do? They had that young baby with them and not much money. One thing about which I was annoyed. They must have known they were coming to England. I mean, you don't just grab your family, pile them into the car and hie off to England; besides they had a list of fan names culled from 4e Ackerman's copy of the Fan Directory, why couldn't they have dropped a card at least, to the Bulmers or someone to say they'd be making the rounds? As it was, they just turned up on people's doorsteps without any warning. I'd never heard of him before and I've not heard from him since. It won't happen again. Anyone who turns up without warning like that will have to find a hotel for themselves.

Wednesday arrived and with it the Potters and Ashworths. As the Turners were here so I couldn't have the kind of evening I'd planned with

them anyway, I phoned and wrote around asking the crowd to come along too. I phoned Ethel and asked her if it would be possible for her to make it. Her hours of duty are so demanding I never know when she's likely to be free. We were lucky in this case, she had a day off, and we sat down 8 to table. Well, that's not quite true. Bruce came straight from work and in need of a meal so we sat him on the floor with his plate. Fans kept dropping in one after the other. Just as I was dishing up the sweet the bell rang out again. I didn't take much notice; I figured I was ready for whoever it might be. How wrong can you get? I looked round as the door opened and almost dropped the plate I was on the point of handing to Sheila. Ian McAulay! I wasn't expecting to see *him* until October, but here he was and I had to make the best of a bad job. I dashed out and phoned the Bulmers to find out if they could come up, for a couple of hours at least. I didn't say Ian was here! Yes, it was *another* party. Those who had filtered in were: Ted, Joe, Bruce, Ethel, Potters, Ashworths, Bulmers, McAulay (by a trick) and Don Geldart and of course, the Turners. This was the night the Dean Drive came up for – you could hardly call it discussion, things got so heated. Ian contented himself with being facetiously contemptuous about it. Mal was keen to worry at it to see if there was any possibility of it working, while Paul Turner was positive it would work; so sure was he about it that he was going to build himself a model of it as soon as he got home. Ken Bulmer every now and again would drop a quiet word into the talk if things looked like flagging and off they'd go again. Not many people notice this trick Ken has for preventing a conversation dying. It gives me a lot of amusement to sit there and watch it work every time.

Ashworths were leaving town on Friday and goodness knows when we'll see them again. This wasn't the last I saw of Ian. He had thoroughly upset my evening so I mused, it had to be paid back and soon. I knew he was to be at the Bulmers' over the weekend. I knew too, that Arthur intended calling on them to meet Ian. I arranged with him to pick me up and take me with him. Pamela opened the door to us; I laid my finger across my lips and hung back while Arthur strode into the room where they were sitting. Ken introduced them: "Mr McAulay, meet Mr Thomson." And that, much to Ian's disgust was how Arthur addressed him for the rest of the evening. The look of horror on Ian's face when I walked in made it well worth the trouble taken to go out. Ted Tubb was there and we spent a pleasant time altogether. Not crowded or hectic, but pleasant. We reorganised Anglomania – they haven't noticed it yet, but we did – talked of the BSFA and lots of other things. It was all so congenial I only

just made the last train home. Pamela offered me a night's sleep over there and much as I would've liked to accept I couldn't as I had Alan Rispin coming to stay that night at my place. When I got home Alan was already in bed; Fred had let him in.

The Turners left for a week to tour Britain then came back. Ian attended the BSFA meeting at my house then left London for a few days. He dropped by to see me once more before leaving for the North; Sheffield, I think it was. No-one has seen or heard of him since. [2]

[1] *Vector* #9 (September 1960, ed. Jim Groves)

[2] *Orion* #26 (November 1960, ed. Parker)

November 1960: Hyde Parker

I was dismayed when we drove through the gates one day at Marble Arch to see that hordes of workmen were ripping up the ground at “Speakers’ Corner” in Hyde Park. What, I wondered, would Khaki Joe do for a living now? If he wasn’t dead, that is. I haven’t seen him or any of the others for some years, now.

Khaki Joe was so-called for the simple reason that he always wore handed-down army togs. Whether they were relics of his own days in the forces or things he’d cadged I wouldn’t know for sure. I’d be inclined to think the latter; they looked too good to have lasted him from WWI. Joe was about fifty, tall and thin. Rumour had it that he lived in a stable, and from his general appearance, you could well believe it. I never saw him well shaved nor yet with a beard of any length. Always there was a dirty grey stubble around his chin and an unlighted fag dangling from his lips. I never saw him with a full-length cigarette, either. If you gave him one, he’d break it into three and smoke them when he saw fit. Maybe he sold them to tramps; I wouldn’t know but I wouldn’t put it past him. A great one for making a shilling, was Joe. He always wore a greasy cap and walked round with an eternal dew-drop hanging from the end of his nose.

Joe used to hire platforms and soap-boxes out to those who wanted to speechify and hadn’t got their own. Anyone who tried to bilk him or retain use of a platform for longer than they’d paid him would get the rough edge of his tongue and they’d never try it again. His language more than matched the stable he was supposed to live in. This was the only time he was heard to speak. A couple of times I tried to draw him into conversation, but mostly all I got were grunts that could have meant anything, so I soon gave up. I never heard of anyone else having better success with him.

One chap who never used to have to hire from Joe was Mr Cox. I don’t know when I’ve ever seen anyone so well named. He was a quietly dressed business man with snowy white hair and chubby red cheeks. He used to drive up in his car with his platform strapped on the roof. He was a bore. Mighod, he was a bore! He was one of the many bible-punchers that used to come there to “spread the Gospel”, as he phrased it. The hecklers used to leave him alone unless they were so bored with nobody else there to heckle they had no choice but to give him a taste of it. It wasn’t much fun, though, because he was such an earnest, *good* little man and ignored

them and their attempts to throw him off his stride. What fun is it to heckle someone who didn't realise he was being heckled? So there he'd stand on his platform talking to himself about the love to be found in God, with only an occasional passer-by hesitating before going on his way to hear what he was saying. Poor Mr Cox. He could never hold an audience. Even in those days a gimmick was useful.

Like the man we called "Happy Harry" or "Southend Harry"; the first because he was unashamedly happy and the second because he used to spend all his Bank Holidays on the beach at Southend, preaching the Gospel. If he saw you there and recognised you as being from Hyde Park, he'd up and welcome you like an old friend. I haven't seen him there myself, but I know a couple of people to whom this happened. Harry had a voice that carried. He'd have the bible in his hand, waving and flourishing it around for all to see. Then he'd burst into one of those old-time hymns and skip around the park in a small circle singing his heart out, with an occasional "Hallelujah!" to liven up the proceedings. Harry always managed to get a crowd. Maybe because he *was* so happy and it was infectious. He'd take all the heckling they handed out with the best of tempers and even gave them their answer if he thought of a good one in time. I have only once seen him really upset. The gang had converged on his meeting and he took all their cracks with his usual good nature, until one of the chaps called out to him: "Harry, do you save women?" Being naive in the extreme, Harry agreed that he did; after all, weren't they God's creatures, too? "Okay," says the wag, "save me two for midnight tonight." I thought he was going to burst a blood vessel. His face turned crimson; whether from temper or embarrassment it was hard to say. He gave the wag a dressing down he didn't forget in a hurry. It was agreed from then on that heckling Harry was all right, but keep it clean...

One little old man I'll never forget. 4 o'clock Charlie, he was called. Sharp at that time every day he'd come to a particular section of the park and hold a short prayer meeting. The formula never varied from one month to the next. Consequently, his audience were as familiar with what he had to say as he was; sometimes even more so. Every afternoon – Sundays excepted – Charlie would parade up and down behind the trees waiting for 4 o'clock so he could come and hold his meeting. We used to watch him looking at the clock way across the park through a pair of binoculars; then, bang on the dot, down he'd come with his old Gladstone bag. Goodness knows what was in it; he never once opened it all the time I knew him. Poor old Charlie; he'd used the same words in the same order for so long he used to go blank sometimes and forget what came next. When this

happened, he'd turn exasperatedly to his crowd and snarl: "Come on, you know it as well as I do. What comes next?" This really used to crease me. He was ooold; nearly eighty, I'd say, and feeble with it. Physically, I mean. He was obviously a bit touched in the head as well, but he was harmless. After his little meeting was over, he'd totter out of the park and disappear, no-one knew where to. He was never seen coming into the park and once out of the gates no-one knew which way he went. It was almost as if the ground opened up and swallowed him until his time came round the next day.

I think of all the weird characters that came to the park, the one for whom I felt most sorry was "The Shorthand Professor." He was tall, gangly and awkward-looking. He walked with a stoop, and never looked warm, even in summer. His clothes were ragged and none too clean and, of course, he had the inevitable unshaven look about him. He used to slope across the park dragging his box and platform with him. I've done my share of heckling, but this was one man I couldn't annoy. The things they used to *do* to him make my blood run cold, just remembering. It was no use trying to appeal to their better nature; the hecklers were eight to one anyway and thought it all a huge joke. I was standing there one afternoon watching and listening to what was going on. I don't know why I did it, I didn't see anything to make me suspicious, but I mooched round to the rear of the Professor and there; just in the act of pushing a lump of lighted paper down his trousers was one of the men! I was able to stop it in time, and the poor old man just thought we were playing the fool behind his back, which in a way, was true. I remember reading something Paul Enever wrote once about courage; I've never ceased to wonder what it was that drove this old man out to the park when he knew what would happen to him. Many other things, much worse, were done to him that it sickens me to think of them, but still he came back. What drove him?

– *Smoke #4* (November 1960, ed. George Locke)

March 1961: The BSFA Tug of War

The BSFA was created to bring people into fandom. That was its actual purpose. Its stated purpose was the furtherance of science fiction. This dichotomy was to cause increasing friction between the fannish fans – or “faans” – and their more SF-centric – or sercon – brethren. It would come to a head at the 1964 Eastercon, but there were rumblings before then.

Again the eternal argument has come up about faan v BSFA non-fan members. It was revived by Daphne Buckmaster in a letter she wrote to *Vector* #10. I at first intended to answer her in detail, point by point, to show how ridiculous her arguments are, but I don't think the non-fannish element among you would be in the least interested in such arguments so I shall save what I have to say for a private letter, or even better, tell her if she turns up at the Convention.

Your editor has made some of the points I would have done, but I would also like to remind Daphne that it was the faans who got the BSFA going in the first place and who have worked hardest for its continuation. I fear the kind of Association envisaged by Daphne and some others would be wealthy in numbers if not in cash with little if any interest in the Association and its affairs being felt by said members. Speaking now as a member like yourselves and not as one of its officers, I don't care how small we remain just as long as those who have joined are as interested in the well-being and continuance of it as I am. Rather a small band of willing and enthusiastic members than a large unwieldy and completely disinterested membership list of faceless names.

Taking full advantage of my position to see your letters before they are printed, I would ask you to read the letter sent in by John Phillifent before going on with this. John “agrees wholeheartedly with every word she (Daphne) wrote”. Here I go again. John and I, at one time, had a fierce correspondence going on this very subject. John seems to imagine that our – or is it my? – sole aim is to make faans of all of you. Nothing could be more wrong. I neither deny nor apologise for making it known to you that such a thing as fandom exists and the wide field of amateur publishing, but that is as far as I go. Having been made aware, the next step is yours. The fact that many of you have joined us in the wider scope provided by

fandom is a feather in our caps of which we are rightly proud. But we don't feel for you, the non-faan, the pitying contempt that John feels for us who *are* faans. I just cannot understand his intolerance. We don't ram fandom down his throat, we don't try to wean him to our way of thinking. Why then should he take every opportunity to blast us as he does, not only in *Vector* I would remind you, but in the fanzines which are faanish publications. Be happy without fandom, John, but please, allow us the same right to be happy in fandom. The loss is not ours.

For the rest of John's allegations about the BSFA "being run by, and heavily slanted toward fandom" I can only invite him and some of the 200,000 who pay for SF to come in and take office. I can imagine how deadly dull the Association would become then. I wonder would it have lasted the three years that it has run so far had they been at the helm?

It's no use, I just can't work up any enthusiasm for this argument with him when it is only a rehash of what passed between us last year.

It is a sad fact that this is my last "official" column for you in my capacity as Secretary. At Easter I hand the position over to Joe Patrizio. Joe is a Scot who has come to live and work in London, and who has, right from the start, shown an interest in the Association and its affairs that is most heartening.

Friday night meetings will continue at my place, and as Joe is a regular attendee you will be able to meet him there, those of you who manage to get along; he'll be at the Convention, too. I have enjoyed my year's work with you, and I have made many new friends as a direct result of it. Now I retire into the shadows and become once more "just a member", but I'll be watching you.

'Bye now and a Happy Convention.

It's all yours, Joe.

– *Vector* #11 (Spring 1961, ed. Jim Groves)

March 1961: We Had a Convention!

Oh, brother, did we ever have a Convention! This year's was my fourth and the one I've enjoyed best to date. Our sincere and heartfelt thanks to the Con Committee who worked so hard to make it the success it so assuredly was: Eric Jones, Keith Freeman, Tony Walsh, Bob Parkinson and Ethel Lindsay. I only hope they weren't all too tired to enjoy the result of their efforts themselves.

Friday night opened the proceedings with a film show which, quite frankly, dragged. That is the only adverse criticism that I personally can level at the whole weekend. Had the films shown then been of a more interesting nature we wouldn't have grudged so much the time involved which prevented us from partying and nattering together.

The series of parties began in the room of Alan Rispin. We were having the whale of a time when someone knocked for admission – or so we thought. Our first impulse was to shout: “drop dead”, it's as well we didn't because on being told to enter, the countenance of an irate tenant was disclosed demanding that we allow his 2 yrs old child to get some sleep that night. No sense of the fitness of things, some people. Being our first night in the hotel it was obvious that if we didn't want the party atmosphere to dissipate entirely we would have to move to another room. Among the assembled crowd I can't remember who it was called out the number of the next room we should grace with our company, but the room turned out to belong to Eddie Jones.

Eddie was lodged in a single, single room, if you know what I mean. It was already quite crowded when I arrived but still plenty of room for more as we gauge these things. Ian McAulay had seated himself on a piece of the furniture which ensured him of space to breathe if not of comfort and as I was standing next to him it meant that each time the door opened to admit even more fen I had to lean far over him to allow them in. A little of this was too much for Ian and he gave up his seat in favour of standing and taking his chance in the melee. I didn't waste any time. Before he'd had the chance to decide the best place to stand I had occupied his vacated place on the furniture. It was now Bob Parkinson's turn to do the leaning act every time the door opened which was frequently.

I am bound to miss someone out as it was difficult to see exactly who

was there, but from where I was sitting I could see Tony Walsh and Audrey Eversfield standing as near to the window as they could get without actually going out of it. The crush later became so bad that Audrey passed out, more from the crush of people than from anything she'd had to drink. Going round the room from the right-hand side and sitting on the floor next to the wash basin there was Peter Mabey. Peter was next to the foot of the bed sitting on which we had: Ina Shorrocks, Ted Tubb, Sandra Hall, and the room on the bed immediately in front of them was occupied at different times by various people. At the head of the bed and immediately in front of the door was standing: Ian McAulay, Joe Patrizio and Bob Parkinson. On the floor just in front of me was a higgledy-piggledy of bodies inextricably mixed. The heads I saw belonged to Don Geldart, Ethel Lindsay, who had been pushed into the room with such force that she'd landed among the crowd on the floor without a hope of getting up again without a major operation being performed on her and some of the others holding her down, and Brian Jordan. This little lot were sitting on the legs of Jhim Linwood, Alan Rispin and his girl friend Diane – I never did discover her surname. [*Goulding – Rob*]

So far I have only mentioned a few of those who were at that particular party as the crowd kept ebbing and flowing. I do know that at one point in the evening someone counted noses and discovered there were 40 fen in the room! Through it all Eddie sat on part of the bed looking so forlorn; all he wanted was the chance to go to bed and sleep. I gave up fairly early in the proceedings going to my room about 2:30 a.m. I know there were parties on the go for much longer than that, but there was the rest of the weekend to go. I believe that Bruce Burn and Ian McAulay stayed up every night until 6.a.m. They were welcome.

I should perhaps mention here that we had two Guests of Honour this year. From the world of prodom we had Kingsley Amis and from our small world of fandom we had Archie Mercer and it couldn't have been offered to a nicer or more deserving guy. Archie has always been most generous with his time and money in the cause of fandom and after having spent three years as Treasurer of the British Science Fiction Association it was long past time for us to show some appreciation of what he has done. Good on you, Archie. Kingsley Amis was an entirely different kettle of fish. At first sight one was inclined to dislike him because of what looked like the beginnings of a sneer on his face. Remembering what non-fan pros have said and thought of fans in the past, when I saw him I thought he was there in a spirit of condescending tolerance. Once having become acquainted with him, he isn't like that at all. Long and loud were his

complaints that he hadn't known about our Conventions before and he was going to come to next year's, by golly. We even subjected him to a room party, an ordeal to which he stood up manfully, so much so that he returned for some more of the same the next night. Yes, a nice fellow, Amis. I liked him as I believe most of the others did.

The first item of any interest on the Saturday programme was a talk by a BSFA member who is also a teacher: Geoff Doherty. The title given it was "An Alien in the Academy", SF being the Alien. Without knowing that he wrote for the newspapers a crowd of us on Friday evening had been talking to Geoff telling him, at his own request, about fandom. He was fascinated by it and wrote a very fair report of the Convention and its members for the Saturday's Manchester Guardian. He sparked off some very interesting comments and argument and seemed to be thoroughly enjoying his place on the hot-seat. After lunch we gathered to watch the slide show which had been prepared for us and sent over by Don Ford. Don, who attended last year's Convention as TAFF Delegate had been so pleased with our reception for the show he put on for us then, that he thought we might like to see more. I have only one complaint to make about its presentation and that is that Don put his commentary on tape this year instead of coming over to give it in person. A Ford slide show is something not to be missed!

The main event scheduled for Saturday afternoon was the talk to be given us by our GoH. Brian Aldiss introduced him to us in jocular manner which at times seemed a mite laboured. This could have been over-anxiety on my part to hear what Amis had to say. I know there are going to be many reports giving the gist of what he said so I won't waste time telling you here; I'll leave it to those better qualified to do it. I must place on record our delight with his gift of repartee especially when answering Ted Tubb. Amis had made some remark about pornography in SF. Relative to a comment made by Amis, Ted said he had been disgusted to find SF being used as a vehicle for pornography. Not knowing Ted's reputation Amis retorted: "...I must be more sophisticated and-blasé than you, but..." This brought roars of laughter and left Ted without a retort of his own.

The rest of Saturday passed in a blur of meals eaten, walks taken in order to get some air, and quick visits made to the Con-hall in order to keep an eye on what was being done at any given moment just so I wouldn't miss out on anything I particularly wanted to see or hear. As the afternoon wore on towards evening excitement was mounting in anticipation of the coming fancy dress party and dance. Nurses had been invited from a local hospital in order to ensure that the lads had a choice of

females with which to dance instead of, as in the past, being thrown on the mercies of the few femmes usually present at these dos. We were bitterly disappointed to find they had accepted our invitation not only for themselves, but for their boy friends as well!

Costumes ranged from the grotesque to the attractive with many in-betweens. Outstanding were the mask worn by Dave Kyle, the bird costume worn by Ina Shorrocks (which won first prize in the parade) and that horrible eye in the middle of her forehead worn by Ruth Kyle. Worth a very special mention in my opinion, was the witch's outfit, complete with besom, worn by Diane (Alan Rispin's friend), both for its simplicity and impressiveness; she really looked the part... if that isn't being rude. Ted Tubb, Bruce Burn, Bob Hawkins, Brian Burgess, Bob Richardson, Pat Kearney and Don Geldart had brought out once more the armour, swords etc. that had been worn and used with such good effect when the London crowd visited Cheltenham at Whitsun two years ago. They started a sword fight with more enthusiasm than regard for rules, if any there were, and it was worth a front row seat to see Ted Tubb matched against Brian Burgess. Talk about trying to move the immovable! Burgess just stood there and let them all come at him; so well encased was he that there was no spot through which they could reach him.

Dancing – or what I saw of it – was patchy, many of them preferring to stand at the bar drinking and forming discussion groups. I was off in a corner of the hall with Ken Slater, Dave Barber, Ian McAulay, Jim Groves and a couple of others talking about SF. That was one thing about this Convention which caused much comment. No matter where you went or at what time of day or night you would come across a small group tucked away somewhere discussing SF. Whether, as has been argued, this was due to the influence of the BSFA members present, or not, I wouldn't like to say. I have noticed that even at our SFCL club meetings it is talked about a lot more than it was in the past. Maybe it's coming back into fashion or favour?

Much later on Saturday night Ethel and I went upstairs to get ready for the company we were expecting to visit our little suite we had to ourselves tucked away in a nice little corner of the hotel. We even had a door which could be shut closing us off entirely from the rest of the hotel any time we felt downright unsociable. Need I say it was never used? The party was held in high good spirits and was an interesting mixture of the faanish and sercon. Here too SF came in for its share of attention during the jollity. Ethel remarked to me next day of two intriguing conversations, snippets of which she had over heard. To one side they were talking about

SF and on the other there was Phil Rogers and I talking about the fascinating way in which Dave Barber wiggled his ears. This must prove summat, but I don't know what. We were keeping pretty well open house between the two rooms and as there wasn't room for all of them in Ethel's place the overflow was passing through into mine. This makes it difficult to know who was at ours and who had gone off looking for another party elsewhere. I do remember seeing Phil Rogers, Dave Barber, Don Geldart, Ted Carnell (who had turned up unexpectedly and most welcome he was too), Jimmy Rattigan, Ted Tubb, Ted Forsyth, Joe Patrizio, Alan Rispin and Diane (that name again!), Brian Aldiss, Brian Jordan, Jhim Linwood, Jeff Doherty, Ian McAulay (you could have guessed he'd be there!), two Shorrockses, Kingsley Amis, Ken Slater, Bobbie and Bill Gray, Ron Bennett, Bruce Burn, Daphne Buckmaster, Keith Freeman, Margaret and Eric Jones, and last but not least Arthur Thomson, who had come down for one day and was acting barman very capably. It was a good party.

I trailed off to bed somewhere about 4:30 a.m. I had to have some sleep as the BSFA was holding its A.G.M the following morning. We had a disappointingly small audience for this but those who were present showed they were actively interested in what the Association were doing and had many suggestions to make for an improved service. I don't want to give the appearance of gloating even if I am, but all the suggestions are now the business of Joe Patrizio who is this years Secretary. Good luck, Joe! Ken Slater, Ted Carnell, Eric Bentcliffe and Norman Shorrock came up with some pretty good ideas and were most helpful and encouraging in what they had to say about the Association's affairs. I think it was a most successful meeting. Further on in the magazine you will see a notice mentioning a fund which was launched during this session. As most of you have heard by now Doc Weir died just a couple of weeks before the Convention. Doc was actively interested in the BSFA and has done a lot of constructive work for us in the form of writing for our official magazine *Vector* among other things. We have launched the "Doc Weir Memorial Fund" to buy books for the BSFA library which was a part of the Association which was very nearly his prime interest. You don't have to be a member of the BSFA to help in this worthy project and I'd like to see us with something well worth his memory.

After the business of the meeting had been completed we were free to go to lunch and Ethel and those who were acting in our club's (SFCoL) playlet written and produced by Bruce Burn, were also free to get the shakes and a bad case of butterfly stomach. This they did. We had a slight delay which is after all in the fannish tradition, and which did nothing to

make our actors and actress feel any better, and then they were off – or do I mean on! Jimmy Groves and Bruce Burn had the stage to themselves for the opening and as they got into their parts it began to sound quite good to me out in the wings. Ethel, who had a song to sing in her part, was standing waiting to make her entrance and I hope I never again meet anyone with such a bad attack of the shakes. Never mind; once on stage she did us and herself credit. Congratulations, you three.

Now we were all set for the fannish *This Is Your Life*. The big question in everyone's mind was: WHOSE?? After some deliberate delaying tactics such as approaching those he had no intention of hauling up to the stage Eric Bentcliffe (who MCs the item) did a quick turn round on his heels to sneak up behind Eric Jones who was sitting there supremely confident that he knew who it was to be: Terry Jeeves. He was wrong, of course, it was Eric Jones. Flustered, Eric was led to the hot-seat and had to sit through a lot of well intentioned kidding. Bruce Burn was notable as an Indian complete with sibilant accent as good as anything done by Peter Sellers. Alan Rispin too, was surprisingly good as a deaf old man, especially when he got his programmes mixed and thought he was taking part in a give-away-show called Take Your Pick. Norman Shorrock was next to come on lugging with him a whacking great machine which when attached to Eric's person gave out with lots of flashing lights and twirling antennae. There was a clock in the front of it which whipped round at an alarming rate and a slot which lit up saying TILTED. All of it completely useless. Eric's face was a picture when he saw it being carried in, as he'd made the thing himself thinking it was for Jeeves. Later in the evening Eric Bentcliffe was heard to confess he felt a bit guilty having asked Eric to make it himself, but the mood soon vanished.

Next came the TAFF auction at which Ron did his best to take what little money was left in our pockets. I did hear unofficially that he wangled £8.00 from the audience but later it might have been more as Eric Bentcliffe auctioned some of the authors present and the beards of Bob Parkinson and Bruce Burn.

Ken Slater came up with a quiz next in which he gave you some initials and you had to identify the name of an author of SF. I was very glad I'd stayed to hear it and it was surprising how many names he came up with of whom I'd never heard before! Slater is an asset to any fannish gathering. It grotches me no end that he lives too far away for him to get over to visit here. What he doesn't know about SF and its writers just wasn't worth knowing in the first place. Ghod forbid that I should put it on record that I like the man, he might find time to read this, let's just say I

don't get to see him often enough to suit me.

Now we all broke up for tea and general natter in readiness for the film to be shown later in the evening, which was to be *Forbidden Planet*. After a meal I sat with Bobby Gray for a while and then did the disappearing act to my room. I'd seen the film twice already and as we were making a side trip to the Cheltenham Club rooms the next day I wanted to get my packing done without having to do it in a mad rush. Archie Mercer had kindly left his record player and records in my room. Now there are some of you who just aren't going to believe this, but with hand on heart I swear it's the truth; to the music of the bagpipes I skipped lightly round the room lifting things and putting them down someplace else only to spend the next twenty minutes looking for them. In two hours I had finished my packing so went down to pay my bill and then in to see the last half of the film. During the weekend I had raffled off two copies of the *Atom Anthology* and after the film was over I asked Eric Jones if he'd do the draw. Dave Kyle was one of the winners and Paul Andre was the other. Dave still thinks it was rigged. This was the end of the programmed items and we now had the desolate task of selling off all the posters which had made the hall look so gay and occupied. I bought one and Ethel bought me another, both of which will eventually find a home on the wall of the Penitentiary when I can figure where to place them; one is a Jeeves and one a Parkinson, both very colourful.

After dismantling the hall I went up to Ethel's room in which there was to be another party. Pretty nearly all those who had come in on the Saturday night turned up again with maybe a few extra who wandered in and out again. After the weekend I had just had I didn't feel like doing much in the way of drinking and I don't think most of the others did either. Ethel was frantic in case any of the bottles should be left with even a little in them as it went against the grain to leave them behind in that case. She kept on crying: "for Ghod's sake finish the bottles!" I am happy to report that this very thing was achieved. I chickened out again around 4:30 a.m. and didn't hear a sound when the party broke up even though they were only next door. Ethel tells me they kept it up until at least an hour after that.

On Monday morning as is the usual thing, people were disappearing from the fannish scene with regrettable regularity. Ken Slater popped his head into my room to say his goodbyes; Archie, Bobby and Bill Gray along with Keith Freeman, Ethel, Patrizio and Forsyth came in to sit and chew the rag for a while. I'll never forgive that Bill Gray; you hear me, Bill? Fancy coming into a lady's room – well, all right, mine then, and

taking a picture before I'd had the chance to even comb my hair! I'll bet it turns out a beaut, too. Knowing that I had all my packing done with the exception of a few oddments still lying around, I wasn't bothered about how long we sat and nattered. In fact I think it was about 11 a.m. when I finally turned them out so I could get up and dress. I came down to the lounge to find there were still a lot of fen sitting around tea-ing and coffee-ing. Having dispatched a couple of the lads to fetch my bags from my room, I joined Ethel Lindsay and Norman Shorrocks in a tray of very welcome tea. Most of the talk buzzing around the lounge at this time was a mixture of comments on the Con just finished and plans for the one to come next year. I don't ever remember leaving a Convention with so many plans already made and firmed up in readiness for the following year. It was good to see how enthusiastic everyone was to keep up the good work.

Bruce Burn, who was the driver for the vehicle hired by the SFCoL, had the job of carting a load of stuff back to the Cheltenham club rooms after which he was returning to collect us and take us to visit them in their natural haunts before we left for London and home. Groups were constantly forming, breaking up and reforming elsewhere all over the place. Friendships were re-affirmed, plans were made for more frequent visits to one another, and promises were made also for more frequent letters to be written. As you can see, we in Britain make our New Year Resolutions at Easter. We collected a bunch to go out for lunch at the local Chinese restaurant. This was to be our last real get-together near the Con hotel and we had: Dave and Ruth Kyle, Ina and Norman Shorrocks, Eric and Margaret Jones, Bruce, Ethel, Pat Kearney, Ted, Joe, Jimmy Groves, Eddie Jones, Norman Weedall and anyone else who hadn't already left for home. It was a leisurely meal with all of us too tired to exert ourselves to be entertaining. After we left the restaurant we broke up for the last time. In some cases we refused to say goodbye as we intended to meet at the club rooms of the Cheltenham group. We got ourselves packed and loaded into our vehicle and were away.

After having lost ourselves among all the small back streets around Cheltenham we arrived at the club to find Ken and Pamela Bulmer had got there first. Those of our group on their first visit were asked to sign the wall and being "different" they chose to start off on a new section of the wall. Audrey Eversfield and Margaret Jones brought tea round to us all and I'm pleased to record that I was given the largest cup/mug to be found in the place. That could be because they had heard I like the stuff. We stayed in the club until about 4:30 p.m. talking over the past few days and making our criticisms to Eric who wanted to know if there was anything

we thought he could have done better. We had few such criticisms to make. None of those who had promised to see us at the club, other than the members, had in fact turned up. Archie had been and gone and the Kyles hadn't shown up at all by the time we were reloaded and set to go. Goodbyes were shouted; fear was expressed that if we didn't soon get moving we might decide to stay after all so they all got behind and pushed, and as we finally took pity on them and drove off the Kyles appeared just in time to give us a wild wave of their hands. Trust them to be late!

We had a very nice, quick drive back to town arriving at my front door somewhen around 7:30 p.m. which was good going. I put the kettle on to make tea and while waiting for it to boil read a letter from Bill Donaho which was waiting for me. Half way through the letter and just as I'd made the tea (it was a long letter), the bell rang. Arthur Thomson had come along to see how the rest of the Con had gone after he'd had to leave. By now all I wanted was for the ruddy thing to finish completely. That wouldn't be until the group had dispersed to their various homes. Finally, utterly weary and talked out for the time being they broke it up and took their leave. I was left with Ron Bennett and Brian Jordan who were staying with me for the next week.

I have been reminded that I've got one thing wrong. Ina, in fact, won second prize at the dance, Eddie Jones coming first. Eddie had designed all the costumes worn by the Liverpool contingent. I have a very special word of praise for Don Geldart and the work he did on behalf of the SFCoL in the matter of a table display at the Con. Don had bought some kits and from them had built a space station and some rockets which he set against a black backcloth in a white frame. Most effective it was too. He has promised us better for next year so Ghod knows what he is planning.

– *Orion* #27 (April 1961, ed. Parker)

[Later that year Lenny Kaye's Obelisk #3 carried a report on the con by Ella, presumably a reprint of this one.]

April 1961: A West Kilburn Microcon

On Thursday (6th April) I took Brian over to visit the Tubb family, we had a pleasant evening with them and the Bulmers who joined us there. Many thanks, Ken, for the ride to the station. We heard the train come in as we dashed down the steps.

Friday night here is BSFA night. I hold a social get together for any members able to get along. I was expecting quite a bunch as a result of fens who were at the Con expecting to be in London for that particular Friday. Jordan gets an idea:

“Let’s hold a Con of our own in West Kilburn!”

No sooner thought than arranged. Brian gets to work on working out a rough programme and ran it off on the duper. I think it was also he who made the lapel badges for those we were expecting, like Gernsback, Tucker, Grennell, Bradbury, Lindsay, Patrizio, Forsyth and the others. Ethel was the first to arrive and almost left again on finding it was going to cost her sixpence (6d) to get in. Why, we even had magazines on sale! We offered her copies of *Vector*, *Orion* and the SFCoL Convention Combozine which had been run off for the bigger event in Gloucester, but we didn’t see why we shouldn’t try to cash in on the spares. Nary a one she bought. Leaving the boys to continue with their preparations for the Microcon she came up to my room and we had a natter with a couple of cups of tea. During a hasty meal the bell rang out its summons again; it was Arthur Thomson, about the only person to turn up for whom we hadn’t made out a lapel badge. He fought like a mad beast against the idea of paying to enter the Penitentiary, but Ron was on the door and wore him down. Next to appear, and unexpectedly at that (so that was two more who had to have rush badges made) were Irene and Ken Potter complete with baby. As Karen [*the baby*] would only be drinking what she had brought with her we let her in free. Big of us, wasn’t it? It was obviously going to be one of those nights so I ceased to worry about who was at the door whenever I heard the bell.

I’ve been very clever about this door deal. When the bell rings the last one to be admitted goes down to answer it. This works very well from my point of view and is fairest to all who are here. No exceptions are made no matter how honoured the guest, so watch it any of you who decide to come

to a binge at the Pen. Make sure your leg muscles are well limbered, you'll need them.

When I had made ready to join them in the Penitentiary con hall there was nearly a full house. Besides those already named there was: Jimmy Groves, Jhim Linwood from Nottingham, Don Geldart, Ted and Joe, both of them also fighting like mad against the entrance fee, but they had to pay up, and Bruce Burn. Just for once we left the subject of SF severely alone. Talk seemed to range round the next year's do and what the SFCoL should put into the programme as a team. With the money collected at the door Ron and Brian went out and bought a few bottles of cider to moisten their tonsils.

I had been expecting to see Alan Rispin and Dave Barber at this meeting (the latter being a BSFA member who helps Ken Slater a lot in his work at Fantast Medway), but neither of them showed up. I got a letter from Dave today in which he explains how he did a "Joe Patrizio" and couldn't find the house; only unlike Joe he didn't persevere and so never arrived. Arthur left early but the rest of us had ourselves a bit of a party. Later in the evening we began making arrangements for sleeping those who were staying over-night. The Potters had left so I asked Bruce if he could put Linwood and Geldart up for the night; this he agreed to do and we were all set.

The bell rang.

By now, I hope, that statement sounds as ominous to you as the actuality does to me at times. The Potters had returned being unable to get their train connections for home; thank goodness they had the sense to come back in good time even though it meant rearranging the sleeping plan we had made. It was now decided that Linwood and Jordan would share a mattress on the floor and Geldart would share a bed with Bennett. It had to be done that way as all my blankets were in use. This too met with general approval and soon after Bruce and the Potter family left. We: Ron, Don, Jhim, Brian and I, sat around talking and I made a start on tea-making again when... the bell rang!

We looked at the time, it was about 11:15 p.m., and began speculating on who it could be. Jhim and Brian said it might be Rispin. I looked again at the time and thought it too late for him. I thought it might be the Potters back having maybe forgotten something. On reflection we were getting nowhere fast, not even to the front door, so Brian went down and returned with Rispin. I don't know if this will prove my innate lack of hospitality but on seeing him my first reaction was: "where the hell am I going to sleep him?"

I decided not to worry my head about it until I'd had a cup of tea. We had a scrappy supper, and that means exactly what it says. We scrounged around collecting scraps of this and that left from previous meals during the day and early evening. While we were eating Bennett came up with the only sensible solution to the sleeping problem:

“Let's have a hand at cards” says he.

We sat playing until 5 a.m., and by then I was so tired, as were the others, we didn't care where Alan was going to sleep. I went to my room and left it to them to sort themselves out.

When I finally rolled out of bed on Saturday morning and went down to see about making the matutinal cups of tea and coffee I found that Don Geldart had already departed without disturbing anyone. I'm sorry that you left without breakfast, Don. I hadn't realised you wanted to leave quite that early. Saturday was very quiet as they all went out for the day and by the time they came back at night I had long ago gone to my bed for a night's sound sleep.

On Sunday morning I went down to the big room in an inquiring frame of mind; I wondered just how many and who had slept the night here. There were only three of them: Linwood, Jordan and Bennett. It seemed that Rispin had accepted the offer of something a bit softer to lie on in Bruce's place than the floor of the Pen, and I can't blame him. While we were having our first cup of tea of the day, Alan and Bruce arrived. I had long ago put the meat into the oven to cook knowing that Jhim, Alan and Diane (hey, I've found out her second name; it's Goulding) had to leave for home early in the afternoon. By the way: Diane had come in with Alan and Bruce. We had just about got dinner out of the way when Ethel arrived followed soon after by Ted and Joe. We were all set for a nice matey afternoon and evening. We were sitting around chewing the fat when Brian Burgess turned up, thinking mistakenly that Sunday was a club day. Brian brought with him a new find in the person of Ian Peters who lives in Croydon near Brian. Another Scot! Bruce's face was a picture of despair when he first heard Ian speak. Bruce has been showing some concern over the way we Northerners seem to be swamping Anglofandom. Ian is a vet and was much amused to see the shingle on my wall which features prominently the name of Dave Kyle who practices the same profession in Kettering. No, not that Dave Kyle, this is someone else.

As our local Convention was still “officially” in session we went round collecting 6ds and got a lot more which went for beer later in the evening. Ian and Bruce went out to see if it was possible to bring Arthur over to join us. Unfortunately he couldn't make it but sent us a consoling

note instead which was much appreciated. I forgot to tell you that when Arthur had been here on Friday night he had written out dozens of slips of paper advertising *Orion* with various slogans such as:

“*Orion* isn’t cheap, but then, things can be dear at any price,” and
“They don’t print books like *Orion* anymore.”

They were stuck all over the place and I even found one in the tea caddy!

It seemed very quiet here on Monday morning with only Jordan and Bennett around. Efforts were made to get some fanac done which had been much neglected during the weekend. I got back to this on Monday but this is Wednesday and the first time I’ve done anything on it since the Monday night. I’ve been too tired to risk fouling things up too much. Composing direct on stencil as I am is bad enough Ghod knows, without trying to do it while half asleep. I have high hopes of getting to work on the duplicating tomorrow, Thursday. Brian left here for home yesterday and sorry I was to see him go. I don’t suppose I’ll see him again until next Easter. Ron should have left early this morning to catch a coach for home, but we had stayed up late last night talking, and when I woke in a panic he had missed it by an hour. He has gone to see about a train but I daren’t strip his bed in case he has to come back. I know he’s supposed to start back at school tomorrow. I wonder if he’ll make it?

– *Orion* #27 (April 1961, ed. Parker)

April 1961: On APAs

IPSO (International Publishers Speculative Organisation) was a short-lived APA that ran from 1961 to 1963 and saw only seven mailings. Started by John Berry and George Locke it was unusual in that members were supposed to submit APazines focussing on an agreed topic that had been announced beforehand. Ella contributed to some early mailings.

When I first heard from George that IPSO was being founded and that the first subject for discussion was the APAs and what, if anything, was wrong with them, I started to give him my views in forceful language. George refused to listen. “Don’t *tell* me what you think, fill four pages on the subject for the mailing” he said.

As you know, I’ve never joined an APA before. Mostly because I haven’t had the time to honour their commitments as I think they should be honoured, but some of the reason has been because the one easiest for me to join, OMPA, hasn’t appealed to me very strongly. This is my chance to sound off on the subject and I’m going to take it with both hands. I know little about the US APAs, so if I state something regarding them that isn’t in fact so, I know you folks will correct me.

I’m not going to bother trying to assess why you others join an APA, what I’ll do is tell you what I would like to see done in any or all of them and what would make me want to join one. The largest sore point that I have to make is the one of the same magazine being pushed into more than one APA to maintain activity requirements. *I think that is cheating.* I’m afraid I don’t see the point in joining every APA in existence if the same magazine (with only the mailing comments changed) is going to be submitted to each; especially these days when a lot of fen belong to all the same ones. The members end up with three or more copies of the same magazine and Ghod knows we have enough junk lying around our homes without duplicates of fmz to make things worse. The answer to that problem is: throw the duplicates out or give them away, but what about your completist who likes to keep all his mailings intact?

As I see it, the answer is, that those who want to join any APA should give an assurance that the material submitted is original for that mailing. The excuse of belonging to too many APAs and not having sufficient time in which to write original material for all of them is too easily squashed.

Don't take on more than you can comfortably handle. APA memberships are collected today in much the same way the Indians used to collect scalps; for the prestige attached to them, and that is the wrong spirit in which to join them.

Material submitted: I have said that material should be original but maybe I should qualify that remark. I like reprints. Hold it! Not just any old thing. The item used as a reprint should be of interest to those in that particular APA for which it is intended and *shouldn't be less than five years old*. It makes no difference that it first saw daylight in a genzine or wherever, provided it is of fannish historical interest. Take a for instance: Burgess in his first ever OMPA mailing ran a reprint of some items from the old *Novae Terrae* zines. The Authors were people like Jonathan Burke, Bill Temple and that ilk, who no longer write for fmz. They were interesting and informative and came from fmz very few of us around today have a chance of obtaining or even seeing. Those I liked.

The SPIRIT of an APA: This too seems to me to deserve some consideration. Too often the members seem to feel that any old thing will do just so they can retain their membership. This is sheer selfishness. If I couldn't honestly put in my activity requirements of a quality that an APA deserves, then I'd quit and leave the place open for someone who could maybe do better. It is this same lack of proper spirit which makes members submit the same magazine to different APAs. I hope sincerely that IPSO won't stand for it. I would also like to see all members being responsible for some part of the production of their contributions, other than just the writing of them. Surely all of us have typewriters even if we don't all have mimeos? Why then don't we insist that at least they should cut their own stencils, if not on a machine of their own then on one belonging to another fan.

I remember how shocked I was when, in a letter I got from Bob Lichtman, he told me that in FAPA, I think it is, you don't have to do more than write something in order to protect your membership. You can send it to another member for inclusion in his zine. This reminded me of the person who told me he was going to publish a fanzine and suggested that I should cut the stencils, do the dupering, collating and mailing out. *He* was going to publish a fanzine!

If for the moment this sounds like a commercial for my genzine, you must excuse me, but it is germane to the discussion. You know of the arguments that have been going on in YSI [?] about the problem of young-fen and material to be found in some of the zines which could antagonise their parents? It strikes me that this is a way in which the APAs could be

of some use to us. Why can't we use them as vehicles for the more controversial material and outspoken discussions between us? I am not suggesting that we indulge in controversy just for the sake of it, but I can see and sympathise with those parents who might pick up a fanzine in which there's a current discussion going on about homos, wondering what in hell their sons have gotten themselves into. I realise it means that you state an age limit under which a fan will not be allowed membership in an APA, but that is unavoidable. It would give a freedom to the rest of us in which to express ourselves as forthrightly as we like. Some of you will argue that you retain to yourself that freedom right now, I know, but I don't because I think we have a lot more youngsters coming into fandom now than ever before and we have to cater for them if we're not to lose them.

Way back, in the early days of SF fandom, if a youngster wanted to join in he could do so with less chance of shocking his parents (in this context I'm thinking specifically the mothers, who I think are the ones most likely to make the fuss), than is the case now. And for why? Because in those early days it was SF that mostly was talked of and dissected and not as now, sex, homos and every other problem of our day that you can imagine. All right, so we know that youngsters of today can hold their own in any discussions on those subjects, but even if his parents know they don't admit to themselves that this is the case, and it isn't up to us to try and make them admit it. Why cause them mental discomfort in facing up to things if they don't want to if there's some other way in which we can attain our ends? As things are I don't think we can afford to be careless of the opinions and wishes of the parents of youngfen. (All right, Donaho, start shooting.)

Mailing comments: No mailing comments is to be the rule. If you mean those capsule comments so prevalent in most APAs, then I'm with you all the way, but I cannot conceive of a subject being finished with in just one mailing. Not among vociferous fen anyway. Take this mailing's subject. When did it last have such a good and detailed going over as now? Please, let's hammer at it a bit longer before the subject is switched on us. If we are to have a "Suggestions Committee" I'd like to put it to them that they change subjects every alternate mailing, thus giving us time in which to disagree with each other in detail and maybe explain some points that weren't made quite clear in the original article. I'll be damned if I'm going to waste time saying that I liked/disliked the way in which someone's contribution was laid out or dupered, but if I disagree violently with what they've said I'd sure like the chance to say so, and in detail, with some

argument to show why I think they are wrong. Please, Mr Committeeman, you wouldn't deny us this pleasure, would you? Talking of comments reminds me of the suggestion for a "reviewer". Instead of appointing one from among the membership, why not approach someone who hasn't joined us to do the job? I am firmly of the opinion they would make a better job of it, not being so close to the arguments as those of us who presented them. They would receive the mailings free for as long as they agreed to officiate as reviewer and it wouldn't much matter if they didn't stencil or duper their offerings. It wouldn't be hard to find one of us with the time to do that part of the work for him. Why not ask: Birchby, Tucker or Boucher to do it for us? They would probably be sufficiently interested in the idea and it would keep them au fait with what is being talked about. Why, they might even be tempted to join us, in which case we find ourselves another reviewer.

Why join an APA? There are those who find in them the chance to better their writing skills, but me? I'm no writer and contrary to the usual wishes of most SF fen, I have no deep dark wish to be one. I can admire good writing when I come across it, but what would appeal to me as being well written probably to the knowledgeable would be considered the meanest crud. Sometimes I read a story which is by no means "well written" and then, right bang in the middle, the author uses a turn of phrase which has all the ear marks of being just that, well written. Many of you must have experienced the kind of thing I mean. No, I don't particularly want to improve my skill as a writer – though if I retain membership this wish might yet be born in me. I like the opportunity an APA affords me for expressing my own opinions to you and seeing what you have to say in reply and I like the chance it gives me of joining in on any discussions going that rouse my interest, even if it's an angry interest. Now it's no use murmuring that I can do that very thing in the genzines, it isn't the same kind of thing at all. In the genzines you are talking to all who get that particular mag., but in an APA you are talking to a restricted circle which makes it that much more intimate and satisfactory.

I was pitched into amateur publishing purely by accident. Paul Enever came to the Globe one night when I was there and he had a fanzine for which he wanted to find a home. Until that very minute, so help me, the idea of publishing or even writing, had never entered my tiny head. I doubt very much that I ever would have become a faned if it hadn't been for Paul. I would probably have developed into the father and mother of all letterhacks for the zines, but no more than that. I am enjoying myself now that I'm in the middle of it all, don't make any mistake about that, and I

haven't the time to count the many friends it has made for me; but also I won't deny I look back with a despairing glance at the chance I lost to just be a fan with plenty of time to herself instead of, as now, desperately trying to catch up with time which seems to disappear with ever increasing speed. Of course, you know we're mad? If I stopped and seriously took stock of the time and money that *Orion* consumes I would simply pack it all in, just like that, that's why I daren't do it. Every now and again I skirt round the fringes of the thought and then shy away from it. I have never dared to ask myself if the fun I get is a fair exchange for the time and money it costs. I discount egoboo deliberately because I don't honestly think that anyone who publishes to any great extent can possibly be doing it just for the egoboo it brings them. If they are, they're madder than me, and that's saying something.

When I accepted *Orion* I honestly think it was in the spirit of taking on something which presented me with a challenge, and one that I'd never met before. It is still a challenge and I won't give up until I produce something that meets with my full approval. The old argument: "oh, it's only a fnz, fans are used to things going wrong, it'll do," has never been good enough for me. So all right, I'm a perfectionist, and what is wrong with that? Even in the realms of amateur publishing is it very wrong to work by the old tenet that "what is worth doing is worth doing well"? I won't deny it gives me great pleasure when I get a letter saying that the last 0 was just great, but it would please me a lot better if they wrote and told me what was wrong with it on the production side. In this way we learn.

I can hear some of you asking what all this has to do with APAs? Well, I'm only trying to show you that I haven't joined this one because I'm so all-fired in *love* with amateur publishing, which seems to be the main reason a lot of you have for joining them.

I don't see why the APAs should deprive fandom of any of its best writers. Surely an APA is the very field in which a budding writer can experiment with style etc and expect to get some loud criticism if it doesn't come off. Most of the fannish writers who are prolific have enough left to satisfy their APA activity requirements as well as the needs of a genzine's faned. The APA could be the place in which one learns to polish one's style.

As for the effect the APA has on a writer, that surely depends on what the majority of its members think an APA is for. If it were made known that a fan wanted to do some serious writing – I don't mean writing serious in content – and invites constructive criticism of what he is doing, then

surely he'd get it? At least he should. But again, it depends on how much value he places on the criticisms offered him. I don't honestly think that fandom is the place for anyone wanting to write seriously; he will never really improve the standard of his material or style if he depends on us for help. It is common knowledge among us that what pleases us would probably never sell; and that after all is what our writer wants to do, sell.

Many times I have been told that I take fandom and my fannish obligations too seriously. Maybe we are in danger of doing the same thing when it comes to fan writings? After all, if they want to write for selling all that much, let them write for and submit to the market for which they are writing in the first place. Me? I'll just burble along in my usual haphazard way and enjoy myself.

•

Well, that has exhausted me on the subject of APAs; but I daren't submit a half empty page to the editors or it'll be thrown back at me PDQ.

I think I'll use this space for lodging a PUBLIC PROTEST at the way in which one of IPSO's Founders has skipped the country after launching yet another APA on the fannish world. Desplicable, contemptuous, cowardly are some of the epithets which come readily to mind. Don't think you have escaped your share of the blame so easily, Locke. You've got to come back one day, and when you do...

Locke "skipping the country" was due to him being posted overseas by the army. He had been "called up" for his National Service the previous year, an ordeal most young men had to endure at the time. The final intake took place in 1960 with the last national servicemen being discharged in 1963.

– IPSO #1 (January 1961)

July 1961: Autobiography

Well, this is going to give Ted Forsyth the shock of his young life. He keeps on keeping on at me to get my second IPSO contribution onto stencil whenever he sees me sitting around doing nothing. As he has made me the promise that I can miss the next mailing I'd better do something to put him in a good mood. This should do it.

It has been suggested that we provide some sort of a potted autobiography in this mailing. All right, I'll have a bash, but don't blame me if it bores you to tears. Like anyone else I like to talk about myself; I am very interested in me. My friends call me "Big'ead" when, they aren't calling me "loudmouth", that is.

I wonder how many of you have had your lives changed as drastically by coming into fandom as I have? My name you know, my age is none of your business. Let's just say I am old enough to know better... but I don't. I joined IPSO, didn't I? I was born in Edinburgh, Scotland (for those who've never heard of it). I was illegitimate, but I hope it doesn't bother you because it doesn't me. I was reared and lived in Larbert until I was 12 when I was brought to London by my mother. Schooling while in Scotland was non-existent, and once in London, of the sketchiest, but I've always been an avid reader, so it's only now and again I really notice the lack. After what schooling I did have finished I kinda drifted around like a ship without a propeller. I didn't really know what I wanted to do for a living so at the suggestion of an acquaintance I took a job as chambermaid in an hotel; it provided me with a home as well as a job. I didn't really care for it, there were too many restrictions on my time and on what I did with it. After having lived in an institution for most of my life so far, I was in the mood for a bit of freedom.

I suppose it was natural that the kind of life I led in those days tended to make of me a solitary person. I got myself a room and took jobs in cafes and hotels, never staying for very long with any of them. At nights I'd go home to my room and spend the time reading all I could lay my hands on or afford to buy. The only people with whom I came in contact or with whom I spoke for weeks on end were my workmates. Then came the war.

When I first came to London I had been fascinated by the big, red London buses, a fascination I have never lost even today. I went to Chiswick, the main depot for recruitment of labour and applied for a job as conductress. They accepted me! It was every bit as fascinating as I had

thought it would be. We were given twelve weeks training and then sent to a garage to go on a test run with a regular conductor. There are selected men in each garage who are paid a little extra on the understanding they give the final instructions on working a bus to trainees. My man was good at it. He never lost his temper at the stupidest mistakes and made all allowances for my reluctance to go up to total strangers and demand they give me money. Remember in those days I'd never heard of Bennett!

It was here, which may surprise you, that I first came across others who, like myself, liked to read. I don't just mean papers other than the *Daily Mirror*, which I *still* read, but BOOKS. I began making friends for myself. It was a heady draught, finding there were others interested in the same thing I was. I wasn't reading SF then, but I did like weird stories and read any I could find; it never dawned on me there might be a market which catered for my kind of favourite reading matter. I stuck at this job for twelve years and enjoyed every minute of it. We had fun. Sure, there were rows between different crews, we swapped stories in the canteen about some screwball passenger we had carried, we had our favourites among the regulars; the public would be surprised to know how much is noticed about them by the conductor they ignore as part of the bus furnishings. We were up to all the ploys they could pull for evading payment of fares, and had knowledge of some they *didn't* play!

When the first of the demobbed men began to trickle back to the garages the Company made it a ruling that all clippies (as we'd been nicknamed) should have to attend for a rigorous medical. I was thrown out because my sight wasn't up to standard. It was good enough for when they had been short of labour, but now they were in the position to pick and choose again so I had to go. No appeal. I took a month's holiday. I didn't go away, but loafed around reading and going to the cinema about twice a week. When my funds began to look a bit ragged round the edges I thought it time I started earning again. What to do? The only experience I'd had was in catering or conducting a bus. Versatile, wasn't I? The big thing was to take something that would replenish the money bags, so I went to a catering agency and got myself a job. I stuck that one for six months. I was restless. I missed the comradeship of my bus mates, I also had forgotten what it was like to mix with people to whom books were something one kept for the sake of appearances and not to be opened at any price. That sounds horribly snobbish, doesn't it? But it was true. Once again I was driven back onto my own resources. I did my job and went home at night to stay in and read. It never occurred to me to join a club or do anything about going where I would meet people. Anyhow, how does

one go about making friends with complete strangers? You can't just go up to them and ask them to talk to you.

I have always liked cooking, so I went on a training course and got myself a job in a factory canteen, cooking. I was bored. I had the itch to change my job too often to do my references any good, and then I heard of a firm which employed mobile staff. This sounded like the place for me. I applied for and was granted an interview and laid my cards on the table. I told them the reasons for my almost constant change of jobs and that what they had to offer sounded like the solution to my problems. They warned me that I wouldn't always be needed as a cook at cook's wages, but that if I would take any and all jobs they offered me, yes, I was in. The money was by now relatively unimportant so I agreed. Sometimes I found myself surrounded by piles of dirty crockery CRYing out to be washed up, sometimes I was grill-hand, but it was most often that they found me a job as cook. It all meant change and it was nothing unusual for me to begin the day's work in one place and find myself in the middle of the day led out and sent elsewhere to fill an urgent need left by someone's non-appearance. That is the job I was doing when I came into fandom in 1958.

Now comes an explanation for the introductory question up there. I began my letter writing career in fandom by writing – in longhand – screeds to Archie Mercer asking him all sorts of questions usually asked by inquiring neos. Archie was very patient and answered them all, but, I suppose all that hand writing must have been a bit wearing because he started to suggest in his letters to me that I would find typing, once I'd mastered it, a lot quicker, and also, it would be easier on those to whom I wrote. I resisted the idea for some time. I'd never in all my life before thought of owning a typewriter, it was something entirely outside of my scope. Yet the more I thought about it the less reason I could find for not owning one. Oh, those first few fiendish weeks, and those first stumbling letters picked out so painfully and at great length! I had gone the whole hog and bought myself a nice new machine – Remington Quiet-Riter – and I was determined that having spent the money I would learn to use it properly. I would teach myself to touch-type! I did too. Mind you, if I want speed I still bash away with the old two finger lark, but I can, and often do, touch-type. I'm proud of me!

Soon after this Paul Enever gave me *Orion*. Enuff said. Now I really had to use the machine, almost every night. I couldn't understand why my letters seemed to come out double. Bobbie [*Wild*] it was who put me right. It appears that I was pressing the keys instead of hitting them sharply. As she earned her living typing, I granted that she knew what she was talking

about, but to treat my nice new typewriter as she suggested I should broke my heart. “The damn things, don’t caress them!” is roughly what she said. I did, the machine didn’t fall to pieces and I’ve been doing it ever since, as you may have noticed.

Now Ted Tubb began to work on me. “Why slave in a kitchen when you can be earning better money as a typist?” he asked. I laughed. I was happy at last in my job and though it was hard I didn’t really fancy myself among those snooty bits of girls I saw when I had the job of taking round the office tea. They looked down their noses at we who worked to give them their meals and I couldn’t picture myself among them. Ted must admit it, I stuck it out well. I didn’t give in and try it until quite recently. Last summer actually. I went to a secretarial bureau and got myself a job as copy typist and I don’t like it. Certainly, the job is easier, the money is double what I was earning, I don’t come home feeling dirty with kitchen grease and the smell of cooking in my hair, but I’m not happy. I made the change too late in life, I fear. It is a completely alien atmosphere to me and those snooty bits of girls are every bit as incomprehensible to me as I thought they would be. Were it not for fandom I would be back on the solitary grind again. Were it not for fandom I wouldn’t be working in an office and hating every minute of it. I could give up and go back to my old job, but the extra money is going to come in useful when I come to the States this year. I have been told that if I went back I would now be equally unhappy in the kitchen. I wonder?

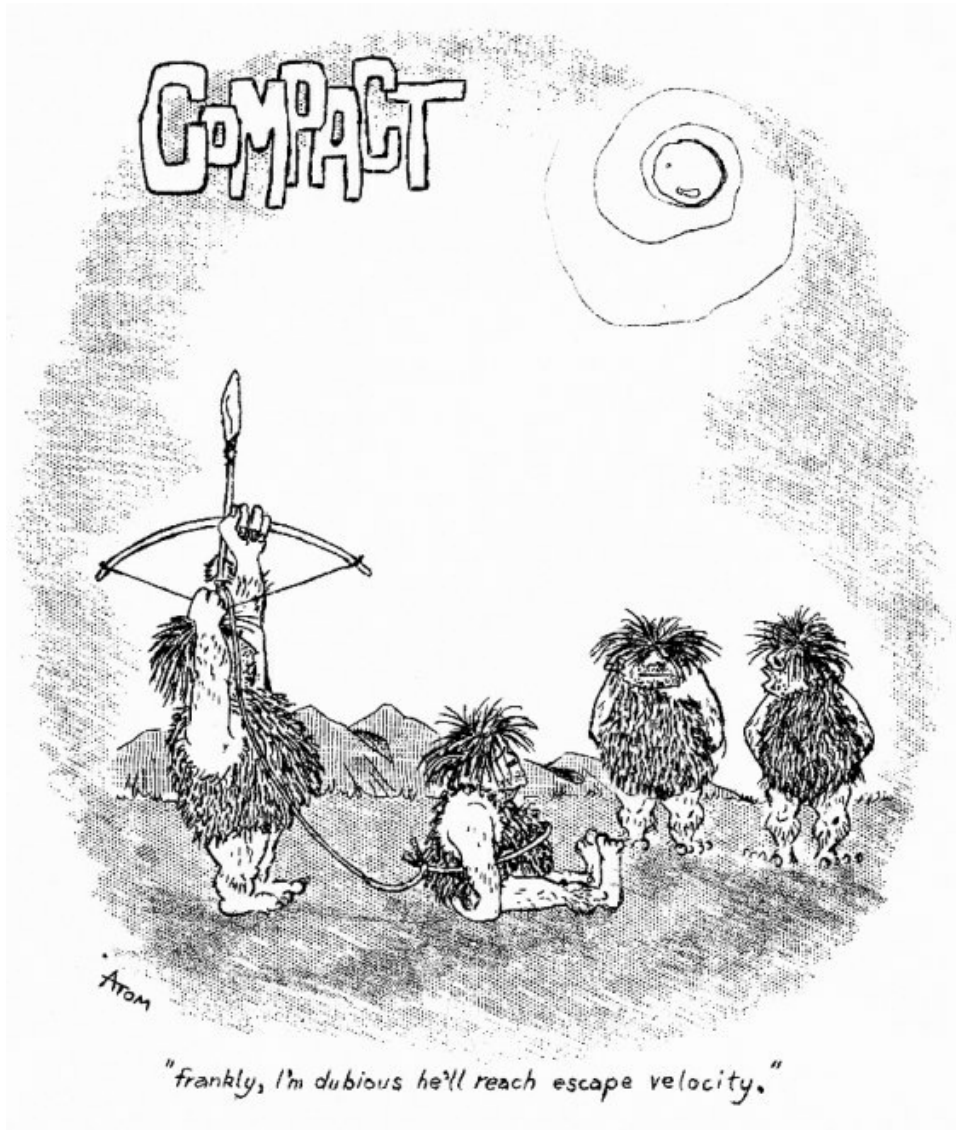
This is potted.

– IPSO #2 (July 1961)



Atom and Ella at the 1960 Eastercon

After *The Harpy Stateside*



Compact #3 cover by Atom
Caption: "Frankly, I'm dubious he'll reach escape velocity."

January 1962: Back in Blighty

I'll bet you ~~hoped~~ thought *Orion* had folded. *I* may have, but *Orion*? No! TAFF. The subject has been having a going over from all quarters so let's see what we can make of it. With the exception of the fan I met while I was in the States (he wants his name kept DNQ [*Do Not Quote*] but he admits he doesn't hold with TAFF as run and *never* supports it), I imagine we are all in sympathy with the ideas behind the scheme? Good! Jack Harness voiced in print an opinion which is shared by many, namely, that TAFF has lousy publicity and needs new methods of generating support in order to gain more money for the fund. He says TAFF should have an "Official Fanzine" and a PRO [*Public Relations Officer*]. At first glance these seem to be excellent suggestions, but there's one thing you have to consider, in fandom especially, and that is the likelihood of gafiation on the part of your PRO or "Official Fanzine" editor and/or publisher. Nothing and no-one is reliable in fandom. Allowing for that, let's look at what *can* be done.

To begin with, TAFF already has two PROs; or at least, I thought it had. If that isn't one of the jobs supposedly done by the Administrators then I am very much mistaken. Admitted, there is much room for improvement and that is where the idea of an "Official Fanzine" comes in. I know that one of the fears by which our TAFF administrators is dogged is, that if fandom becomes aware of how much is in the TAFF kitty, they won't bother to subscribe more. I'd like to see them proved wrong. The ideal way to run TAFF is to have sufficient in the funds to pay the winning delegate's trip *before* the voting takes place, even before the campaign gets started. I can hear the old and selfish (yes, *selfish*) arguments swirling round MY head already. "Why should we pay into a fund like that when we don't know who is going to benefit from it?" I ask you! *Does it matter who benefits?* All you need to know is that a fan will benefit... you never know, it might be YOU!

For gawd's sake, leave us not drag TAFF into the dust. I for one, would hate to see TAFF fail because we were so all-fired careful with our pennies because we were afraid someone we didn't care for/agree with in fanzines, might benefit by a trip. If we could agree on this point then we could make it known we wanted an "Official Fanzine" which would keep us posted on the state of the treasury and any other news pertinent to TAFF

that they think we should know; because of course, it will be the Administrators who will be responsible for publishing it. It need only be a newsletter type thing of two or three pages and, if it comes out quarterly it shouldn't mean a lot more work for the fund's Guardians. There is no doubt that interest in TAFF is flagging (interest, that is, in making sure the fund has ample money. There is still a lot of interest in guessing who will accept nomination and who will win), and it is up to those of us who care, to see that it doesn't die altogether.

Why can't we have auctions carried out through the fmz for items that will benefit TAFF? In that way we in Britain get the chance to make bids on things not normally available to us. At the convention the bidding could start off with the last postal offer made; this is another use that could be made of the "Official Fanzine". Certainly, it seems we are going to have to find something to take the place of the TAFF reports. It has always been my opinion that these are an imposition on the winner. Ignoring, for the moment, the farce which obtained last year when we had four of them for sale at the same time, just think of the waste of a fan's hard cash at a time when he can least afford it. He has to finance stencils, paper, ink and (because fen have come to expect it) photostencils. On a gamble, he runs off 200 copies for the benefit of TAFF. By how much does TAFF benefit from all the unsold copies still in their hands, the author's hands, I mean. Let us not have a state of affairs, which I can see coming, where you'll have fen fighting not to be nominated because they couldn't afford the after-commitments. They are more than ready to work on behalf of TAFF in some repayment for their trip, what more do we want from them? Blood? I would be much interested in hearing from you the reasons you have for choosing just whom you will vote for. What do YOU think are the attributes that will make one person rather than another the best Delegate? Is it for the report you think/hope he will write, or their sociability, or what?

FREeloaders. Joe Gibson also had some things to say about leeches and the like in fandom. I read what he had to say with mixed feelings. The first thing that occurred to me was, that if Joe himself has suffered at the hands of these people, why didn't he do as he urges us to do, and *name names*? Maybe I am particularly naive but, I often think the offenders do what they do from sheer thoughtlessness. Don't laugh: just because you wash your hands prior to sitting down to a meal and wouldn't dream of eating without having done so, you will probably think that any visitor to your house who doesn't do so is a savage. I am a heavy smoker, so I have lots of ashtrays round the place. There is one fan I know who seldom, if

ever, uses them. Always I have a pile of ash to sweep up when he's been here. Putting an ashtray at his elbow is a waste of time; maybe I always put it on his blind side, I wouldn't know. I don't even know if he *has* a blind side.

Maybe things are different in the States, but there's one thing that really annoys me and that is when an uninvited fan comes to stay, expecting food as well as a bed and, instead of offering money or groceries he stays for a week or more and thinks he's done his bit when he buys me a box of chocolates or cigarettes on leaving. If only they'd buy me the chocolates when they first come I could offer those for supper instead of my meal I was going to have myself. That sounds horrid, but it has happened so often it's no longer funny. I still say it's thoughtlessness *but it's my own fault*. If I won't tell them I want them to help provide their own food I can't expect them to read my mind. It strikes me we are stupidly proud or afraid to talk money among our fan friends and I'm damned if I know why.

HELP LIFT OUR CONVENTIONS OUT OF THE DOLDRUMS. Briefly condensed, that is what I'm asking you to do. There must be many of you in the States who don't have any idea of how many difficulties we face each year. Briefly, this is what happens.

We seldom attend one of our conventions armed beforehand with the news of who is going to do the following one or yet, where it will be held. In the few years I've been around I have never yet heard of different groups/people bidding for the honour. Usually, we sit looking blank, waiting for some sucker to volunteer. Everybody looks at everyone else in the wild hope they might suffer a temporary mental aberration which will land them with it. And the reason for this very real reluctance? We always have difficulty in finding a hotel that will accept our business. I'm not denying that a lot of our troubles would vanish if only the hotels were a lot more cooperative but, we could do something ourselves if we had YOUR support as a convention member.

First of all we have to discover if you, the Britfan, are interested in us continuing to have conventions. If we are to keep our end up in TAFF participation then we must. Even if you can't attend them would it really break your heart or your pocket if you paid membership fees? With your annual support we could probably reach the stage before long where we could put on an annual "do" that you wouldn't want to miss. We could have two charges; one for those intending to be there and a lower one for those who know they won't be able to make it. If you intended coming and then, for some reason, couldn't manage it, you would have half your

membership fee returned.

Once we got the Convention Fund really solvent we could find an hotel that is just the right size for our conventions and *book the whole place*, money on the nose. Right now we don't have the cash in hand to be able to do it. We have tried sharing a large hotel with mundane types and usually it means some sort of row with the management because of noise at late parties and the like. The ideal solution is as suggested above; a hotel we could "take over" for the weekend. Your membership in our efforts would help us to realise this ambition. It would also make for bigger and better conventions because, having got our hotel, we would be able to publicise our convention well in advance so the attendance would be bigger. I hate to think of the number of folk we have lost at these things just because we haven't been able to advertise in the promags well in advance.

After all, you join the American conventions, some of you, knowing you have no hope of being there, why not spread some of this charity at home? Yes, we would welcome US memberships too. Oh, and by the way; you had better get your finger out. London is bidding for the Worldcon in '65. I know, we're raving mad but too, we are willing to do the work involved if you will give us the kind of support we sadly need. Think on it, but not for too long, and then DO SOMETHING.

– *Orion* #28 (January 1962, ed. Parker)

January 1962: On Books

I can't ever remember a time when I wasn't fond of books and able to read them. I suppose I must have learned but I don't recall where or when. Can you remember learning to read? If so, how old were you, do you think? I can remember falling downstairs, head over heels, when I was very tiny – it is almost as if an older me was standing by watching this happening – but I can't remember learning to read. Surprising, really, when you think how many hours I've spent doing nothing else.

I love riffling through other people's book shelves and this I've been able to do by reading a number of book lists that have been published frequently by some fan. I've watched out for favourites of mine but so far no-one seems to have read the conglomeration I have collected through the years. None of them are of any great Intellectual or Educational importance, but they have entertained me for hours and still keep me company when I'm in the mood to go and take them out.

As a child my one and only favourite was *Black Beauty*. Oh, the tears I shed over that poor old horse when I was a child. I wonder how it would read now. Another book I remember, but not half so fondly, is one called *Jackanapes*. No, I don't know what it was about. It bored me stiff from the very first paragraph and, even at that age, anything boring made me impatient to be done with it. If I tried to read that book once I tried six times. I wouldn't allow myself to succumb to the temptation of looking at the last few lines to see if it ended in an interesting way. So I never read it and, to this day, can't forget it.

I know I was always getting into trouble as a child because I'd rather sit indoors, on my own, to read. The adults thought I'd be better employed playing outside with the others. I shudder to think what trash I must have read because, with the one exception I named, I can't for the life of me recall any one other book that caught my fancy or attention then. There must have been others, they just didn't have the same appeal as *Black Beauty*.

I must have been about twelve when I read *Little Women*. It made me sick. I thought it soft. I don't know what kind of child it's supposed to appeal to, but it certainly didn't appeal to me. Ghod! Those girls were just too good to be true! I wonder what girls of twelve feel about that family these days? I can imagine they would find them as cloying and sanctimonious as I did. Kids of the age these girls are supposed to be

aren't as good as that unless they are downright unnatural or trying to suck up to some adult for purposes of their own. Sanctimonious and hypocritical was my verdict on that lot, even if I didn't use those words. I didn't know them at the time.

Just about then I found another book that has been a favourite of mine ever since, Jack London's *White Fang*. Another animal book, you see? I can't tell you how often I've read it. I still take it out for a reread even today. *String Lug the Fox [by David Stephen]* is another of my all-time favourites that I often reread. When it comes to Radio, TV, or books, it will always find favour with me if it's about animals. I'm a real sucker for them. Paul Gallico's *Jennie Baldrin** is yet another I've read, many times. Anyone who has kept a cat just knows that this is how they behave. When I was in South Bend, staying with Betty Kujawa, I remember how pleased I was when, one morning, she was doing something and got muddled. She paused and said to herself: "When in doubt, wash." I whipped round and said: "Jennie Baldrin!" Oh, we were pleased to find we had something more in common. The next ghod knows how long was spent in remembering the book together.

* *This is the name of the cat heroine but the actual title is just Jennie; or in the USA, The Abandoned.*

"But, hasn't she read the Classics," I can hear you ask. No, I haven't. I know most of the stories... or should I say, "plots"? I've had a bash at Dickens and don't care over much for him. The only one I could stomach to the end was *Dombey and Son*. Tiny Tim and his dad in *A Christmas Carol* are every bit as sick-making as the family in *Little Women*. I know that in Scrooge's place, if I had someone like Cratchit working for me, his servile manners would make me long to kick him. He got the treatment he asked for. Oh, I know they were of Great Social Significance, those books but, when I read books I read them for entertainment. If Dickens wanted to preach, he should have written tracts. They were all the rage in his day.

Shakespeare I never learned to like. Maybe because I don't care for poetry. Thackeray's *Book of Snobs* I find delightful. Most of Thomas Hardy I like. In my time I have picked up all sorts of old stuff about London. I have a set of five volumes – I never could find the sixth – about London. In here it tells of how the London bridges were built; describes the days when goods were taken from one side of the Thames to the other by barge. The bargees didn't like the idea of bridges taking their livelihood away from them and tried to get the building of the bridges stopped. Without success, you may have noticed.

I have a large, thick, old book called *No Name*. Actually, it's a collection of magazines of that day, all bound in one volume and it has been named for one of the serial stories in it by Wilkie Collins. There are many old-time advertisements to be found here. One, I see, saying Mr. Charles Dickens will read an instalment from his latest story. There are all sorts of uplifting snippets, like for instance this one called: "Paint, and no Paint." I quote. "The recent revelations in a public court, of an artiste in what is said to be the art of enamelling ladies' faces, did not disclose any novelty. Those who remember to have seen the late Madame Vestris on the stage must have observed the covering which that lady is believed to have used" and so it goes on. Someone had been using inferior chemicals in the making of makeup. The reporter is declaiming against its use as much as its manufacture. The name of the magazine thus bound is *All the Year Round*, with which is incorporated *Household Words*. No wonder Dickens had an advertisement in it; he's one of the editors! The date of this gem is 1862. Just a hundred years old! There's a very touching little article here called "A Gossip About Flowers". Now doesn't that sound real matey? There are other serial stories too, mainly by Wilkie Collins. These are ideal books in which to browse.

Another quaint collection I have is called *Chambers Miscellany* and is dated for 1847. This, in its way, is even more uplifting than the other one. There's a charming treatise here called "Hints to Workmen", and it has some lovely chapter headings. Get this: "Cultivate Humility; Or Waste of Time". No, I don't think they are telling them how to do it. Here's another chapter, "Attention to Little Things"; or would you prefer this, "A Taste for Reading". Oh, here's an article for fans! "Wonders of the Telescope". Or how about this: "Women's Trials in Humble Life". Who, after reading any of these, would want to indulge in Time Travel into that past? Not me, that's for sure. Makes for fascinating reading, though.

When I'm not browsing among the old stuff there are others I take out to read, from time to time. The worst thing about me is my terrible memory. If I thoroughly enjoy a book it means I'll remember what it was about, but that doesn't mean I'll recall who wrote it or what it was called. In *Cry*, I mentioned something about Sammy Davis Jnr. and other negroes. Betty picked me up on it in such a way it made me dig out a book I hadn't read for some years. I've not long ago reread it but I can't recall who wrote it. It's called *The Winds of Fear* and is about a negro community trying to live under the terror of a Sheriff who hates blacks. He himself is white but what they call "white trash". Actually, he is given the job because it's reckoned to be a degrading one; keeping the n*****s in check and the like.

This chap loves it; it gives him all the excuse he needs to go looking for trouble and, if there isn't any, he makes it. Horrible, frightening and all like that. It doesn't make me change my opinions about Davis just the same. I don't know how many of you saw the interview on TV that Sammy Davis gave, on the occasion of his wedding? It was revolting. The words that made me so angry were, roughly, "and I'm grateful to the Fine American People for being so gracious." This because they allowed him to live among them! Damn it, he was born American! I gathered from what he said he knew he was doing wrong in marrying a white woman; he knew lots of other people would feel strongly about it and he was thankful to have got through the day with a whole skin. When I think of it, his apologetic air still makes me mad. He married the girl so why apologise? Not very complimentary to her, was he? I'd far rather he faced up to whoever it was he feared and said, We're married, so what? If this had been a small place where the locals could be influenced to give a rigged verdict when a coloured person is on trial, then I could have understood it, but this was New York. In a way, it's like Cratchit again. They expect to be kicked, so you kick them; but you are angry with them for making you feel like that. You hate yourself as much, if not more, than you hate them.

At one time I was the proud possessor of the entire "Whiteoak"* stories. There was a talent for you! Every member of that family came alive in the pages. I followed avidly every detail of their lives. The old Grandma and her parrot Nap. Renny, the head of the family since his father died. Meg, his sister who was fat and made a pretence of not eating because she wanted to be thought "delicate" when in reality she had the houseman bring large trays to her room where she gorged herself in what she fondly thought was secrecy. Actually, the whole house knew of her habit and pandered to it. I was really mad when a friend's youngster said she would love to have them and I parted with them to her only to find that, though she's had them for over five years, she still hasn't read them. Once in her possession she lost all interest in them.

* *A long Canadian family saga by Mazo de la Roche beginning with Jalna (1927).*

Round about now I began to prefer weird, supernatural, and books of that ilk. I have one book with which I would never part. It's an odd book called *Man Made Angry*. It isn't particularly well written; it isn't even cleverly done. After I've read it it leaves me feeling vaguely uncomfortable, I don't know why. I haven't opened it for more than ten years but I can still remember it clearly. It's a murder story but one with a

difference. I suppose you'd call it a psychological thriller. Girls are being murdered all over the place. This man, very quiet, mild in manner, keeps himself to himself, hears about them. He and some of his friends set out to try and trap the killer with a decoy. Of course, it's he who is doing it all the time. Not much of a tale when you strip it down to its bones but Bob Bloch's *Psycho* was a romp compared with how this one made me feel. Ugh! Just in talking about it I can feel that creeping horridness coming back.

Of the Supernatural tales I have collected, "The Monkey's Paw" was spoiled for me by hearing it done as a radio play before I read it. The play was done so well I have never been able to shudder over reading it as I have over some others. I think my favourite of all is "How Love Came to Professor Guildea". The real horror here, for me, at least, was the way in which he cherished his privacy and had it invaded at any and all times. The proffered love, unwanted though it was, seemed only an added indignity.

I have been fascinated for as long as I can remember by the thoughts of solitary confinement. Never having been subjected to it, I often wonder if it would hold the terrors for me it seems to have for those who have had to suffer it. From here, I don't think it would be any hardship. How do you feel about it? Mind you, I don't know for how long I could stand it but I'd be game to try it out to the limit if it were possible to make such an experiment. Maybe the secret is to live each moment as it appears. Not to anticipate the next second even until it comes up in its turn to be lived through. How would you tackle it? How long do you think you could hold out? What mental reserves do you have to make solitary confinement bearable? I suppose, really, it all depends on the kind of person you are. It would seem that the introvert could stand it better than the extrovert... or could he? Maybe the mere fact that he is an introvert and, therefore, less likely to mix with his fellows, he'd have less stamina to stand him in good stead. I don't know, but I'd like to.

Having had a wide grounding in the realms of horror and/or supernatural tales it takes something pretty special to raise the small hairs on the back of my neck. We have a series running at the moment on TV called *One Step Beyond*. All the cases shown are supposedly fully authenticated. To say the least, they are creepy. At least I can watch and enjoy them because I haven't already read them in a book.

So, as you can see, all of my reading has been of the inconsequential kind. I have only scratched the surface of the many books I've read and enjoyed, but they all have one thing in common. In some way even the horrible ones have given me some measure of entertainment. I have to be

careful when buying new books or I'll find myself buying those I already have. I told you I have a lousy memory. Often I can recall the story long after I've forgotten what it was called or who wrote it. Usually I read the first paragraph and buy or reject the book purely on the strength of the amount of interest it rouses in me. This may not be the prescribed way to buy one's books but it's the way I buy mine. This method is handy for recognising old books reissued under new titles, too. I'm thinking now especially of SF where this is an all too common and dishonest practice.

– IPSO #4 (January 1962)

February 1962: John Glenn



Congratulations, America!

Maybe I should explain the seeming, to me, aptness of the above illo. Today is February 22nd. You all know what happened day before yesterday, don't you? The name of Glenn was on everyone's lips. Now I'm not saying he took *Orion* on his trip with him but he did have the thoughts and prayers of *Orion's* editor, for all the good they did him. He is a much more likeable hero than Gagarin but let's not go into that!

Orion #29 (April 1962, ed. Parker)

April 1962: Conventional Wisdom

GEORGE LOCKE IS BACK! [*from his National Service stint in the Army.*]

It's been one of those weeks at the Penitentiary. I had Brian Jordan staying here. He was in London for some business interviews and, as I hardly ever see him other than at Convention time, I was glad of the chance to get some talk with him. In spite of what he says, I did too let him get a word in. Why, I didn't even make him work on the duplicator. Brian was here from one Thursday to the next. I knew that George was expected back in England the Tuesday before Brian would be here but didn't know how long it would take for him to become a civilian again. It was Thursday when they both, Brian and George, arrived.

We had so much to say three-ways, it became almost incoherent for a while. The SFCoL had planned a social weekend of the party kind for George, so you can then imagine my dismay to hear him say he'd be going to the country for the weekend with his parents. I had to tell him what we had planned so he could wangle out this other deal. I'm glad to report he was successful.

Friday night is BSFA night here and we had a goodly bunch in. Somehow it has devolved into an "open" meeting FOR FANS whether they are in the BSFA or not. As George's parents were away that weekend, he stayed on with Brian. Ethel Lindsay was also here for the night as we had a Con Committee meeting slated for Saturday morning. We sent the boys off to bed and, even though we knew we had to be up fairly early next day, Ethel and I sat talking until about 3.30 am. As often as she and I get together we never seem to get talked out.

I had just about fed my lodgers and Jimmy Groves was here... tell a lie, I remember now – I *told* you it had been one of those weeks – Jimmy got here about 4-ish in the afternoon. The four of us had fed, talked, got my shopping in and generally talked up a storm. We were hard at it when Jimmy arrived. We just about got through our business when the first of our party members arrived. For me the rest of the evening was a blur of faces and voices. I know it went well because no-one seemed to want to break it up. Atom had to leave pretty early so gave Ted Forsyth and Errol Pace (a new club member) a lift home. Don Geldart and Bruce Burn left at

the same time and the rest of them were here for the night.

When I came down in the morning they were all up and rarin' to go. Pat Kearney, Jimmy Groves, George, Brian and Ethel were the die-hards remaining to me. We had arranged to go and see *The Road to Hong Kong* that afternoon but couldn't leave until Keith Otter (BSFA and new club member) had arrived as he was coming with us. I don't know how many of you have seen this film. I urge all SF fen to go. It may have been because I don't go to the cinema often but I laughed until I ached at the scene of them in the space-ship. The whole film was worth sitting through for that alone. It's the same old "Road" recipe and none too good at that. I won't tell you any more about it; go see it for yourself.

The rest of that week was spent talking to George, talking to Brian, partly made a tape to Betty [*Kujawa*], bashing out stencils for *Orion* and the other item, planning for our Eastercon weekend, and generally living in a whirl. It has been so long since I wrote any letters, my typewriter automatically sets itself for stencil-cutting when I come near it.

The big topic of conversation between us all has been that of the British Conventions – past and future. The only person to comment in detail about my remarks anent these functions in my last editorial was Sid Birchby. I was more than interested in his comparisons with how his Amateur Winemaker's Assoc. Conventions are treated and ours. Of course, the flaw in ours is so obvious I wonder we haven't done anything about it before. We always aim our conventions and make our arrangements for hotel accommodation to suit those with the least to spend. *This is a mistake*. Anyone – I don't care how young or broke they may be – really wanting to attend a Convention has a full year in which to save for it. If they don't feel able to put 10/- or even 5/- away every week they could try salting away every 6d piece or 3d they get in their change. It's really surprising how this mounts up. That takes care of that moan before it's had a chance to deafen us and muddy the issue.

I would *suggest* that during each Convention those attending, having been told who is putting on the following year's event, should find the person heading their Committee and pay 5/- membership. If this is done at once you are then a member whether you attend or not. The whole fee should be annually, no matter where it is held or by whom it is put on, 15/- for all those attending and \$1 for overseas memberships to facilitate mailing. If these sums are permanent there is no delay because we don't know how much the membership fee is going to be this/next year. ((If London gets the '63 Convention these are the fees that will obtain.)) It is also time the Convention Secretary was relieved of the chore of booking

members rooms for them. Any contracts of that nature should be between the hotel and the person wanting the room. In that way if, as has been done to us in the past, one of our bunch arrives to find his/her room has been re-let, it is up to them to kick up a stink. As things stand, we go round looking for the cheapest hotel possible and set about trying to knock the price down even further. This is a sure indication to those in the business that we don't have the money to pay their initial charges so, if they choose to muck us up, we won't have the money necessary to go to law. Obvious, isn't it? We ask to be treated like dirt and we are.

This year a new practice has been inaugurated and one of which I am in favour but only when we are all housed in the one hotel. The all-in charge. So much per day, meals inclusive. This does tend to keep our members on the spot and available for programme items when they are due. It can hardly be called a "captive audience" as there's nothing to stop them wandering off to their rooms, the bars, or even to go for a walk outside if there's something on in which they have little or no interest. The main reason I favour it is because it ensures continuity of the Convention feeling that is lost to a certain extent when you have to wander the streets on a Bank Holiday weekend looking for eating places that are open. We have got it ridiculously cheap this year (32/6d inclusive, or 42/6d [*£1.63p, or £2.13p*]) but to date I have no idea what the hotels are like. I believe we have got the two hotels entirely to ourselves. I must be honest and admit we couldn't possibly hope to emulate what Ron Bennett has done for us at the same price and in London, and this is the crux of the whole situation. I am not going to ask *can* you pay more for our Convention weekend because, as I've said up there, if you want to come you can save so it becomes possible. No, what we (the London Con Committee) want to know is, *would* you pay more for your Convention weekend and, if so, what is your maximum if we could get the inclusive deal for you?

You will have appreciated by now these questions aren't being asked from idle curiosity. We really want to know, and *soonest*. All I ask is that you be realistic and not expect the moon for sixpence. It is past time we in Britain faced up to some home-truths. You wonder why we can't find fen willing to take on the burden of planning and putting on our annual Conventions. Frankly, you are asking of them the impossible. The Con funds with which they have to work are negligible, they have to cast around for the cheapest possible place that will stand for all sorts of demands and, to top it all, you scream like mad no matter what is done because you have fares to pay as well as everything else. Damn it all, this is a hobby for your Convention Committee as well as for you. The least

you can do if you really want an annual Convention is to make it possible for them to do their best for you with *your fullest support* and not the half-hearted interest with which they've had to contend to date. This is *your* Convention; it should be the biggest date in your fannish calendar. Is it? Not for many it isn't.

If we can get you persuaded to pay a bit more per head per weekend we could thrash out the hotel problem for once and all. I'd like to see your Con Committee having the hotel booked early on in the year so they can give their time and energies to seeing that it is well advertised months before and leaving them free to work on the programme. With longer and wider advertising I am sure we could enlarge our Conventions, enlarging the Con Fund so we can put on bigger conventions. All it needs is for you to take the initial plunge. It won't hurt, honest.

London is hoping to bid for the Worldcon in '65. I told you that lastish but none of you have mentioned it. I would like those of you in Britain to let me know, if you intend writing a LoC on this, how you feel about it. London is keen, make no mistakes about that but we are not Britfandom and if the rest of you are agin it we would have to withdraw our bid and cease plugging ourselves for it. Don't for one moment think that because we are plugging for '65 that you needn't bother about it yet. We must know how you feel about it because there's a lot of groundwork to be done. No, this doesn't tie-in with what I've said up there, at least, only indirectly. If we have the Worldcon it will be for one year only, I promise, my hand on my heart! Our regional Conventions are annual affairs and to put them right is important if they are to continue in the future.

Today is Monday, April 9th, and I've already begun to run off this. While working I recalled something said to me by Brian Jordan that I promised I would mention in my editorial. I forgot. This is it.

If we are lucky and get the Worldcon for London in '65, is there any reason why it *has* to be held over the weekend of Labour Day? Including Christmas, we have four Holidays over here. The others are:

Easter, of which Good Friday, Sunday and Monday are Bank Holidays, as we call them. Saturday in that weekend is a normal working day for shops and stores though offices don't work then, even those who normally do work Saturdays.

Whitsun, which is really only a two-day Holiday, Sunday and Monday. This usually comes about six weeks after Easter.

August Bank Holiday, which is the first weekend in August, just as your Labour Day is the first one in September.

Again the August one is only two days long, Sunday and Monday.

From what I know of London hotels, we would be as well to keep it at September because of price raises during the Season only. I don't know how many would benefit over here as well as in America, if we moved the date of the Worldcon just this once. This is a matter of extreme urgency so, please, those of you with helpful comments and suggestions to make, get them in as soon as you've read this. [1]

In the event London won their bid for the 1965 Worldcon but lost out on the 1963 Eastercon:

IT'S PETERBOROUGH IN '63!

When one says that "this year's Convention was the best I ever attended" folk are apt to look knowing and, at the same time, slightly disbelieving. When I say it about the one just past in Harrogate, *I mean it*. Apart from all the people who were there that I hadn't met before the seal of success was put on the proceedings for me by the fact that for the first time in BritCon history there were *two* bids for next years Convention. Just think about it. Hitherto we have had to sucker someone into speaking up with all sorts of devious tricks.

I also found it heartening that the successful bidder went round collecting memberships and, to my certain knowledge, went home with a total of at least forty. This too is something unheard of. I hope it is just a beginning of the interest that should be shown in our Regional Conventions [*i.e. Eastercons*] every year. It would be a pity to see such a good beginning go for nought in the following years. [2]

[1] *Orion* #29 (April 1962, ed. Parker)

[2] *Orion* #29 Supplement (April 1962, ed. Parker)

March 1963: The Big Move

It was before I went to America that I heard we would soon be moved from 151, under the local council's "slum clearance" scheme. Not being used to the way in which local government works, I imagined that when they began haunting my doors, asking me all sorts of personal questions, like: where does your brother sleep?, do you have to share a lavatory with anyone?, have you a bathroom in the house? etc, it would only be a matter of weeks before we had our new home. Still, being naturally lazy (and what fan isn't?) I left things ride and went blithely off to L.A., Seattle and all points. On my return, Fred said he hadn't seen or heard from anyone at the Town Hall so we went about our business.

One fine day I was working at the Gestetner when, lo, a man came from the "housing dept". He asked so many questions that I had already answered for someone in some other department. I have nothing to do with that, I need your answers for my office, I was told. I continued working while he filled in the papers he had with him. Out of the blue he shot his bolt. "You won't be able to do that where you're going," he said. Getting him to explain that he was alluding to my duper, I explained, very carefully, that it was a hobby, not a business. "That makes no difference, they won't stand for it in the new flats." I'll admit I just about blew my top, not to him, fortunately, but to anyone in the London gang who would listen to my tale of woe. I had tried to pin him down to admitting I could have a flat if I forfeited my hobby, but he wouldn't come right out and say so, though it was what he meant.

After much thought I decided to come out into the open and approach the Housing Manager; what an imposing title that is. I went into some detail about what I'd been told by one of his men, and please, is it true? I really piled on the agony. I found it an absorbing hobby, which I do, but I neglected to tell him of the life of ease I could enjoy if he really did forbid me to continue publishing. He wrote back, asking what kind of equipment I had; he assumed I used the usual type home printing apparatus, and please could he have a copy of my magazine to show at a council meeting when they discussed my case? I did some soul searching, I can tell you. I toyed with the idea of letting him assume what he liked, in case he should disapprove of what I was actually using and withhold his permission, but clear thinking won the day. If I lied, and later there were complaints about the noise, they could and would be justified in chucking us out of the flat. I

didn't want this to happen, as those of you who have visited the old Pen will understand. I told him the truth, that I have an electric Gestetner. I also sent him a copy of *Orion* #28. I heard nothing more for months.

Yet another of the Town Hall minions appeared. This time to tell me they had considered my case and I would be allowed to continue publishing, but not in the new flats. They didn't think the noise would be absorbed sufficiently, so they were going to rehouse us in a place that had been "reconditioned". This, in case you are not "up" in officialese, means that they've taken over a house too good for demolition, so they have done some work, which usually means putting in a bathroom, proper kitchen etc., and we could have that. He would be back later to weigh my duplicator, books, paper and the like, meanwhile, please, could he have a copy of my magazine if I had another to spare. He reads SF and, in fact, in their union magazine *The Triffids* was currently being run as a serial. As far as I could ascertain, this was the only SF he had ever read! He voiced the opinion that what I really needed was a house so I could carry on my activities without fear of annoying any neighbours. I agreed with him, but we also agreed that I didn't stand a hope of being allocated one by the council. Once more I was left alone to wonder what our eventual fate would be. Oh, I forgot to tell you, when he told me I had permission to publish, I informed him I wasn't prepared to accept his word. I wanted to have it in writing from someone in a responsible position. To this he was quite amenable. In a couple of weeks I received a letter from the Housing Manager giving the required permission. During all these comings and goings no-one seemed to know just when we'd be moved out, nor to where we'd be going. Things stayed like this for the next few months.

One night I came home from work to find a notice in the door saying someone from the council had been to see me; would I fill in the bottom half of the paper giving them an alternative time to call when I'd be in. This was the "bug-boys" as I call them. Seems, when the local council is going to move you into a new place, they have to make sure you aren't taking any pet insects with you, like bedbugs and others of that ilk. They were a couple of youngsters and friendly; even more so when they came into the fan-room and saw some copies of *ASF* on the table. To cries of joy from them at finding someone who read the stuff, they were happier when I told them they could have the mags. They did a tour of the place and pronounced it clean... I almost said clear.

I asked them the inevitable question: did they have any idea when we'd be moved? They told me that on past experience it should only be about three weeks after their visit, that this was how it usually worked out.

On hearing this I began packing! The biggest headache was going to be all the fan stuff; fanzines I had collected, books and magazines etc, to say nothing of reams of duplicating paper, envelopes... the lot. I got them done in good time and even began on the household goods as far as possible.

Then, we sat and waited, and waited, and waited. This most of you already know. Three weeks before Xmas the people from the downstairs flat were moved out; they hadn't been in the house for longer than three years and you were supposed to be there for at least five before you became entitled to a new home. Just a week after they left, half the ceiling fell down in the lavatory, making it unusable. The weather was atrocious and the place reeked of cold and damp. I think that last month we spent at 151 was the most miserable I can remember in my whole life.

Just as we had given up all hope and I was seriously considering unpacking some of my fan stuff so I could resume publishing, I got a letter asking me to call and collect the key for my new flat. You couldn't see me for dust. Fred was rather surprised, I think, that I didn't rush up to see what the flat was like; I couldn't. I had helped the woman downstairs to take some of her stuff over so I could look at her place. I have never in my life felt such envy of another human being; it was beautiful! I had been told I wouldn't have one of them because the stuff I had was too heavy; it didn't make much sense to me, but that was what they said. Now I actually had in my hand the keys to one of the new flats and I was afraid to push my luck too far. I still had the idea they might find they'd made a mistake and we weren't to go there after all. I had exactly one week in which to complete my packing ready for the removal men.

I handed out my larger Atomillos and the large pic of me among the Cincy Fantasy Group that Don Ford had sent me to some of my friends for safe keeping. I didn't trust the removal men not to break them. A friend of mine helped to cart my glasses and other breakables to the flat before moving day. I wasn't too happy with the rooms as I saw them then, they looked to be like matchboxes, and I didn't think I could do much with them. I have since traced the reason for this feeling; the rooms are plenty large enough, it's just that the ceilings are so much lower they make the rooms look smaller than they actually are. I need quite a bit of electrical work done (any volunteers?), but we are highly delighted at the whole place. We have five rooms including a bathroom/lavatory and kitchen large enough in which to eat our meals if we so wished. We have a private balcony all to ourselves; central heating and an enormous, by our old standards, airing cupboard in which I keep my spare blankets and pillows, among other things.

For years I have dreaded the day when I might have to become a “council tenant”. In the past I have heard of how dictatorial they can be, telling you what you can and can’t do. I know of someone who has never been able to paint or paper her rooms as she would like; it has to be done to their specifications. This isn’t in Willesden, but it did have me worried. Now we are here, it appears we can do pretty well as we like, provided our rent is paid regularly. We are unable to do any decorating for the next six months; this is to allow them to inspect the place and discover any faults that may have developed in that time. If any, they will be made good before they sign for the building. We are delirious with joy over our new home, and still can’t quite believe in our good fortune. I am enchanted with my kitchen and enamoured of my bathroom. Why, I’ve been known to rush in there first thing in the morning, just to make sure it hasn’t disappeared during the night! I think even more than all the joys of convenient and comfortable living, I relish most the view to be had from the kitchen and one of the living room windows; especially after dark. I often stand in the kitchen doorway just to look out over Kilburn which looks much prettier than I would ever have thought it could.

We are still in a mess, mind you. I’ve unpacked most of the household stuff and shoved it away into cupboards and drawers for the time being, just so I could get rid of a number of boxes for which I didn’t have storage space. The kitchen is about the only room already thoroughly organised and operational. I did hope that once I moved I might get a bedroom to myself without a stack of fan stuff crowding me out; seems it isn’t to be. My bedroom is still more of an office than it is a bedroom, my bed is about the only domestic object in the place. I have my desk, filing cabinet, cupboard unit in which I have stored my ink and duplicating paper etc. The Gestetner is in here too, so any time I can’t sleep I just have to get out of bed and I can go right to work.

Yes, we are still a bit dazed at our good luck; Fred goes around still looking as if he expects to be chucked out any day. I have to keep reminding myself that it is true and this is our new home. I don’t know how long it will take for us to convince ourselves of the fact. George Scithers was the last overseas fan to come to the old Pen; I wonder who will be my first to come here? Now don’t rush all at once, give me time to get things organised, then you can sign the visitors book for us, and welcome.

– *Compact* #1 (March 1963, ed. Parker for OMPA)

March 1963: On the Matter of TAFF

Has TAFF had its day? One could just as easily ask, have “special funds” had their day? But, as we’re talking about TAFF, let’s give it some more thought. First, considering the innate fairness of fen in general, I am surprised that none have supported the *[call in] Cry* to increase the voting fee to double, at least, what it is now. I wonder how many worthy candidates for TAFF have refused because they knew they couldn’t afford to make the trip, even with TAFF paying part of the fare, which is what it comes down to for Britfen travelling to American cons. It was all very well to make it as low as it now stands when fen were a lot younger and poorer than seems to be the case those days. None of this is as irrelevant as it might appear to be. *If* we don’t raise the voting fee for TAFF you will continue to have fen refusing the dubious honour because they can’t afford to lay out the extra cash needed to make the trip. *If*, in face of these refusals, we don’t get a platform of fen to stand, of what use is TAFF? Take this current campaign. We have the spectacle of the Administration begging fen to accept nomination just so we can have a vote. Not a word is said about their suitability, worthiness, or whatever it was that made fen in the past eligible for the honour. You must surely agree it is becoming farcical. If we have to lower our sights when it comes to finding someone worthy (having earned the honour, is how I interpret that) then, yes, I would say that TAFF has outlived its usefulness, no matter how loudly the administrators, past and present, might shout in protest.

I admit, I would hate to see it go but, on the other hand, why let it drag its skirts rather than adapt it to something workable? Fandom is, after all, the place where one expects to find an elasticity of thinking that should make it easy to adapt from something to something else when and if the need arises. The main difficulty with TAFF, and one of which I am always aware, is trying to keep interest alive in it while there is no campaign going on. TAFF always needs money, it *never* has enough. How to keep the funds up when fen are thinking of most anything except TAFF? Plugs in the fmz are so frequent and uninspired, I would hazard a guess the fen read them without really seeing them. This is inevitable when a thing is repeated so often it becomes part of the scenery. We need some live-wire thinking and action. With the panel of past winners in our midst, surely

they could get together and think up something to make TAFF interesting to fandom? It's all very well to sit back and say "Leave TAFF alone, it's worked like this for years, if we change anything it will fall to pieces." Nuts, I say. Why should the administrators have the worry of trying to drag a few extra \$\$\$ and £££ out of us in order to send someone over either way? TAFF is only really successful if we have sufficient in the Fund to send them over without having to beat the drum *extra hard* when someone is found hardy enough to accept nomination.

First raise the ante for voting and, I've no doubt, you'll find many so far reluctant fen, quick to accept nomination. No, I am not proposing we should turn the Fund into a charity organisation, but why should the not so wealthy fan have to refuse simply because he can't afford to accept what should be a fannish honour? So come on you people. If you don't want to lose TAFF, for CRYsakes, do something constructive about supporting it, PLEASE?

Well, as you can see, I'm at it again. I've been quiet for so long maybe it was on the cards that I should open my big mouth as soon as I got near a stencil again. TAFF has always been my favourite fannish charity and I would hate to see it die for lack of courage to change what needs changing, or from lack of support. I would like to see some realistic thinking and doing in aid of this worthwhile project.

– *Compact* #1 (March 1963, ed. Parker for OMPA)

March 1963: Through New Eyes

It has worn off a bit now, but for a long time after I returned from America I watched our TV with fresh eyes and compared it with the US brand. I must confess, I prefer ours here. I also confess that it is probably because I am more used to it, kinda conditioned. I don't doubt for a moment, if we looked in the trade papers which deal in builders and property dealers business, we would find many advertisements of this kind, but it does surprise me that you never see any mention of these articles in any of the adverts put over on our commercial channels. In the States it is done in the name of "public service", or so the station announcer tells us. I take this to mean that it is a free plug. I'll tell you what they don't have in the States – at least, I didn't see any of them – and that's commercials for the armed forces, and we do. For a long time I assumed that these too were part of a "public service", but, on making enquiries I found that the War Office, or whichever dept is responsible for this kind of thing, has to pay a hefty sum for the items shown. Draw what conclusions from this you want to.

I know Harry Warner doesn't much care for discussions of TV programmes in fmz. I believe he imagines it means we have run out of other things to discuss. It ain't necessarily so, Harry, but I would like to talk for a few minutes about two Saturday night programmes that have hit Britain recently.

One, on ITV, features Bernard Braden and no-one else; the other, *That Was the Week That Was* (henceforth called *3T3W*), has a gang of brash youngsters headed by David Frost, before this an unknown to us. It makes for heartburn in some households, mine among them. Times of showing clash. If you favour one over the other, as I do, too bad.

3T3W is loud, brash, and self-consciously daring. They have an enormous team and after a session with them I feel physically exhausted, they do so much dashing around with ghod knows how many costume changes during one transmission. *On the Braden Beat*, on the other hand, has only Bernie, seated in front of a tremendous gimmick-ridden desk, and he sits there just talking in his quiet, humorous way about anything that comes into his head or that has caught his attention during the past week. Sometimes he makes acid comments on what catches his eye; most often he leaves the obvious stupidity involved to make its own comment. The bludgeon and the kid glove is the comparison I make between the two programmes.

You can't open a newspaper, magazine (except SF), read an article on satire without hearing *3T3W* mentioned as an example of what they are trying to say. I have noticed, in the past, that when a radio or TV programme gets this kind of attention it begins to deteriorate. I hope sincerely they don't "discover" *On the Braden Beat*. Braden has long been a favourite of mine; ever since he and his wife, Barbara Kelly, came to England from Canada. I don't know if you in the States know the Bradens? If not, you have missed something good. I will long remember his Uncle Gabby, one of his more loquacious characters.

Yes, I have watched *3T3W*, often. We have a working agreement here that Fred gets to watch it one week, the next week I get to watch Bernie. We both watch the other's preference so, I assure you, I know of wot I talk. I won't deny they have some good gags on *3T3W*, but I don't much care for the underlying taste of malice I seem to find there.

While we are on the subject of TV programmes; a series has just finished over here (2nd series, actually), that I can heartily recommend to you if sold in America. I speak of *Steptoe and Son* [later remade in the US as *Sanford and Son*]. Some of the slang used might be incomprehensible to you, but that shouldn't spoil your enjoyment in it any. It's about a father and son who are junk dealers, a dying race here, now. There is a mixture of love and hate there that at times is stomach-turning. Harold, the son, is always trying to better himself. Dad, on the other hand, is quite content as things are. Anything Harold picks up on his rounds with the cart that has the least smell or taste of "Culture" about it, he keeps for himself. He is very proud of his cocktail cabinet. This is, in fact, an old sideboard he picked up long ago, in it he has a series of old bottles into which he pours the dregs from any bottles of drink he picks up. It makes no difference what the brand or quality; if the bottle he has says sherry on it, he has a bottle already half full of sherry into which he pours the dregs from the empty ones he brings home, and so on. Dad, with his magpie nature, fastens on to almost anything 'Arold brings home, for his own collection of junk. There's no denying, they bring home a load of stuff but they never sell any of it, which is what they are supposed to be doing.

It is quite an "earthy" programme, but, I'm glad to say, the BBC do seem to have admitted recently that they do have an adult audience and are bent on giving us something we can enjoy. The characters as played by Wilfred Brambell (Dad) and Harry H. Corbett ('Arold) are true to life, not, as we have come to expect from the TV, caricatures. This is one programme I make sure I stay home to watch, no matter what. Now that the series has come to an end I have only Braden left as my ideal of

entertainment. I used to favour *Tonight* on the BBC, but, since it came back from the last long break, I don't know what's gone wrong, it isn't nearly as interesting as it once was. I feel that maybe the team they have working on it are becoming stale and have lost a lot of their own interest in what they are doing. It used to be obvious, if you watched them regularly, that they enjoyed their work; not so now.

That, you will be pleased to hear, is the end of this little dissertation.

– *Compact* #1 (March 1963, ed. Parker for
OMPA)

June 1963: Light and Dark

I am working under the happiest conditions it would be possible to imagine. It is a beautiful day and the sun comes right in onto my desk which sits under the window. I have Handel's *Messiah* playing on tape while I work, which will, I know, shock those purists among you who consider works of that nature should be listened to while unoccupied with anything else. That is a theory to which I do not myself subscribe. I enjoy *The Messiah* so much I like to have the music floating throughout the flat while I m doing my housework or anything else I might have to do, like this issue of *cOMPAct*. Mind you, there are occasions on which I do play it and sit to listen.

The latest progress report of how things are going at the new flat, is good. We have now taken delivery of the last item for which we were waiting, our carpets, and they have been laid. It is now beginning to look as if we are *living* here. The only thing that in any way bothers me now is that we can't do any decorating until we have been here for six months; we still have two months to go. Once I can get my books out of their packing cases and my Atomillos up on the walls where they belong, it will really look more like home.

The one magazine I know you all expected me to latch on to was Bruce Burn's *Sizar* in which he attempts to make some sort of an assessment of my character/personality. In his opening paragraph Bruce is talking about BNFs [*Big Name Fans*] and, as he goes on to mention me later I can only assume he has elevated me to those lofty heights. I'm sorry about this; I thought all this nonsense about BNFs, who is and who isn't one, had died out, seems not. For those of you who don't know me, not having met me, I must admit to some things, like for instance, I do love to talk... and talk. Unfortunately for my listeners I have a loud, maybe even raucous voice which I've no doubt grates on the ears and nerves. I also have an unfortunate manner of speaking which comes out sounding abrupt in the extreme. To anyone who doesn't know me well this sounds downright domineering and dictatorial. As a consequence, when I express a *personal opinion* it comes out sounding as if I mean it to be taken as a *matter of fact*. Now, without prefacing all my remarks with the "in my opinion" gambit, there is nothing I can do about it unless I change in some radical way and that I can't foresee at this late date. I admit it is impossible for an acquaintance to get to know me. I've had much practice in keeping

them at a distance which I still do instinctively. My friends know me for what I am and that satisfies me. *I don't think* that I go to extremes in my loves and hates but I will admit once having made my mind up I seldom, if ever, change it concerning a person. I won't bother with people I don't like or who bore me; why should I? I don't expect those who dislike me or whom I bore to put up with me. All this, of course, proves how self-centred and selfish I am. As for Bruce's stupid assertion that, and I quote: "...and the only way for her to feel sure of her importance to them is to see how happily they accede to her wishes". Rubbish! If he has taken seriously what is a purely local type joke – that I am bossy and a slave driver – then he saw less than he reckons on.

– *Compact #2* (June 1963, ed. Parker for OMPA)

September 1963: Duperrollinatomsfcolellaparkerd

Late in September it was made possible for a group of us to have a tour of the offices of one of our National newspapers. It was understandable that these visits could only be arranged for the evening when most of the staff had gone home, but it did mean that the bustling activity one associates with such a place was left to the imagination. We were shown where the various editors and sub-editors did their daily chores and were told how the work which most concerned them reached their desks. The entire works in fact. The poor man who was acting as our guide must have been climbing the wall, because he had to keep insisting we move on when anything caught our special interest and we looked like dallying for too long. The library was a good example of this. He brought out one of the enormous books into which copies of the paper had been bound; it was for one of the years during the First World War, I forget which. We were entranced with the headlines and news items. Ethel Lindsay and I were reading the prices for which goods were being offered then and looking at the fashions displayed.

From the offices we went into the linotype room and would have been there yet if left alone. We watched the men operating them and had the monster explained to us. Then came the magic moment. "Would you like to try it for yourselves?" Of course! The first thing that floored us was the differences in the keyboard from that of a typewriter. We wasted no end of time hunting for the letters we wanted. I was crafty. I let a few of them go ahead of me while I examined the board in some detail so that when it came to my turn to have a bash I didn't do too badly.

From there we went to where the men set type by hand as the size of print needed was larger than that carried by the linotype. It seems that I was the only one to notice what appeared to be an anachronism. In that place of giant machinery there was hanging at the rear of the lead pouring machine what looked like an old fashioned glue-pot. There was an enormous bar of metal sticking up from it and it was from this they got the melted metal to impress the type onto what they called, if I remember correctly, the slug. I discovered later that the others had noticed it but they hadn't thought it particularly out of place.

Our last port of call was to the printing presses themselves. In spite of

the din I am sure that we'd have stayed down here for hours, so fascinated by it were we. By judiciously edging towards the printing presses we were able to peer into the room below where the enormous rolls of paper were being fed into the presses. It was impossible to follow the route taken by the paper as it unrolled onto the presses and then came off already collated and folded ready to go upstairs to the room where the van-men waited for their bundles, so fast it went. I had been attempting a conversation with one of the men there so was one of the last to follow our guide back upstairs, as I did come away to join the others there was our Arthur, standing by one of the machines with the paper coming through at a terrific pace, with one hand in pocket, turning an imaginary duper handle. It was the more comical because he was absolutely dwarfed by the thing. I don't know if the men around knew what he was doing – if not, they must have thought we were mad because it looked so funny. We just stood there, rolled up with laughing. What he would have done if the bottom roller needed cleaning off I just don't know.

Altogether it was a most interesting and entertaining visit and well worth the trouble of going. We all have our mementoes of the visit in the shape of whatever we chose to type out for ourselves on the linotype.

– *Compact #3* (December 1963, ed. Parker
for OMPA)

October 1963: At Fifty Eight in Sixty Three

Since I last wrote to you my life has undergone some reorganisation. When I first came into fandom, Archie Mercer suggested I get myself a typewriter because, as he said, it made it easier for the recipients to read my letters. I didn't know anything about them but Remington was a name I recognised so bought one of theirs. With the machine there was a book telling one how to learn touch typing. This I studied, determined to get the most from the machine having paid out good cash for it. I was a fool. Instead of persevering with the touch method of typing I found it quicker, I thought, to use the hit and miss method so beloved of fandom. Even so, I had the gall to leave my work in canteens and go into an office which offered so much more in the way of money to say nothing of a less energetic way of spending my working hours.

I have always been dissatisfied with this way of using a typewriter but, until recently, did nothing about it. For some reason my dissatisfaction has been increasing so I enrolled at night classes. It didn't make much sense to me that I should take tuition on three hours per week on the correct method and spend eight hours a day using the wrong one. So I gave up office work for the nonce and took a job, in a factory of all things. Heinz's to be specific.

It has been an entirely new experience for me and I have found it to be interesting. I answered an advertisement for girls needed in the department preparing the vegetables for soups and salads. I didn't have a clue what I was getting into and two weeks there was more than enough. Actually, I was ready to chuck it up after the first day, but thought it would be sissy if I gave in that easily. The conditions of work were dreadful. I must be fair and say that taking into consideration the job which had to be done, the firm provided us with all the protective clothing they could. We wore heavy overalls, heavy plastic aprons, plastic arm coverings, and rubber gloves. If we wanted them we could ask for waterproof boots as well. All day we were in damp surroundings and, as the work had a bonus attached, heads were down all day and it was much too noisy to be able to talk, if you wanted to. No, this wasn't for me. I decided to give my notice on the Friday and soon discovered that there were others so intending. I found myself another job in an electronics factory which would at least be

dry.

They have a system of supervision at Heinz which sounds clumsy but it seems to work. Our immediate superior wore a white overall with a blue collar and she is known as the “blue-band”. Those with the red collars are called, guess what, that’s right, “red bands”. I had to give my notice to my blue-band who then passed it on to the red-band, who in turn sent for me and told me I would have to go and see the Personnel Officer. Meanwhile could I give her a reason for leaving as she had to fill in a card for the office. I told her I didn’t think the job was for me and left it at that. I was amazed on being sent for by the Personnel Officer to find she didn’t want me to leave if it was only the job I disliked and not the idea of working for Heinz. Would I consider a transfer to another department? I told her I had another job lined up but she insisted that if I could be persuaded to stay she would be happy and, she hoped, so would I. I accepted her offer, and was transferred, beginning on the following Monday, to the department known as “Rework”.

I’ve been there three weeks now, at the time of writing that is, and have stuck my nose into everything in the least interesting to me. I’d like to tell you of some of the things we do in the place, I hope you won’t be too bored.

From any part of the factory, if anything is suspect it comes to us. A batch of tins might not be labelled properly, they come to us and we have to strip them down and, if there are only a few at fault, we re-label them ourselves. If all of them are bad, we return them to the department from which they came to be labelled again by machine. We have an X-ray machine into which we send any tins suspected of containing “foreign matter”. It might be a wedding ring that has come off someone’s finger and she suddenly has missed it. The entire output from her starting work that morning is put into “quarantine” and sent down to us. I had been looking at this thing and couldn’t for the life of me figure out how it worked. I asked the girls who were using it if they minded me looking at it. They were quite willing.

Two girls work outside the machine. One is taking the suspect tins out of the cases and stands them on a conveyor belt which takes them out of sight. I went inside to see what happened next. The girl inside sits in front of a screen, very much like that on a TV set. In the centre of this screen is a pointer. As the tins pass slowly in front of the screen you can see their outlines and the contents are transparent, unless there is something there that shouldn’t be. This would show up in a black outline. The girl inside can stop the belt, move it backwards and, of course, restart

it. When she sees a tin that should be stopped, she presses a button on the small console in front of her which stops the belt. She must make sure the tin is immediately under the pointer on her screen. She rings a bell which, from the outside, has a strident voice, and the very act of ringing the bell causes a drop of oil to fall from the pointer onto the top of the can which should be removed, which it then is by the other girl on the outside who is returning the good cans to the empty cases.

Sometimes a man comes into our department and sets up a gadget which for a long time had me guessing. It was, or looked like, a weighing block with a metal plate in the centre. At the back there was a piece standing upright which had an electric bulb attached. Surrounded by stacks of cases he would take a tin from one of them, place it on the metal plate and put it to one side. If the light went on, he put it on the opposite side. I couldn't figure out what he was doing. He appeared to be weighing the tins, but he couldn't be doing only that because part of our work consists of weighing consignments of tins suspected of being light-weight. I asked around among the women, not really expecting an answer. I've asked them about things before and they never know the answer; they are remarkably disinterested in anything that doesn't concern them immediately. I finally went over and asked the man himself. He was testing the vacuum to see there were no leakages. He works for the Metal Box Co. which makes tins for Heinz and they send a man over frequently to make these tests. Although the basic design never changes they do come across small adjustments that have to be made to ensure good sealing. I went back to my own work and pondered over what he had told me. Then a thought occurred to me. What is there about those tins that makes the vacuum suspect in the first place? I trotted back and asked him. Nothing, they just take a random selection of five hundred tins and test them. Happy at having solved that one, I went back to work.

I can't say anything on the subject of how the food is cooked as I haven't seen the kitchens, but I have been somewhat re-assured about using tins since I came here. The slightest fault and it goes out, though not always into the rubbish bin. If the fault doesn't interfere with the quality or safety of the product, it goes downstairs into Staff Sales where it is sold at a heavy discount. This particularly applies to dented cans, provided they aren't too bad.

Some of the faults for which we have to look sound most peculiar. Here are a few, just for the record: cable cuts, spinners, broken chucks, cutovers and lips. All of these are faults in the sealing of the cans. When I first went to the rework department the "blue-band" would tell me what it

was we were looking for and would show me the fault in a book of illustrations she had. Another thing we had to look for was called “peaks”. This is a dimple on the top of the tin. When found they are all collected and put into the hot room where they are left for fourteen days at a temperature of eighty five degrees, the theory being that if a “peak” is an incipient blow it should become fully blown in that time. If it doesn’t, then it never will. Of course, you know what a blown can looks like? Well, it has a swollen appearance both top and bottom and is thrown out immediately. You never buy a can from the shop when it looks like that; it should never have reached the shop in the first place.

Never having worked in a factory before, I don’t know if other places are as good to work in as is Heinz. Right from the first day I went there, and later, on reading through their rule book, given to every employee, I was struck by how thoughtful and considerate of their employees they are. In thinking about it a bit more it becomes obvious that they are doing themselves a bit of all right too. At first glance you get the feeling they are being very careful of you and your rights but, logically, if you follow their advice not only are you kept healthy and free from accidents, but it saves them time and money. The best thing of all, in my opinion, is the opportunity given to every employee to tour the works and see everything with no holds barred on the number and nature of questions you can ask. The idea being, if you see the entire works and can relate your job to what you have seen, you will take more interest in what you are doing.

The work we do is, of necessity, repetitive and tedious, but it’s a living and will hold me until I have mastered the course I am taking at school, which should be about Xmas, I reckon.

– *Compact #3* (December 1963, ed. Parker
for OMPA)

November 1963: JFK

It was the evening of November 22nd, a Friday. I had come home from work, switched on the TV to catch the news, put the kettle on to make myself a pot of tea. This hour from 5.50 – 7pm, is my last chance for a rest and a cup of tea in peace. The news programme was over and the usual magazine feature, *Tonight*, was on. Suddenly, the news commentator's face appeared with the caption that there was a *newsflash*. At that precise moment my doorbell rang to announce the first arrivals. I turned up the sound so I could hear what was being said as I went to the front door. I admitted two of the lads putting my finger to my lips to indicate they shouldn't speak. They had missed the announcement.

"Kennedy has been shot", I told them. The news had been broken in tones that seemed to be confident that it wasn't serious. We were shocked, yes, but engaged ourselves with guessing what crank had chanced his arm and what would happen to him if he were caught. The next arrival was Ted Tubb and I went into the kitchen to get cups of tea for them all. As I returned to the living room I caught the last of what Ted had said. "What was that?", I asked. "Kennedy is dead", he answered. I was stunned. I wanted to be sick. I felt cold all over. I could feel my flesh crawl as I tried to realise the truth of what I'd heard. All I could find to say was, "oh, no!" We gave the news to the rest of the lads as they appeared and they all seemed equally stunned.

Not since FDR have I felt so personal a loss at the death of an American President. Even so, the death of Roosevelt wasn't really unexpected. He was an old man and had been sick for years. Kennedy was a young man in the flower of his years and had died violently. It was the manner of his death that shocked me more than anything, I think.

It's no use, you know; just writing about it brings it all back too strongly for me to be able to remain coherent. I find it difficult, even today, to convince myself that it really happened. He was a good man, I honestly believe, and was our main hope of peace in the Western world. It will be a long time before we ever see his like again in an office where he could implement his ideals.

May he Rest In Peace.

[To Dick Schultz in OMPA] Your muddled thinking and your grief were so exactly as I felt that Friday when I heard the news. Some of it has worn off by now, but it lingered for days. I still don't understand how you

had the ability, under the circumstances, to put a stencil into the typewriter and pour out your feelings. It makes for poignant reading and I am grateful to you for the trouble you took to do it. One thing that throws me for six is the letter you printed from Harry Warner. I would never have thought him to be so self centred that he would think of fandom or self at such a time. Fandom, or the fear that Oswald may have been a fringe fan, never entered my head or that of anyone else I know.

Kennedy himself was well aware of the 20 year jinx he was bucking. It has been reported that he said he thought he stood a good chance of breaking the sequence; more's the pity he didn't. [2]

The first episode of Doctor Who was broadcast the day after the assassination, an event that passed mostly unremarked in fanzines of the period.

[1] *Compact* #3 (December 1963, ed. Parker for OMPA)

[2] *Compact* #4 (June 1964, ed. Parker for OMPA)

December 1963: Appreciating Atom

I know a lot of you share in my feeling of admiration for the artwork done on stencil by Atom. He has yet another talent which I believe may be entirely unsuspected by many of you; his ability to provide apt titles for columns and articles. I, who have no ability in this direction, am often left breathless in wonder when faced with yet another example of this gift he has. The title for this column [*“Epee”*] is an example of what I mean.

When asked to title an article, all he asks for is an idea of its content and, sure enough, the title will fit it perfectly. For all I know there are others in fandom who have this same ability, but then, Atom does it so often for us that I feel it is time we gave him due credit and thanks. All I have to do now is sit back and wait for him to see this mailing, then he'll give me a wiggling. While we are on the subject of Arthur, let me try to give you an idea of the kind of person he is. After all, he is, I hope, the next TAFF delegate to go to America and I feel you should be partially prepared for what is coming to you, you lucky people! In appearance he is small and wiry with an enormous capacity for fun. Here again you will be enthralled at the sheer aptness of some of his cracks in any given situation. He wears spectacles and has brown hair cut short. When I am at a party or convention with him he always reminds me of electricity. He darts around so quickly and his quick-fire gags keep you on your toes. It is very easy to get Arthur drunk. You don't have to supply him with booze, he gets drunk on atmosphere. At a gathering of fen where rapport has been established he enjoys an elation that, at times I should think, is almost unbearable because it is so intense. How he can endure it without becoming hysterical is beyond my comprehension but he does.

If you want to have an illustrated memento of his visit, just make sure he has paper and pencil in his hands while he is talking and all the time he'll be dashing off cartoons. Did I tell you he is ambidextrous? He is. I well remember the first time I noticed this. It was in the Globe one Thursday night. Arthur was surrounded by the usual admiring crowd and happened to be holding on his lap a ream of paper someone had brought up for me. As he talked he drew. I happened to be watching his hands rather than his face – that sounds like a declared preference, doesn't it? – and I noticed that when he wanted to do something on the far side of the paper

he didn't, as most others would, turn the page round to get to it easier; he just switched the pencil to his other hand and kept on drawing and talking without any pauses or hesitations. I was fascinated.

This then is the man that soon you will be meeting for yourselves and I know that many of you have been waiting impatiently for this chance for years.

MAKE THE MOST OF IT, AND PLEASE, SEND HIM BACK. WE NEED HIM!

•

Most, if not all of you, know that I hold "Open house" to anyone in fandom who cares to come along and enjoy a social evening every Friday night. Originally it was initiated to enable members of the BSFA to meet each other in less forbidding surroundings than a pub, where they would have to buy a drink whether they wanted it or not. Besides some of those who attend are under age and cannot go into a pub. I am glad that this has become such a well established thing that I often get phone calls during the week from strangers asking if they can come along. This is not necessary, you know. If you are in town and it is Friday, just come along.

A few weeks ago I had such a phone call from a couple of fellows who claimed to be friends of John Baxter's. Naturally, I welcomed the chance to meet someone who knew John and told them about what time to be here. Their names? Hold on while I get the Visitor's Book: E. Komeuda was one, at least, that's what it looks like, and O. Gerwy is the other. The writing is awful so I can't guarantee the spelling is correct. They only stayed about an hour and in that time the only reference they made to SF was to ask where they could buy some. We gave them the address of Ken Slater and the subject seemed to be closed. Next they wanted to know where were the girls? Seems I was expected to offer them the kind of entertainment to be found in a brothel. Maybe they thought I was the madam of a disorderly house, I don't know. That subject also having been closed the next item on their agenda was to try and get rid of a camera lens they had smuggled into the country which wouldn't fit the cameras either of them had. No sale being effected, they left and good riddance.

I wouldn't normally mention an incident like this, but I don't want it to happen again so I'm telling all of you. By all means tell your fan friends to look me up if they are in London, but please, also tell them that it is a social evening and not a market for ridding themselves of embarrassing objects they may have smuggled into the country; neither do I provide the kind of entertainment they were looking for. I will be pleased to welcome your friends but they will be barred from future meetings if I find they are

trying in any way to capitalise on my hospitality. This may sound too strong to you, but I don't feel that any apology is due. John, I am not holding you responsible for the behaviour of these men in any way, but I had to mention it. See you....

Abuse of her hospitality would lead Ella to discontinue the Friday night meetings in 1964, as described at greater length in Then: Science Fiction Fandom in the UK: 1930-1980. The final meeting was on 18 December 1964.

– *Compact* #3 (December 1963, ed. Parker for OMPA)

April 1964: The Bard, the Harp, and the Eastercon

I can't stand to read plays, can you? Least of all can I bear to try and read Shakespeare. I have never gone to the theatre to see any of his plays and for years I've been resisting any-and-all suggestions made to me by Bobbie Gray that I should go to see the films. I have been converted! Hey, you listening, Bobbie? I'll tell you how it happened...

Who among you doesn't know that this is Shakespeare's Centenary year? I noticed in the Radio Times, that they were doing *Hamlet* from Elsinore. Curiosity decided me to watch it. After all, if I didn't like it I could switch to the other channel and watch a modern play starring an actor I knew and liked. *Hamlet* began at 8:50 p.m. and finished at 11:50 p.m. with a break of ten minutes for the news. I sat enthralled and watched and *listened* to the lot. Howzat! Now I am all at sea. Was it just that I was in a receptive mood, or was it the fact of it being shown on location thus giving it more impact? I think the first must be the truth, because since then – all in the same week – I've, sat through and enjoyed *Richard III* and the modern-dressed *Julius Caesar*. I confess I listened with some trepidation when certain of the characters began their well-known and oft-quoted speeches. I feared they might sound stale, but it says much for the actors concerned that they were as fresh to me as if I were hearing them for the first time... as indeed I was, *in their proper setting*.

I can well imagine those of you well familiar with the works of Old Bill chuckling in your beer at my sudden enthusiasm. Any day after receiving this I expect to get a sarcastic letter from Bill Temple – who is a Shakespeare buff – for my lamentable ignorance of the good things in life. I don't give a damn. You can laugh as long and as heartily as you please. It is a relief to me to discover those plays are not the bore I have always found them to be in the past.

I consider myself to be a most lucky fella. Nearly all the things which give me most pleasure have come to me pretty late in life. I was already middle aged by some standards when I found fandom; now I have found Shakespeare and I believe my enjoyment in these things to be all the keener because I could so easily have gone the rest of my life without them, and I can appreciate the narrow squeak I have had in both cases. Makes me wonder what marvels old age has in store.

The older I get the more my pleasure in certain pursuits is heightened. I enjoy conventions more each year, though I don't do the same things now that I once did. Hold it, I mean I don't attend many programmed items – I used to be sure I saw and heard them all. I have always loved to talk, as anyone who has met me will tell you, but when I first came into fandom I was far too busy dashing around to make sure I didn't miss out on anything to take more than a minute to stop and talk to anyone. Now I am content to sit and chat with them all and I let the bustle go hang. Much more satisfying.

I have, at last, achieved an ambition I have long cherished. Walt Willis's name is in my Visitor's book! Sounds like lion hunting, doesn't it? It wasn't really. I first met Walt at the Harrogate Eastercon and what I saw I liked... this comes as a surprise to you? We had exchanged a few letters, but for some reason I was never at ease writing to him as I was writing to others I'd never met. I think I allowed his reputation in fandom to intimidate me. Daft! I resolved, by hook or by crook, I was going to get him to the Pen and really get to know him. How to arrange it was the bother; I just couldn't see him hopping the Irish Channel to one of my Friday night meetings. It would have to be something else. But what? Then fate took a hand.

Walt and Madeleine were coming over for the Eastercon this year a day early and they had to have somewhere to sleep. When I first heard this news I jumped in quick before anyone else could and offered them a bed here if they didn't mind roughing it in a fannish way. Actually, at the time I wrote I thought there would be more staying the night than there was. This must have come to Walt like a poke in the solar plexus, but he took it like a man and accepted my invitation like a gentleman. Good recovery, that lad. He came, but did I get the talk with him that I hoped for? Of course not. You know things never go as you arrange them in fandom. There was some last minute duplicating to be done before we left for Peterborough next morning, so I was chained by my own petard or something. One of these days, I promise myself, I'll tie that man down in a corner and get him talking. Walt, you have been warned.

Actually, it was a nice evening. Wally Weber had been in Belfast with the Willis's so I had perforce to bed him down as well. Ethel was here for the night as well and we had a few people in for the evening. Joe and Anne Patrizio came; Joe had never met Walt and was anxious to do so. Bill Temple, the proudest grandfather I know of in fandom, came along too. Teds Tubb and Forsyth were there as were Ian and Olivia McAulay. Oh, Atom was there as well.

Right there you have the ingredients for a pleasant evening any night of your life. It was a case of many hands making light work. Walt cooked the frozen peas we were having for dinner, and right well he cooked them too. Madeleine made the gravy; Ethel dashed in and out serving at table. Me? I just stood around supervising. Bedtime came far too soon, but we had to be up betimes in the morning.

Fifteen of us, if I remember rightly, travelled down in the same coach. Atom, who was coming down on Saturday, had come along to see us off and as the train began to move we were convulsed to see from the window Atom leaning well into the wind, with his cheeks puffed out, pushing the train as hard as he could. We settled ourselves down for the journey and the train was doing a respectable speed when Wally said quietly, "this train sure goes well on Atomics". I'm not sure if the bruises were healed by the time he went home, or not. For some obscure reason known only to herself, Madeleine Willis gave Wally a box of sweets (candies). Immediately we were round him. Not only did we point out to him the ones we liked, we took them. All you could see was a flurry of hands and the fast emptying box. Wally looked in dismay at the two we had left him when I decided that one of the two was also a favourite of mine. Then there was one. Don't worry about him, we gave most of them back to him.

Not all of you in OMPA get *Cry*, the zine in which Wally is editor of the lettercolumn, so maybe you don't know of his reputation for giving the unexpected comment/answer to something you say in your letters. Many a time I've been a victim of his peculiar talent in this direction. It gave me much pleasure to pay him back in his own coin. On Sunday evening at the convention, Ethel and I took Wally to dinner. We asked him how he was enjoying himself and he waxed all enthusiastic about the generous way in which he'd been treated. He went so far as to mention that he hadn't been allowed to pay a bill so how the heck could he learn to use our currency. I jumped on his neck right away for going around Peterborough bilking all the restaurants. His face was a picture. Just for a moment there I had caught him with his guard down and he hadn't been expecting this reaction at all. So often was I able to catch him I feel that once more we start out level. The slate has been wiped clean.

– *Compact* #4 (June 1964, ed. Parker for OMPA)

April 1964: Hwyl Jr

Hwyl was the title of Elinor Busby's Cry editorial column.

Seattle Fandom is coming East! At the time of going to press, Our Man W.W. Weber is in London. Tosk [*Burnett R Toskey*] proposes to follow his example come summer and Buz and Elinor will, we hope, be coming over for the '65 Worldcon. Having already had a sample meeting of the Nameless Ones [the Seattle group] here one Friday night, it might just be possible to induce the above named members to remain in London so we could open a branch of our own. How about it, Busbys?

There has been some talk in the past about whether or not TAFF has out-lived its usefulness. In view of the reception accorded to the latest delegate, I would venture an opinion and say, yes, it has. Not that you are going to find anyone willing to admit they dislike Weber or that they are displeased with the manner in which he behaved himself while, here. After all, that sword of Damocles, his report, has yet to be written and we are a bit anxious to discover how he liked us... or even if he did. Therefore, we *like* Wally. We have *enjoyed* having him here. We *would* like to have him come back sometime... in the *distant* future.

I didn't really intend writing a Con report, so I hope you aren't hoping for or expecting one. I must mention though how enjoyable it was this year. I know I say that every year, and it is always true. On consideration, I would say this one was the best ever. If anything the whole deal was under-programmed, and I consider this to be a Good Thing. I made a point of asking a couple of fen, whose first Con this was, what they thought about it. They agreed that it was just right as it gave them time to go around and meet people they'd never met before and talk. Apart from the personal (as distinct from the "Official") success enjoyed by Wally, was the resounding success of the Ed Hamiltons. Ed, of course, is the shy one and is not so readily forthcoming as his charming wife, Leigh, but once you got him talking he was well away. They were to be found anywhere there were a bunch of fans sitting around. I can't remember the last time we had professionals so available to us. We will be sorry if they can't manage to look in on us before they have to leave London for home.

A new group fast coming up to prominence is the Manchester Group. Last year was their first Convention and they walked away with first prize

for their costumes; they did it again this year. But, this year they had prepared an item for the programme which by popular demand was repeated on the evening of the same day it had first been done. The item? They had made some films. I have never seen anything so funny – or so good – before. I tell you, it was quite something. When I heard they were going to do a repeat of the show I was just about to go out for dinner. They were to show a couple of items we hadn't seen in the afternoon and I didn't want to miss them, so I asked Harry Nadler if it would be possible to show them last so I wouldn't miss them. He assured me that what with the films to be rewound and the sound to be re-calibrated it would be some time before they were ready. I arrived back in a rush only to find they had been waiting for me for ages. Everyone else was in their seats and they were all ready to roll. There were other highlights, like the majority of IF being present which always makes for a good con, and, at last, I got to meet Madeleine Willis! Yes, I think I'll go again next year. It's bound to be a good convention.

– *Cry* #173.5 (April 1964, ed. Parker and Wally Weber)

June 1964: Opinions

OMPA

Why I joined OMPA? Sheesh. I resisted joining for long enough. I finally joined mainly because from force of circumstances I was unable to maintain my usual genzine publishing schedule. I thought that if I could contribute twelve pages per year it would be a good way of keeping some kind of contact with a large number of fen who might otherwise think I had gone from the scene. Mostly members feel that OMPA is for experiment. This is good, but I have a different purpose. I think of it as something of a correspondence club. I can express opinions, indulge in arguments, and keep in touch regularly at little cost or effort. You may think these to be all the wrong reasons, but they suit me.

Frankly, I don't understand how other fen have time/resources to publish a genzine as well as an APAzine. Of course, when I first gave this matter some thought, it was surprising how many of the fanzine publishers were male. I know that in a lot of cases they were/are helped by their wives, but I can't think of another femme in fandom who is entirely responsible for her own fan publications at the same time as she runs a home and entertains fans. Bjo Trimble has her John, Juanita Coulson has her Buck, Madeleine Willis has her Walt, and so it goes on.

It's a sad fact but true that it's always the men in fandom who find it easy to do any amount of fanac and assume it to be just as easy for everyone else. 'Tisn't so. Since I moved here I've been trying to get my trip report finished, but there's always something that has to be done that has prior importance. I spend most evenings in my own room shut away from Fred or anyone else and get through an enormous amount of work. I go to school twice a week (4 hours) and am out at work all day. Not even my weekends are entirely mine. Believe me, twelve pages per annum is the limit for me or I would have to surrender my place to someone more able to cope with it.*

* *This paragraph from Compact #3 edited into extract from #4.*

Ethel's spare time is entirely her own, for which I envy her. No rude noises now, but when I resume genzine publishing I can't honestly say if I'll retain my membership in OMPA. I'll make this promise though, that if I find it too much for me, I won't hang onto my membership by the skin of

my teeth. I'll get the hell out and leave room for an active member.

The Handicapped

[To Colin Freeman] You are right, of course. When I say I feel guilty because I am whole and they – the handicapped – are not, I was talking entirely of their physical handicaps. I wouldn't come near to suggesting that their mind is as restricted as their bodies.

We all at some time indulge ourselves in day-dreams. One of mine is that I should be just sufficiently incapacitated that I have to take to my bed for months. I dream fondly of all the reading I would like to do but don't have the time for, I think of all the crudzines I could publish and mail out to the defenceless fen on my mailing list, the numerous letters I would write. Naturally, part of the daydream is that I would have a sufficiency of cash to enable me to do all this.

No, I was not embarrassed when I met you, for two reasons, (1) I was meeting Colin Freeman, a person with whom I'd been corresponding and with whom I'd become friends. (2) There was no apparent physical handicap. You didn't have a speech defect which made it difficult to understand you – I discount a broad Yorkshire accent – you didn't have a badly deformed hand or anything else that was obvious to me. I think, perhaps, I suffer from a bad case of selfishness. Anything I can see that makes me feel uncomfortable, I resent, so I feel guilty because I know my resentment is unreasonable.

1960s Television Presenters

[To Terry Jeeves] I'll go along with your condemnation of Raymond Baxter, and for the same reason – he always manages to put my back up. Dimpleby I can just about tolerate as I find his manner so amusing when faced with a royal occasion. Added to these, I would name Alan Freeman and Jimmy Savile for their phoney geniality; David Jacobs for not having the courage to quit a job with which he is so obviously bored and doesn't bother to hide it; John Grierson for his gabby habits, when all you want to do in his programme, *This Wonderful World*, is to watch some of those fabulous films he always manages to get; Bill Burrud, whose commentary in the *True Adventure* films spoils it entirely by his inanities. What finally finished me was in one film he was showing a group of men out hunting a mountain lion. In the introduction he had already told us the beast was

dangerous, and it was going to be hunted to the death. From then on at intervals, he repeated this information at great length and his false attempts to enthuse over what was happening, like goshWOW boys, was sickening. Hughie Green and Michael Miles come way up on this list. Miles had a dirty habit of being funny (he thinks) at the expense of some old woman he imagines too ignorant to know what he is doing. That he is right in thinking this doesn't make it any nicer to see. I gave up watching most of their programmes some time ago, but memories of them still linger. With a bit of thought I've no doubt I could come up with more, but why bother?

Thematic Repeats

[To John Baxter] As a matter of interest, exactly the same point you make about your first story dealing with Alien Contact, Parallel Universes etc., being the most memorable and reading later versions of the same plot being not so good, was made at this year's Eastercon. We were discussing whether the SF being written today had the same impact as that written in the "golden years" as some fens describe them. Consensus of opinion seemed to agree with your views. They may not have the same impact, but if the variations on a theme are well written they can be entertaining, and so few are these days.

I don't have your dedicated interest in films and I certainly have no knowledge of the various techniques over which you buffs rave. I go to the cinema so seldom that I invariably enjoy what I do see. I did see the original of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, but can't remember much about it. Of those you catalogued I've seen only two, the remake of the above and *Key Largo*. A poor score, huh?

Smoking

[To Archie Mercer] I know what you mean though, when describing your visits to the theatre. These other people who insist on talking during a film, to say nothing of the gangs of youths who went there just to shout and show-off in front of the local belles spoiled many a good film for me. Ideally, a theatre or cinema should be empty of anyone else for the duration of the performance. You wouldn't have been subjected to this particular nuisance, but it always seems to be my fate to choose a seat next to or near someone who has forgotten their matches/lighter. When I light a cigarette, not knowing this, my fate is sealed. Unless I move my seat,

which I do now, I am pestered for a light whenever s/he wants to smoke.

There has been a lot of talk in some of the fanzines on this vexed question of giving up smoking. My head tells me I'd be better off in health without it, but my heart isn't entirely convinced. I have slowed down some, but not as much as I'd have liked. I read all the advice columns on the subject, but they are not really much help. They seem to imagine the entire evening while you are at home should be spent in some active work. Typing doesn't seem to come into this category; although I must admit I burn more cigarettes while typing than I smoke. Wasteful. Another thing that bothers me is that once you give it up you always seem to put on weight, and I'm already far heavier than I like. Arthur is most always telling me to slim. If *any* of you have solved this puzzle, I'd be glad to hear how; you never know, it might work for me too.

The Fab Four

Come on, Joe [*Patrizio*], why be so harsh on the Beatles? I must admit I don't go a bundle on their singing but they are an interesting group for more than one reason. For instance, Fred, you know Fred, raves about them. If I'm in my room watching TV and I happen to be on a different channel to him and the Beatles come on, whether they are performing or just being interviewed, I have to yell for him either to come and watch or change channels on his set. I find this an amazing phenomena. As a general rule he is unable to distinguish between any of these teenage squallers and his opinions of them are unprintable, yes, even for me. Yet, for the Beatles, he raves. I hear tell Elinor Busby has been bitten by them as well. I don't care for their singing, but I do sort of like them as personalities. They are cheeky and have their feet solidly on the ground. They know that it's more than likely they'll be OUT on their respective ear'oles any day now and they intend to milk the existing situation for all it will bring them. And who can blame them? If they've been sensible, and I believe they have, they are set for life without having to worry about spending their days doing a job they don't like just in order to eat and pay the rent. Another thing I like about them is that they haven't fallen into the trap of believing their agent's publicity; they even take the mickey out of it. Did you see them on TV when they returned from America? They stood on the steps leading from the plane and looked at all those girls standing around yelling for them. They couldn't believe it. As one of them said, it was mad. I like 'em.

Giant Ants

An odd thing has just happened. Years ago, when I first saw that film *Them* – you know, the one about the giant ants – I thoroughly enjoyed it. It must have been at least two years later when I was doing some ironing I heard a noise out in the street. My head shot round and my heart jumped into my throat. Quite without thinking how stupid and illogical it was, my first and immediate thought was *Them!* I hadn't even thought of the film in ages.

As I type this, it is 11 a.m. I have heard another noise which brought back the same memory of that film. Last time it happened I couldn't identify what had made the noise; this time I know. It was the engine of a taxi ticking over. Knowing what was doing it, I sat and listened to it more intently and could still hear the ants in it; not at their shrillest as when they were nearby, but as they sounded when they were at a distance. Uncanny.

– *Compact #4* (June 1964, ed. Parker)

1972: Lowdown on Liftoff

Part I

I give fair warning to those of you who are not interested in the Space programme, or who think it all a tremendous waste of public money, read no further. This is not for you. I am a space addict right from the days of sub-orbital flights and my enthusiasm is liable to gall you. Having said which, we are off....

I left London 1 p.m. and arrived Orlando 2:40 a.m. London times. Quite a few things have changed on the Trans-Atlantic flight since I last did it. For one thing they have films. Tough luck on you if your seat happens to be in front of the screen which is dropped from the ceiling; if the plane is full, you've had it. They also have earphones which are on hire for the princely sum of £1. I must admit these are a great help in passing the time. It is from the earphones you receive the sound track of the film. Plus 7 other channels, ranging from pop to opera, ballet music, film sound tracks etc. There is also a channel especially for children. Oddly enough I read just recently that the business men who commute over the Atlantic frequently, prefer to listen to this last one. So much for Big Business. The selection of music is good but it was surprising on the way home just how many passengers fell asleep with the things clamped to their heads. It was a night flight.

I had to change planes at Miami for the domestic flight to Orlando. I swear I walked half a mile or more to reach the booking-in desk of the Airline I wanted. This is one place where they could usefully install moving walk-ways. My back was playing me up after all that sitting and I had to use my walking stick. This seemed to cause a fair amount of amusement as I saw nothing but laughing faces as I passed lugging my top heavy hand bag, to say nothing of the bag I had been laden with at the duty free shop in London. That had my supply of cigarettes in it so I wasn't about to let it go. I had by now had enough of flying so I was glad to find it didn't take more than 40 minutes to reach my final destination where I was to be met.

I was to stay with Joe Green – the SF author – and his wife Juanita – henceforth known as Nita – and I was doubtful if I would know him. After all it had been ten years or more since I met him in Seattle and I was by

now a bit dazed from lack of sleep so I wasn't my usual bright and perky self. Luckily he saw and recognised me even before I had got the place into focus. He had his daughter Rose with him and I never did ask him what he thought of it, but the first thing I needed, and quickly, was a cuppa. Not only was I tired but parched too. Thank God they put the Tbag in the cup and not in the saucer as so many of them do; the way I felt at THAT MOMENT it would have been the last straw. Much refreshed we were on our way.

I confess here and now, I have no recollection of meeting Nita in Seattle although she assures me she was there, so I only knew it was she as we had arrived at the house. With a warm greeting from Nita and a stately acknowledgement from a lovely brown dog – Sandy – I knew I was going to enjoy myself. I had not been able to see much of the countryside as we drove home because it was already dark; even so the one thing that did impress me, even at that time of the evening, was the heat. It was a palpable thing as I came out of the airport and already I felt over dressed. Joe went out and brought back King sized hamburgers. These must be specials; they were enormous and I hadn't realised I was so hungry until I bit into mine. I was really too tired to make much sense or to be very good company, so after a nice big cuppa I wandered off to bed.

In spite of being so tired the night before I was up bright as a new button at 7:30. It must be the knowledge of being on holiday; I couldn't sleep much past 7 or thereabouts. The latest I was up during my two weeks this time was 8 a.m. and that was because I stayed up late the night before watching TV. Joe had to go to work but Nita had managed to get a couple of days off. Although so far I was the only one to arrive there was an indefinable air of anticipation about. Maybe some of it was brought by me – I was so looking forward to the launch and felt a bit on edge realising I had made it at last. Anyway, there it was, a feeling of excitement in the air which was almost electric. Nita had a load of shopping to do as there was to be a pre-launch party on the Saturday night, and I do mean load. It was so easy to think of America as the country of largesse when you see the amount of shopping they do on just one visit to the shops. True this was for a party but Nita looked to me as if she had bought enough to feed an army. It was just as well, because an army did turn up. She filled one trolley, left it near the check out and went back with a second and filled that one too. There was everything in that store, including cut flowers and the most enormous tomatoes I've ever seen. We didn't have a lot of time to spare as we had to go to Melbourne and meet Chris Moskowitz. Chris has come to quite a lot of the launches and takes the opportunity to indulge

in some bird photography. I saw some of the pics she has taken in the past and they are wonderful. Chris's plane was about 3 hours late as I recall, so Nita and I went for a stroll round some of the local shops and then came back to sit in a nice cool dim lit bar. There was quite a bit of debate between Nita and the girl behind the bar what I should have. All I was demanding was something coold. I'm still not sure what it was but it was delicious. There was also a souvenir shop in the airport which gave me my first indication that you don't have to go the Kennedy Space Center (K.S.C) for APOLLO knick knacks. My fingers were simply itching to get hold of some of them, but Nita insisted I wait until I got to the Kennedy Visitors Center (K.V.C.) and see what was there. Reluctantly I agreed. Chris arrived finally and for those of you who remember Don Ford and the Atom cartoon on the front page of his report, this was more of the same... a batch of cameras with Chris behind them.

After taking Chris to her motel we went back home where everyone was going quietly mad. It was almost impossible to hold any kind of consecutive conversation as the phone never stopped ringing. Oh, about that phone. The first time I heard it ring I expected Nita to answer the door, instead she answered the phone. It has a lovely ding-ding, quite musical and quiet, yet it can be heard above the loudest talking. So much lighter on the ears and nerves. Folk who had been invited were ringing to say they were bringing four/five extra and would it be all right? When asked from where they were speaking it usually turned out that they were well on their way to Joe's already. What could he say, but yes. I swear those walls were made of elastic; more and more people kept turning up, so many I didn't manage to keep track of them all. Luckily some had brought caravan-trailers and were sleeping themselves in the yard. I got up one night to make a late cuppa and the only floor space not covered by sleeping bodies was the kitchen section.

Friday morning we began making moves to collect our Press passes. I was supposed to be accredited to Dobson Books but they couldn't find his letter. After going back 3/4 times to see if it had come to light, without saying anything about it, Joe got in touch with Don Wollheim, Elsie actually, and asked if he would oblige. Elsie phoned a message via Western Union – how else? – and we went back to the press centre later. No, no accreditation from New York either. By now I was beginning to feel more of a nuisance than I wanted to be. Joe and Nita never let me know by word or sign that they had a lot more to do than keep running back and fro on my account, which made me feel worse about it than ever. We left it at that for Friday.

Saturday morning there was still no sign of Elsie's wire. There was to be a Press tour of the Space Museum, the Vehicle Assembly Building and the launch pad on which APOLLO 16 stood. Nita would be able to go later so loaned me her pass. It was fascinating... I'm afraid that is a word likely to be much used here. Since I saw the V.A.B. on our TV set it has had an odd attraction for me, one I can't explain in any way that would make sense. Imagine then how I felt not only to be standing right there outside it, but was actually able to go inside. When you walk in everything is on such a large scale your eyes wander all over the place. It is difficult to focus on any one thing or place. You look to your right, and something attracts the eye which leads right up to the roof. You try to look straight ahead, but straight ahead is so far away your eye is caught by something in the side bays. And so it goes on. I caught sight of some men in white helmets with the word "HOST" on them, so I grabbed one, figuratively speaking. Not only did they answer any questions you might have, they also helped to focus the eye on one thing at a time by pointing out details which would so easily have been missed. I had noticed near the entrance a much wrapped package which was only slightly smaller than gigantic. Not only was it wrapped in layers of polythene but it had as a final protection what looked like a thick tent zipped up front. He pointed to this and told us it was one of the engines for APOLLO 17 which had been delivered the previous week. His finger led our eyes up and up past all the galleries along which the workmen walk to reach their work gantries. These gantries swing out towards the centre of the building as they work on the assembly. A fine job for a steeplejack if he could take the heights.

I wondered how they, the men who work in the building on the assembly, feel around launch time. Were they perhaps so used to successful launches they had become blase? Were they only "doing a job" or were they there because they were space minded. I found it most heartening to hear that all of them felt personally involved in each launch. They meet the men who ride the rockets so this would help them to identify with them and on the day they are all to be found outside viewing with their fingers crossed and a prayer in their hearts.

For someone like me who has absolutely no technical or engineering knowledge it was quite something to be able to look at rockets and models of the lunar module and note – thinking of the model kits we have made here – so *that's* what that is, and now I see what that is for. And down on my knees to look underneath to see if the model had the same appearance as our model.... It had. What is the name of the story of the old watchman who has the job of guarding a graveyard of rockets? That is what the Space

Museum reminded me of. They were of no more use but they can't bring themselves to get rid of them. True there was no evidence of rust but the feeling of a rocket graveyard was very strong all the same.

The final stop before returning to the Press building was to the Kennedy Visitors Center (K.V.C.). As we left the bus our guide told us that we could go to the toilets, cafe, souvenir shop, have a look at the exhibits in the hall... and we had 20 minutes. I didn't know when if ever I'd get the chance again so I bounced off to the gift shop. 20 minutes = \$22. I really made like a tourist and didn't much care what anyone thought. Most of the things were APOLLO souvenirs. A plate to put on the wall of the first moon walk. A tea spoon for Ethel's collection with the 16 mission emblem on it. Key rings and paper knives for various folks; some transparencies I'd never seen before – there were lots more I had to pass up on the score of expense. A goodly selection of post cards including some lovely 3D ones etc. I got back to the bus bearing my loot and feeling triumphant just in time to avoid being left behind. On the same bus I had the company of Hal Clement. It was hard to know what to call Hal. His real name is Harry Stubbs and he insists on introducing himself as such, but when Nita, who had known him for some time, admitted she felt the name Hal came easier to her I didn't feel too bad about using it too. It must be odd to answer to two different names under varying circumstances. Hal is also a camera bug and was most helpful to me in my quest for good pictures. My own camera had broken down the day before I left and I'd had to buy a (to me) new one en route to the air terminal. As it was second hand it didn't have a booklet telling what the parts were and did. There's a dial on it I still don't know how it works, something to do with metering light... I think. Anyway, Hal was a great help – as was Chris Moskowitz – in suggesting the correct setting for the light which obtained at the moment. Due to them I've got some very nice pics. Hal struck me as being very shy and is certainly very quiet and self-effacing.

When we got back to the house Danny and Mary Frolich were going to the Press building and Joe suggested it might be a good idea if I went too to see if this pass would come through. NO. Joe phoned the Wollheims again and asked Elsie to get Western Union to Telex a new wire to the Press building. To cut a long story short, I finally got my pass late that afternoon after a lot of trouble. Western Union's fault as usual. Now I had my pass and was wearing it you would be astonished at what could be had for the asking, sometimes you didn't even have to ask. In one room of the Press building they had trestle tables lining the walls round the room full of information sheets, glossy booklets, pics and anything anyone could

want about the mission. Each engineering company puts out its own brochure describing in great detail their part of the project. I have some very interesting ones about the different cameras the lads took with them. I also have a detailed specification of the lunar module which is fascinating to read but all too long to detail here. They also give you a whacking great book of the flight plan with another just as large and thick of the contingency plan in the event of something going wrong. When you talk about the cost of the Space programme I wonder do you take into account just how much is spent on informing and cosseting the press of the world? So, it's only a fraction of the cost, but it must mount up some when you think of all the free buses laid on to take the press hither and forth; and some of those brochures issued are real pricey jobs. Nothing it seems is too good for the Press. Naturally I took full advantage of what was going, who wouldn't, but it still shook me just the same to see how extravagant they were. Finally all the excitement and tiredness caught up with me and I took myself off to bed for a nap. I figured it was going to be a late night. After all there was the Pre-launch party to come in the evening. That I meant to enjoy.

Part II

It is amazing how folk seem to infiltrate a room without being noticeable. One moment the room is reasonably empty and the next, when you look around, the room is as full as can be. The noise level didn't appear to rise all that much with the influx of bodies so I suppose that helped to delay the realisation that more were arriving all the time. Sam Moskowitz had arrived some time during the early evening and was in the room and settled down before I knew he was there. As I recall, his voice used to boom out as he entered and you didn't have to look to see who had arrived. Many folk were there who I'd never met before and whose names I forget, or didn't catch properly when introduced. I met Danny Plachta again, also Doreen and Jim Webbert, all of them easily recognizable still after all this time. Dave Kyle turned up and almost fell over with shock when he saw me there; our last meeting had not been under the happiest of circumstances, being at the funeral of Ted Carnell. Things developed along the lines of all fan parties; lots and lots of talk and if any hard drinking was done I don't know when, they all seemed too busy to drink much.

The younger set had gone out to sit in the Freas trailer in the yard and I wandered out for some air only to join them in this smaller and more

select party. Apparently I was honoured as you had to be under 21 to get in but they made me welcome and we sat chatting in a desultory way for some time. It was a very sultry evening to my English-conditioned body and I was becoming more edgy as the evening progressed. I couldn't wait for the morrow to arrive – which was launch day – at the same time, I didn't really want it to be over too soon. Not an enviable state to be in, I can assure you. I wandered from group to group settling at none, the longest time I think I sat in one place was when Kelly Freas did one of his caricatures of me. I went outdoors, came back indoors, made a cup of tea, smoked like a chimney and generally behaved as if I were bewitched. Finally, I drifted off to bed not too hopeful of being able to sleep, I was so restless.

The arrangement was that with Danny and Mary Frolich I would leave earlier than the others as we were going to the building where the astronauts lived to see them leave for the launch pad. This is something that we have all seen many times on TV, but to be there and feel the excitement and see the small things that go on outside TV camera range no matter how unimportant, was something else again. I was taking it all in determined not to miss a thing. There was a table just in front of us with a telephone; obviously some press boy's spot, but he wasn't there when we arrived. There was already a large crowd when we got there and when this press man came to claim his place he did nothing but bitch at all the rubber-necking tourists who had decided to get up early and give the boys an encouraging cheer to their van. From what he was saying, he used to have this spot all to himself before the moon shots took on the attributes of a tourist attraction, and this he didn't like although he still had his front spot and could see better than any of us.

I'm afraid that when we got the tip the boys were on their way out, although it was far too crowded to attempt to take pics, I did tend to crowd this bloke more than was necessary just for spite. I felt pretty niggly with him, I can tell you. The lads were out of the building and into their van so quickly that you daren't even blink, but they looked cheerful enough and gave an expansive wave all round. Once they were in the van I dived through the crowd and got as close as I possibly could without actually joining them inside and then they were driven off. As always happens when what you have come to see is over, you have a feeling of anti-climax but this didn't last long as **NOW WAS THE TIME TO GO TO THE LAUNCH PAD.**

We scrambled for the buses which had been laid on for those of the press who wanted to come early and were now taking us to the press stand.

Luckily I had taken Nita's advice and made myself a couple of sandwiches but what I was going to do for something to drink I didn't really know. Who cared? Not me. We arrived at the launch complex and immediately the atmosphere of a fairground strikes you. True, there aren't any roundabouts or swings but the fairground cum festival cum picnic feeling stays with you all day. I discovered rather late that it is possible to book a seat in the press stand and I was lucky to get one. I was even luckier to get one right at the back in the top row. The heat by now was beginning to make itself felt and that high up there was a very nice breeze going through which kept me comfortably cool all day. I went down for a walk round the area just to stretch my legs and see what all was going on. Folk had their cameras set up and were fingering the settings nervously from time to time. Others had set their cameras up and wrapped them in towels or paper against the heat and gone off to sit in the shelter of the press stand. I was amazed to hear that the press stand is nearer the launch pad than any other and is the only one with a roof on it against inclement weather – don't laugh, I know this was Florida, but the next day, Sunday, we had a fearful thunderstorm. The V.I.P. stand is further back and the dependants/tourist stand is further back still. So you see, the world's press is given preferential treatment even here. Now the time seemed to drag. I sat and banged off some film of the surrounding crowds and again of the V.A.B., which looked to be only a stones throw away. You know, that place fascinates me. It is so imposing and sits out there all alone and the building itself gleams in the light as if newly washed. I never did see Joe or Nita all this time, I don't know where they were, ferrying people to the launch I shouldn't wonder. It was possible to keep an eye on the count down as the large electronic time check was right opposite our stands and when it came to 10 minutes before launch I decided it was time to go down to the water's edge and choose my vantage spot for the actual launch. I was only wearing sandals and the heat from the scrub was an assault on my feet and I did give a passing thought to the possibility of snakes. But time was wearing on and the great moment was almost upon us. Harry Clements had loaned me his monocular lens as I had decided I wasn't going to be bothered with cameras, I just wanted to look and soak it all up in every detail.

Had I not already seen the report that Danny Frolich wrote of this event, I might not feel so diffident about putting into words just how I felt at the actual moment of launch, I have the words but don't of necessity have the gift for putting them in a highly readable order, so you must just take my word for it that this is how I felt, and what I thought as it lifted,

and as far as I can recall, how I behaved.

During our long hot wait on the stands we had heard from time to time what almost amounted to a cross talk act between the men in Control at Kennedy and those at Mission Control in Houston. Now from where I was sitting I could no longer see the electronic time check so was pleased to hear the count down being given over the p.a. system which could be heard for miles around. As they reached the now famous 10, 9, 8... I just had time to realise that my stomach was all knotted up and I was holding my breath. Watching TV really doesn't prepare you for the actuality. Just as he reaches 1, lift-off, there is the god almightiest whoosh of flame, it is literally a wall of fire and although I was easily five miles from it, I instinctively shrank back from it. This flame entirely covers the lower half of the rocket; it can't be for long, but it appears to be so. It doesn't entirely disappear but resolves itself into the tail flame on which the rocket rises. Again I caught myself thinking: "It's just like the books, it really does rise on a tail of fire." This fire is burning bright hot and the darn rocket just *sits* there. By now I was so wound up it was only afterwards that I appreciated, that having waited all day and been so keyed up it seemed to sit there for ages when in fact it was only seconds. Now it moves. Sooo slowly and *quietly*, up, ever up, now there's a slight wobble and I catch my breath but still it rises and I swear that all this time I forgot to breathe. Now it is clear of the tower and the noise and vibration hit you. It's a torrent of noise, sensation, emotion, and all mixed up together at the same time. I defy anyone no matter how blase they think they are to watch a launch and not be moved by it. You think of the three lads inside, and even take time out to remember that they are probably far too busy to be as excited by it as you are. You remember all these years when you've been reading about just this kind of thing and how often you were jeered at for reading that muck, in a peculiar way you feel as if you have yourself helped to bring this into being and you feel yourself vindicated too.

I had been warned that once it was up, if I lost sight of it in the glasses it would be impossible to pick it up again so, as it went higher and ever higher, I went over on my back to follow its progress. I saw the first staging and the flare of the second stage actually fall. As it had risen I was aware that along with all the others lining the water's edge I was shouting, "GO, GO, GO." Tears were streaming down my face and when I realised they had gone and I could no longer see them I felt absolutely drained. For minutes afterwards I couldn't move from my spot on the verge of the water. Anything else after this had to be anticlimactic. I was so full of emotion I couldn't even talk about it to Joe and Nita when I saw them

again.

Before going back to be with the gang again I walked around alone and tried to re-live the moments just passed. I was surprised it hadn't been more noisy. True, there was a roar but it was nothing to what I had expected, the thing that really got me – and I mean that almost literally – was the great vibration as it rose into the air. Every bone in your body, every tooth in your head and, I dare say, every hair on your head, just to the core. I did begin to wonder if it was going to become too much and if so what the hell could I do about it. Nothing.

Part III

Having seen the launch of Apollo 16 and shouted myself hoarse in encouragement, when I could draw a normal breath again I realised how glad I was that I'd taken the precaution of bringing those sandwiches with me and that I'd talked Danny Plachta into lining up for me at the refreshment trailer to get me some milk. Drained of emotion as I now was, had I also been hungry I swear I would have collapsed.

I dawdled along the water's edge, quite happy for the moment to be among complete strangers and without the necessity of making conversation. I don't really know why it is but, when I experience a strong emotion, whether it be grief or pleasure, I find myself unable to talk about it for some long time afterwards. It's as though I daren't let it out, I have to hug it to myself in all its detail. I'm not even sure if in some cases this could be thought of as masochistic. This had been the main purpose and aim of my trip to Florida, now I could take time out to think of other things.

When off on a short-term trip in which one does and sees a lot of things in a short time, details are apt to become blurred and it is only when one is home again and able to look back at leisure that some things re-impose their hold on you. I've already told you of the weird fascination the Vehicle Assembly Building has for me but, I notice on reading back, that I've entirely neglected to mention another monster which held almost as much interest for me; the giant crawler or Transporter – to give it its real name. I recall vividly the first time I ever saw it and realised what I was looking at, We were on the press tour of the Cape complex and the Frolichs had their binoculars with them. Danny passed them to me and pointed to where I should look without really giving me any indication of what was to be seen, just a general wave of the hand into the distance. I

focused onto this general area and was just about to say I couldn't see anything of special interest when I saw it. What I had taken to be a small (for that area) blackened building was in fact a vehicle. It was gigantic. Later our bus was to go past where it was parked and I was lucky enough to grab off a couple of shots "on spec". They came out rather well and I was even luckier to get a shot with a full size estate car beside it, which looks like a child's toy in comparison.

We had been driving down a gravelled road which led to I didn't know where. The driver stopped the bus and asked us to look out the windows at the road we were on. It didn't appear to have anything peculiar about it, but I should have given a thought to where we were. Bus drivers are not given to stopping on a gravel road in order to make inane remarks. It transpired we were actually driving along the route taken by the crawler on its way to the V.A.B. to pick up the Saturns with capsule and take them to the launching pad. Our bus was on one side of the road and there was a grass verge down the middle with a similar road the other side – for traffic going in the opposite direction, thought me. The entire span was just the width of the crawler's treads. The grass verge was in the middle because the vehicle straddled it.

He told us it had taken the authorities a long time to discover the best material for the road to enable the crawler to move without sinking or churning normal type road stuff into mud. After numerous tests which had come to nothing they had thought to give gravel a try and that was it. The road has to be re-gravelled after each trip the monster makes and that's an awful lot of gravel. (More expense.)

Another important scene on our bus tour and depending on how you feel about the whole programme, it could be just about the most important place in the world, was a small insignificant looking cluster of huts in a wire enclosure. The largest building there was the size of a small warehouse. Absolutely featureless as derelict buildings tend to be. I was astonished to be told that this was the first site for what had grown into the Cape Kennedy complex as it is today. This was where it had all begun. Talk about an acorn growing into an oak.

One thing that was very noticeable to my English ears was how PR conscious the NASA people are. Yes, even the bus driver was doing his bit. We were reliably informed that great care had been taken to ensure that any and all wild life in the area had been disturbed as little as possible, if at all. The US equivalent of our RSPCA had spent long months testing that launches didn't disturb nesting birds from their nests or cause any of the livestock to move out to other areas. I find that somehow touching.

They spend all those billions of dollars and take the time to make sure that they don't do too much damage to their surroundings. It is amazing just how much wild land there is around the Cape; acres of it.

Wandering along the water's edge and reliving all I'd been through my main feeling of the moment was what a relief it would be to see something of normal size, I felt overwhelmed by bigness at the Cape; it was somehow exhausting.

It was something of a relief to forget for a while the tremendous emotional experience I'd been through, so I deliberately pushed it to the back of my mind and joined in the party mood which obtained back at the Green House. Nita came up with a marvellous idea. She would come home at lunch time and take me out to the K.V.C. and phone Joe asking him to pick me up on his way home from work. In this way I had a couple of nice long visits there which I didn't expect to have. I was able to have a long detailed look at all the exhibits they had and I revelled in it. Rockets opened along their length with all the components detailed, even to showing how the Lunar Module is packed away behind the service module before separation. They have a Command Module which has made the trip, the base of which is blackened and scarred from the terrific heat to which it has been subjected. There are all sorts of displays on which you pull this and push that to operate them, all with commentaries and some of them far too technical for me to follow.

There are two theatres at K.V.C. – remembering that in America they call the cinema “theater”. One of them actually was a cinema and was showing films of past Moon missions. Immediately opposite was another room exactly the same size but in which they gave lectures about every aspect of these missions in which you would be likely to be interested. I was spellbound. It is surprising to find that T.W.A. [*Trans World Airlines, now defunct*] have quite a lot to do with the running of K.V.C. I'm not certain that they actually administer it, but they do operate bus tours round the complex and they are also responsible for the lectures given in the second theatre. There are two of them. Each lecture takes about 30 minutes, less if they don't get asked too many questions. They alternate in giving these talks and, I suppose, in this way manage to stay reasonably fresh.

The first thing to hit the eye on entry is the back pack which is open down the back. Remembering the lives which have depended on these pieces of equipment I was happy to stand and gaze my fill. Each pipe which has a certain function is painted a different colour which gives the whole thing a false appearance of gaiety. As we have seen from TV

pictures, the men on the Moon often seem to be pushed forward by their packs, and I wondered if there was any chance of them being made smaller without sacrificing any of their efficiency. Yes, they are working on reducing the size but are only going to be able to make them *slightly* smaller. I would have loved to get my hands on one of their helmets to see just where and how the conduits led into them from the packs but they didn't have one on show. They did have an assortment of foods which have been taken. First they showed us the old type plastic bags from which they had to suck their nourishment; but as the trips got longer the need for bulk in their diet became apparent, so they gave them tins of meat, bread, puddings and other goodies. He let me heft the tins and as you would expect they are not nearly as solid or heavy as the ones in use on Earth.... You know, even talking about the difference in foods used on the Moon and on Earth gives me a kick in the imagination. When he mentioned that they now eat bread in their capsules I immediately asked about the problem of crumbs. He assured us that it is specially compacted so that they don't have that problem. All their body wastes are brought back in plastic containers for examination after the trip and then he came to the subject of the suit.

Most of you will by now have read as much about the attachments as he told us. What did startle me was when he showed us a lump of suiting split into its component layers. This was for insulation, this was for something else again, and then he came to a silvery looking piece and this, he said, is teflon! I know I'm not technically minded but I don't think I'm any more stupid than the average, and this shook me rigid. Teflon? A layer in the suit?? I thought teflon was used to coat the interior of the engines or some such thing. But no, and its job is to toughen the suit to make punctures less possible. As you can no doubt imagine, this was the part of K.V.C. that really caught me up and held me. I found it all blissfully fascinating.

That really was the end of the Space Saga as far as I was concerned. Apart from the fact that from time to time, depending on the route taken, I could see the V.A.B. way off in the distance, I came down to earth and enjoyed the remainder of my visit with Joe and Nita.

On my last Sunday – it was a gorgeous day – they took me to Cypress Gardens. It was a glorious place. I was lucky enough to be watching TV when the B.B.C. did a programme on this place so I knew what there was to see and went round all of it. We saw the water show in comfort but the one thing for which I will always remember it is the variety of its foliage. You wouldn't believe how different the plants are from path to path. They

have a children's section filled with animals and dwarfs for the kids to sit on and have their pictures taken. There's a Japanese section with the kind of bridge you would expect to find in their gardens and the whole place is enchanting. They have a swimming pool which is the shape of the Florida coastline and which, the plaque says, was used in a film made by Esther Williams and they had it transported to the Gardens. It's a beautiful place to spend a day.

All too quickly the time came to return home. I had a lot to tell Fred but still and all, I love the sun and didn't really want to leave it. Need I say that with the help of Joe and Nita I had a much better time than I would have had without them. I am grateful to them and if anyone can come up with a practical way of saying thanks, I'd be most happy. I had a ball!

*Scottishe #62-#64 (June-December 1972, ed.
Ethel Lindsay)*

Remembering Ella



Ella on the balcony of William Dunbar House, mid-1960s.

Prolapse Memories

Bruce Burn:

I have always had the greatest respect for Ella Parker. You might not think so, and perhaps I didn't always demonstrate great respect, but I admired her and was constantly surprised at the hidden depths in her character. Ella Anderson Parker appeared well into her thirties when she first became involved in SF fandom during the late nineteen-fifties in London. Her first name was Isobel, but she didn't like it and adopted the diminutive. Ella was Glasgow born and had already survived the tussles and troubles of life by the time she encountered fans. She'd worked as a canteen assistant, bus conductress, typist, and factory hand. It seemed to me that the new friends she found were a relief from whoever she may have known before, and by the time I met her first she had embraced her new way of life with enthusiasm.

Of course, Ella had a whole lifetime of experience behind her by the time I first met her in August of 1960, and as a fan she'd attended several gatherings, with her first convention being in 1958, the year she met Jim Linwood. Jim knew her for much longer than I did – until well after I had left England and returned to New Zealand. Jim says: “Ella was raised in a Scottish orphanage with her brother, Fred, and both came to London during the war. She worked as a bus conductress during the Blitz and saw some dreadful sights. I think she contacted Archie Mercer via a prozine around 1958 and he suggested she go to the Globe meetings. There she met Paul Enever and inherited *Orion*. Bruce Burn deduced from her passport that she was 39 when she visited America in 1961. Ian McAulay courted her for a while and even proposed marriage – at the time she asked me, a callow 19-year old, what she should do. She always treated us Youngfans like adults and although she could be very spiky at times I regard her with some affection.”

Jim adds, “Ella saw the importance of networking (the current usage of the word hadn't been invented then) among the young BSFA recruits and through her I met fans of my own age and we set up (under Ella's guidance) the YSFRG [*Young Science Fiction Readers Group*] which included several future well-known fannish names. Her own regular Friday night meetings at their height in the early sixties were much more popular than the Globe until a certain person started jumping over the settee and Ella closed them down.”

Ella once told me that the difference between “ordinary” people and fans was that fans met as if they were already friends, continuing a conversation they’d begun elsewhere. It was the difference, she said, between meeting with fists and meeting with a warm handshake. The strange closeness one can feel to people met only through letters and fanzines was immediately welcome in her life. She was awed by the people she met in her early days as a fan in the London Circle. One suspects the awe she felt never lessened, even though many acquaintances became familiar visitors to her home.

That home had tales of its own. This was “The Penitentiary”, or the Pen for short: a three-bedroom flat above a butcher’s shop at 151 Canterbury Road in Kilburn, an inner-city suburb of north London. The whole district appeared run-down, as well it might since most of the buildings were due to be demolished to make way for large tower-blocks of flats.

Much of the land around had been owned by the Church of England for many years, and most had been bought by the local Council, who planned the improvements that would include the apartment towers and all the spread of vertical slum-creation that was to provide the environment for the coming couple of decades. Ella found she had a low rent to pay, and by staying on in the old flat she would be guaranteed a flat in one of the new towers. In the housing scene of North London, it was a good option. Ella shared the flat with her brother Fred, and as her involvement with fandom grew, so it made inroads into her home, but both she and Fred were hospitable to every intrusion. Eventually, the main room became a place for fanac, dominated by an electric Gestetner in front of the windows that overlooked Canterbury Road. In one corner was a bed, used mostly as a couch by visitors, but also the overnight resting place for many a travelling fan. Against one wall was a table with a mirror behind it, and the other walls were mainly backgrounds to an assortment of chairs and stools and small tables or boxes.

And what a background! The walls were covered by light tan wallpaper with thin vertical stripes in shiny gold with a flopped design reminiscent of Edwardian flower vases. On it, Ella had hung framed pictures and original sketches and cartoons, and numerous odd mementos, including plaster mouldings and at least one toy reptile. The other rooms of the flat were spread over two and half floors with a narrow stairwell providing a spiral connection between them. A curiosity was a basin with running water halfway down the stairs from the main room, alongside a small toilet cubicle. Beside the fanac room was a bedroom which I recall

was used as a television watching space, and upstairs were Ella and Fred's own bedrooms. Somewhere there must have been the usual facilities of bathroom and kitchen, but I can't picture them these many years later, and am told by Jim Linwood that the place was known as a "cold water flat" which apparently would lack the usual amenities. Later, about the start of 1962, Ella would move to a tall apartment block, the William Dunbar Tower, built by the local council. I recall a working bee to move some of her gear from the old Pen to the new one, a two bedroom flat on about the eight or ninth floor of the building, with a view from a small balcony looking over the site of the old Pen. It was that near!

In the main room of the original Penitentiary, the Gestetner was in constant use, producing copies of *Orion*, Ella's personal fanzine, SFCoL publications, *Vector*, and innumerable other fanzines including the original *Atom Anthology* and *Parker's Peregrinations (The Harpy Stateside)* about Ella's long USA trip in 1961. Many other fans would give a hand to produce the fanzines, particularly when it came to assembling the issues and stapling them. I can remember doing a great deal of interleaving on *The Atom Anthology*. That's why she gave me some discards to use as extra sheets in my own *Sizars* of the time. A once-famous story of the *Anthology* concerned a stencil that Arthur Thomson had inscribed so heavily that we were able to print only a couple of dozen copies before the stencil fell apart on the silk screen. Ella rewarded her team of helpers by ensuring they received copies with the extra "monster" picture inside. A later reprint by Ken Cheslin many years later included the monster picture, but that was all done with photocopying.

Ella had a special friendship with Arthur Thomson, "Atom", the great fan-artist. They were both Glaswegians, and were staunch allies to each other. Arthur was a generous and kind person who donated his incredible talent for illustration and cartooning whenever he was asked. He could appreciate that Ella was essentially holding London fandom together, and worked in with her on any publication she might produce.

On most occasions, Ella would simply type the words onto a stencil, and leave spaces for Arthur to sketch his fabulous drawings. He'd happily fill in all the empty spaces and the headings for articles, usually without bothering to do a preliminary sketch. When Ella moved from 151 Canterbury Road to the nearby William Dunbar Tower, Arthur helped a great deal in setting up her new flat, painting, decorating, and putting up bookshelves. Arthur worked for Tri-ang Toys in south London, where he lived with his wife Olive and their young daughter. Much of Arthur's work at Tri-ang involved design of new miniature model cars and Trade Union

activities and weekly meetings with the three brothers who owned the company. He and Ella shared their glory as working class kin, and, probably because of my Kiwi egalitarian ways, I was privileged to be included among their friends.

Ella herself was a complex person: not conflicted, however, she was completely in balance. She tried to project a rough take-it-or-leave-it exterior. Underneath that she was a caring person who'd been knocked about a bit by life. The work she'd done was wide and varied, but she certainly was able to do office work because I took her along to the Graydon Bureau in the Strand and she got casual work through them (as did I while I was in London) to build up funds prior to her trip to the USA, as recounted in *Parker's Peregrinations*.

Ella Parker was extraordinarily generous, with her time and her resources. She was genuinely concerned for the welfare of young fans, many of whom came into fandom via the British Science Fiction Association. That was probably why Ella supported the members and organisers of the BSFA so strongly.

Look at the situation she found herself in. There had been two main centres of fannish gatherings in London in those days: The Globe pub, and the home of Vince and Joy Clarke and Sandy Sanderson at Inchmery Road in east London. Without any warning, Joy decamped with Sandy and Vince was left literally holding the baby, Nikki. A fannish centre had simply ceased to exist.

While Ella was relatively new to fandom herself, she felt she had to provide a new place for fandom in London. Poor Ella found herself the only one in a position to become totally involved in fandom and therefore the only one to be able to offer a home to fans from far and wide. She really had the role of running a "focal centre" whether she liked it or not. She took that role quite consciously. We were all younger, and much too idealistic. Ella also decided someone had to help nurture the young SF readers attracted for one reason or another to fandom. She felt she had become in loco parentis to the younger fans, and would seem very protective of them. In effect, Ella accepted what she saw as a Mission thrust upon her by circumstances to mother-hen a loose association of young fen. I think she also wanted to keep them away from the boozy crowd that we were in those days. But to do that she clearly found herself fighting human nature; I gained a distinct impression some of the younger fans were rebelling against her, seeing in her an Authority Figure that belied the genuinely warm and caring person she was. It would be interesting to hear from those who were the young fans concerned, to see if

my impression was correct or off the planet in Cuckooland.

In later years, well after I had quit the scene, Ella herself left the fannish crowds and gradually hid away from old friends. Jim Linwood recalls, "It's a pity she became a recluse in later life, and I regret never dropping in on William Dunbar House to see her, but Vince Clarke had warned me that she had become unsociable."

Which really sounds quite extraordinary. I find it hard to imagine that her liveliness and her ability to draw around her groups of people who would help her organise conventions and tour groups and innumerable gatherings where her renowned two-spouted teapot would bring the teams together could all have withered away in such a short time. Could the stresses of living in a focal centre have worn her down? Did she finally run out of patience with her Friday night Youngfan gatherings which stopped abruptly in 1964? Was there exhaustion after the 1965 London Worldcon? I don't know, because I wasn't there anymore. In the few years I knew Ella, we had only one falling-out and that was caused by my unwise attempt to be an accurate reporter in providing a word-picture of her in one of my fanzines at the time. Just because I called her "middle-aged" I got shat on by all and sundry. At the time, I was in my early twenties; she was in her later thirties or early forties.

To complicate the issue, it all occurred about the time I left the UK to return to Godzone and once home again I entered the challenging working world of commercial radio announcing and finally found the Right Lady and within a year was married to her. Still am, but for my by then tenuous connections in fandom it was Bad Timing, because you couldn't really have a drag 'em out row from halfway round the world in those days of snail mail. It might help a later generation to know that when we talk of Ella being gruff or untidy or older, everything is relative. Well, except for the gruffness, because that was part of the shield she felt she needed in order to face the rougher people of the world, and it had become habitual. Her appearance was... comfortable. She dressed for comfort in her own home, and who can complain at that?

But, in those more caring times it wasn't done to give graphic unflattering descriptions of people which might be taken as criticism, and I fell into that trap when writing in my own fanzines. Generally, if a person went out or was in the public view a person would put on their "Sunday best", and commentators reciprocated by ignoring that which was unflattering. The "warts and all" attitude of Cromwell had not survived through the Victorian ages! But, for the sake of rounding this description of a fine person, here's some of the material I wrote, provided in an

attempt to give a full picture of a lady I liked very much.

“Ella Parker is... one of those rare people whose basic instincts lead her to Command. She has a personality that crackles on the senses and a manner so vivid that it tends to damnation or praise, hate or love. Perhaps she contains deep loves and bitter resentments: certainly the manner that allowed her ability of command to develop has tended to inhibit the growth of her ability to love until now her love of friends seems to be expressed by her ordering those people she likes, to pander to her whims. It’s as if when she likes someone they become ‘important’ to her, and the only way for her to feel sure of her ‘importance’ to them is to see how happily they accede to her wishes....” (from *Sizar* 9, in mailing comments to Lynn Hickman)

“...My first impression of you was that you were a rather washed-out-looking and slovenly-dressed middle-aged bourgeois woman. On later meetings this purely physical impression was modified to: a washed-out-looking and scrappily-dressed middle-aged-looking working-class woman.... Your voice was loud, but I’d heard loud voices before. There was hardness to your voice that I didn’t like.... Later still in our acquaintance I began to see beneath your threadbare appearance and flamboyant manner (which complement each other), especially in those long, long talks we used to have together. Remember? I particularly remember the night we talked away after you had returned from the USA. We talked and talked of so many things and when I eventually left (to go to work!) I felt that I really knew you.” (from *Sizar* 10, in mailing comments to Ella)

You might think those descriptions are not nice things to write, and perhaps you’re right. They certainly suggest I had the hide of an elephant. In my defence I should point out the first comments to Lynn Hickman were simply examining some interesting ideas concerning motivations and how people interact, and perhaps I got carried away. The second piece was a direct response to Ella questioning my perceptions. Again, I think I got carried away.

However, the follow-up to all of this was an attempt by Mike Moorcock to blast me out of the water, and he succeeded! Why he entered the fray I don’t know, except he said it was because I made such nasty comments about “...an attractive and personable woman whom I admire

and greatly respect.” He then did as I did: went too far and blasted me: “That Bruce should make these comments from New Zealand is, I realise, typical of him. He should be careful not to display his innate vulgarity in future.” (*Scottishe* #35 pub. Ethel Lindsay, March 1964)

Now, that I felt was most unfair. The exchanges concerning my impressions of Ella began while I was in London, well before I left to return home. I met her several times after the first round of opinions had been exchanged, and neither of us felt aggrieved at each other. Ella held a “farewell Bruce Burn” party for me in her new flat prior to my departure, and Mike’s insinuation of some sort of cowardice was empty.

I had previously looked on Mike as a close friend, so the result of Mike’s uncalled-for intrusion was that I felt betrayed by friends half the world away and I ditched fandom completely until reluctantly excavated from my idyllic little life in a personal paradise nearly twenty years later by a new bunch of kiwifans who were doing what English fans did in the early seventies – re-discovering the history of their hobby.

Now, that’s my sad tale, but it should not reflect badly on anyone but perhaps myself. Certainly not on Ella Parker, for whom I have the fondest memories. You see, respect and fondness are merely challenged if you don’t like how someone dresses; they are not lost. Admiration at the writings and the dedication of a person never ceases even though you may cringe at the sound of their voice. Had we been able to continue the debate with another exchange it may well be much of it might have been resolved and perhaps life might have gone on its merry way.

I might have learned to use a tone less harsh in my fan-writing, as I certainly was able to do in any other writing and broadcasting. Ella was tough and might have told me to “hud yer whisht” or whatever the expression was that she used to suggest a speaker should “hold his wind”. Who knows?

But I do know one thing: Ella didn’t like being treated too kindly. Perhaps it got under her defences when she realised someone could see through that tough exterior. Well, that’s my impression after all these years. During that night when she returned from the States we talked almost to tomorrow about her experiences there, and she constantly expressed her amazement at the kindness and hospitality and sheer generosity she had been shown by the Americans. I might say, she’d pretty well run out of money for her trip soon after the half-way mark, and had it not been for those Yanks the last part of the trip would have been quite miserable. Mind you, the trip, as I recall, was extended through that generosity! You see, Ella had one other remarkable attribute. You just had

to love her. [1]

Joe Patrizio:

All in all, Bruce has pretty well got it right about Ella, but if you want a cool dispassionate analysis of her, don't come to me. I had (and still have) the greatest affection and respect for her. Sure, she was loud, brash and bossy, but she laughed a lot and was kindness personified. Ella was my first contact with fandom proper (i.e. not just the BSFA); her *Orion* was the first fanzine I received and the first I wrote for (again, discounting *Vector* – which wasn't a real fmz anyway). I also have very fond memories of Fred, Ella's brother, who was (if possible) even kinder than she was; at the time, I thought that the world was a better place for his being in it. I'm sure Bruce is right when he says that Ella felt that she had to nurture young fans, but I at least didn't feel that she was being protective. But then, perhaps I was just insensitive about that sort of thing (callow youth that I was). "Rebelling" also seems a bit heavy, although I seem to remember a bit of tension occasionally when Mike Moorcock and some of his pals came to the Friday night gatherings.

Don't get me wrong, there wasn't any blood on the floor but as I remember it discussions sometimes got a bit heated, and Ella didn't go for that too much.

Bruce mentions being dumped-on for his description of Ella in one of his fanzines, and explains his position, which is fine. However, at the time the general perception was that he had accepted Ella's hospitality then made rude comments once he was away. I fully accept Bruce's explanation of what happened but that is definitely not the way it appeared at the time. [2]

Steve Stiles:

On the wall of my fan den there is a photograph of Ella hanging between Frank Zappa and Paul McCartney. This may seem odd, and there is no significance in that association, but Ella was undeniably a major influence on my life, one of the few people to have such an impact in the brief time when I first met her.

When I first got into fandom, it was largely through Seattle's *Cry of the Nameless*, and Ella and I were both fairly active in *Cry's* letter column, where we were mildly teasing each other for a few issues. Not too long after that I got to meet her personally when she was passing through New York fandom and being feted by the Fanoclasts on her way to SeaCon in 1961. [After SeaCon, actually – Rob]

In 1961 I was still a teenager and, it may seem strange to some now,

pretty much of a wallflower. Many of the fans I hung out with were older than I was by a vast three to six years, and I was very much aware of my own naivety and inadequacies in comparison to this vastly sophisticated bunch – and they were, when you think about it: we’re talking about people like Terry and Carol Carr, Ted and Sylvia White, Pete Graham, Lee Hoffman.... The list goes on and on. So I largely kept my lip zipped in hopes of getting by on drawing alone and in hopes that no one would discover that I was of that rarest of breeds, the Manhattan-born hayseed.

Ella noticed this at the welcoming party thrown for her at the Lupoffs – I think I was trying to be invisible in a corner nearest the door – and proceeded to light into me because of my obvious introversion. Now I don’t think this was malicious on her part, but Ella had a humour style pretty much like Don Rickles’s, and we had been having a mock feud in the pages of *Cry*.... Like Rickles, her style was outrageous, infuriating, and highly funny; you found yourself torn between getting angry and doubling over in laughter, which was what happened with me. Ella completely broke through my shell and I began answering in kind. And, much to my own amazement, I found that I could keep up with her, that people were laughing with me, not at me....

She really tore that wall down for me. Ted White wrote about the incident, and to paraphrase him, “Steve hasn’t been able to keep that flapping yap shut since then!” Thanks, Ella! [3]

[1] *Prolapse* #9 (November 2007, ed. Peter Weston)

[2] *Prolapse* #10 (February 2008, ed.

Weston) [3] *Prolapse* #11 (May 2008, ed. Weston)

William Dunbar House

Arthur “Atom” Thomson:

Having tried to write my first *cOMPAct* “Odd Notes” wittily, intelligently, and maybe even readably, I was somewhat dashed and cast down by the remarks of our redoubtable editoress, Miz Parker.

“Hhmm,” she said, about my column, and a “Hhmm” from her is equal to a punch on the nose from anyone else. This is true. “It doesn’t seem to have your usual ebullience,” says she. “Oh?” said I, hunting around in the pokey corners of my mind for the meaning of the word she had just used. I found it later, at home, on page 146 of my *Chambers Etymological Dictionary* (yes, the one I wrote about in *Ploy* in 1957); so I decided that when next I wrote my column I would be as gay, charming, and ebullient as all hell.

A Funny Thing Happened To Me On My Way To The Column. I realised that nobody had actually (or factually, for that matter), described this new, plush, palatial penthouse abode of the Parker. “Why, you ebullient old so and so,” I said to myself, “*you* have the chance of doing a First. *You* can go down into posterity, or where-ever they send people like you, as the first ever to write about the Parker residence in a factual and actual like manner.” Besides which, and as well, think of all those fans out there, like F.M.Busby to name a few, who will be coming over here for the Worldcon in 1965 (plug, plug, plug the Con, boys), and won’t know what he is walking into when he arrives for the Ceremonial Visit to 43, Willum Dunbar house. So...

Vavoom! Followed by blinding flash and thunderous roar, which all in all is really only me landing mythically and even hypothetically at Albert Road, in the well publicised but little known hamlet of West Kilburn, in which lives the well known but little publicised fanne Ella Parker, and brother Fred. Albert Road is a somewhat, no, damnit, it is a fullwhat oldish type of neighbourhood. In Albert Road, amongst the tiny little terraced houses, the Council have torn out a large space – no, not in the actual road, clotty, but in amongst the tiny terraced houses and bomb-damage. Into this large, torn-out space they have plunked several brand new towering blocks of flats. (For the benefit of our Stateside brothers, it isn’t actually a BLOCK long but the term we use for an apartment building, and, of course, the word “flat” means, believe it or not, an apartment. Why “flat”, I don’t know, other than to differentiate from the

word “house” which means a two or more level building. (Mighod, how complicated explanations can become.) As all the flats have numbers, they (the Council) confuse it further by naming the blocks instead of just running the numbers up into the thousands as they do in the US. So, by the luck of the draw, and even just blind chance, the Parker residence is number 43 in William Dunbar House. Ol’ Willum, as we regulars affectionately call it. The flats are only a stone’s throw from Ella’s old home, 151 Canterbury Road, and as you approach William Dunbar House you can see this by the number of broken windows.

The approach to the main entrance to the block is rather hazardous, as the surrounding grounds seem to be in the hands of the contractors still. From the amount of rubble, building materials, w.c. pans and cement bags that are slowly hardening in the gentle drizzle, I guess there’s nearly enough stuff lying around to build another block of flats.

Going through the main door, you find yourself in a rather gloomy foyer, with a large central trunk wall, into which is set a small steel door fitted with a tiny glass and steel mesh window. The effect is something like a film version of the special prisoners section of Lubyanka jail. Set in the side of the wall, by the lift doorway, is a small black button and a little red light that, when the button is pressed, gleams balefully at the button presser. There’s nothing to indicate that the lift is going up, coming down, stuck on the second floor, or even lying at the bottom of the lift well. You just have to press the button and stare back at this little red light, hoping for the best – the best is usually about two minutes.

After the two minutes, during which time you have a chance to inspect your fly buttons and blow your nose, there is a dull “whump” and the lift door slides open – oh yes, it’s all very uncanny. The regular visitor is ready for this and moves circumspectly into the lift. The unwary visitor steps forward, after making sure that the lift is in fact there and he isn’t stepping into a black void, only to be trapped by some vital part of his anatomy by the lift door which has shot closed again. Once in the lift it’s really quite simple. You just have to select the floor number button and press it to carry you up. HA! You have forgotten on which floor No. 43 flat is. The buttons only tell you the floor numbers, 1,3,5,7, etc. and not the numbers of the flats on each floor. You remember that you did see outside the lift a board giving this information, so you press the “door open” button and nip out to see which floor you want. Meantime, someone on the top floor calls the lift and it smoothly glides away leaving you hammering on the small black button to bring it back.

After half-an-hour it returns, and three small boys trot out – they had

been playing with the lift – you dart in, press the correct button, if you remember it, and sail upwards.

Arriving at the required floor, you step from the lift, walk the wrong way on leaving it and have to trot right round the lift well, looking at all the door numbers before you end up back at the door nearest to the lift in the opposite direction to the one you had taken on leaving it. Pressing the door bell brings a shadow looming up on the frosted glass upper panel of the door, and it opens. Inside there is a corridor stretching way up the length of the flat, with other doors leading off it. To the left of the front door is a coat-rack with about 40-50 coats on it. I'm only guessing that these are all hung on hooks, there could be several young neos under it all holding the coats up; I don't know. Having managed to successfully get your coat to stay put on top of the pile you make your way up the corridor, past the two doors that turn out to be Fred's and Ella's bedrooms, and at the end of the corridor are three doors leading to the bathroom, kitchen and living room. The bathroom has, besides all the usual sort of stuff a bathroom should have, a set of defective weighing scales that put the wind up all the femmefans who nip into the bathroom during their visit as a result of the innumerable cups of tea one is forced to consume at Ella's.

The kitchen holds a large washing machine, fridge (ice-box), and cooker, as well as a pile of teacups a mile high. The living room is jam-packed wall to-wall with fans all holding large mugs of tea and trying to ignore the high-pitched "Wewhheeeeeeeee", that issues from the central heating system without stopping. On one of the outer walls there is a large glass door that leads out onto a small balcony ((it holds eight people – Ella)) clinging to the side of the building. Fans have been known to venture out on to it but, never in a high wind. The position of the furniture in the rooms is at present constantly being changed around. Fred has been moved into and out of every room in the flat before finally being established in his haven of refuge from visiting fans, in the small bedroom half way down the corridor. In Ella's room, and nearly every other place in the flat, lie piles of books, fmz, letters, tapes, tubes of ink, duplicating machines, tape recorders, cameras, mascots, trophies, plastic models, imitation spiders, bamboo poles, foldup putaway tables that are neither folded up or put away, odd fan guests, visitors, Council men, telephones (KILburn 1422) and pieces of foam plastic that will, no doubt, come in useful for something one of these days when Jimmy Groves gets round to them after having finished putting up curtain rods, pelmets, bookcases, shelves, hooks, light fittings, racks (not the torture variety, despite what you've heard), and all the other gimcracks that seem to be necessary for

the continuance of fannish life for Ella Parker.

Even so, 43 Willum Dunbar hasn't yet acquired that fabulous fannish air that so graced 151 Canterbury Road, but give her time; Ella's working on it.

– *Compact #2* (June 1963, ed. Parker for
OMPA)

Her Secret Vice

Arthur Thomson:

It's a known fact, of course, that whilst science fiction and science fiction fandom is the main interest of the keen "fan", many of us have other hobbies and interests outside this sphere. Ron Bennett collects stamps, John Berry has for years collected facts and data on aeroplanes, George Locke is keen on gliding, and Eric Bentcliffe likes chasing girls. Many and varied are the interests that some fans have. But there's one fan whom I'd have sworn on a stack of *Quandrys* was only and completely interested in fandom. A fan who lived, thought, and slept nothing else. Who would get up in the middle of the night to type a fan letter, or go without food for several days whilst running off a fanzine. Ella A. Parker, ex-chairwoman of the Science Fiction Club of London, Secretary of the BSFA, Editor of *Orion*, was, I thought, the *complete* faaaan.

Until, a short time back, on a damp Saturday afternoon at the Parker residence in Kilburn I witnessed the most amazing spectacle imaginable, in which Ella Parker forgot and ignored fandom for three complete hours without even a backward glance or a letter of comment to *Cry of the Nameless*... I sensed, I now feel, that something was amiss with Ella during the first part of my visit to her. We were sitting in the main fan room at 151 Canterbury Rd., the room that doubles for the SFCoL clubroom, and after she'd made the ritual cup of tea I noticed that as we talked she would keep breaking off the conversation to glance at her watch, and an impatient frown would cross her face. Then she'd get up and pace round the room, light yet another cigarette, pick up a book or fanzine, put it down, sit down, stand up, and then she'd wind up her watch and stare at its peaceful dial. Finally, when she'd stubbed out her sixteenth cigarette, I plucked up enough courage to ask her if she was going out or had something to do and did she want me to go?

She hedged on the question. I could see she didn't want to actually order me out of the house, but at the same time she didn't want to tell me just why she was on tenterhooks. So I decided to sit the thing out and see what it was all about; her performance had made me curious.

And we sat there and talked, Ella watch-glancing and me trying to keep the flagging conversation going. I found I was answering my own questions most of the time and Ella became more and more distracted as she paced the room from wall to wall. Finally, when it was about three

o'clock, she couldn't bear the tension any longer and with a final glance at her watch she muttered that we'd go into her brother Fred's room *to watch TV*. I didn't know of any steffic programme on at that time but I followed her, and entered the room behind her to watch in amazement as she flung herself across the room at the tv set and snapped on every switch it bore with a dexterity that was wonderful considering the frenzied speed of her movements.

She finished her whirlwind activities by dragging up the only comfortable chair in the room and plumped herself in it about three feet from the front of the set. As it began to warm up and she lit her eighteenth cigarette she had practically forgotten I existed, but vaguely motioned me to a chair near the wall.

I sat down, wondering just what was in store. I couldn't remember any interesting programme scheduled for that Saturday, but sat back and waited to see just what it would be. An SF play? A talk about Science Fiction? An interview with some prominent Astronomer, or maybe some shots of the latest rocket launchings?

The set blurred into light and the sound came up. I stared horrified at the screen and then sat back. In the middle of a ring, surrounded by hordes of yelling, waving people, two large fat men were trying their best to wrench each other's arms off. The voice of the commentator boomed out: "...And in the third round of this exciting wrestling match from Beckenham baths, 'Tiger' Standish has the 'Lower Tittering Mauler' groggy and dazed from an 'Irish Whip' and double hand throw...."

The fat man in the black trunks must have been the Lower Tittering Mauler, for he was upside down on the floor with the other gent sitting astride him, both legs clamped round his head, and rubbing his face into the canvas floor of the ring. The roar of the crowd was deafening but through it I seemed to hear a familiar bull-like shout.... It was Ella, sitting right on the edge of her chair, cigarette dangling brokenly from her flexing fingers as she screamed, "The twist, give him the twist!"

The chap called Tiger must have heard her... she was shouting loud enough for it to reach the stadium on the other side of London... for he seized hold of the "Mauler's" ears and with a sharp flick of the wrists stood the "Mauler" up on his head and then threw him out of the ring.

Ella's chair went back with a crash and she shoved her face right up to the set to shout, "Get back! Get back and fight!"

At that the screen bent inwards slightly, the "Mauler" seemed to know what she wanted for he vaulted back into the ring like a two year old – which surprised me somewhat as only four seconds before he'd been

practically dying on his feet. Immediately, the Tiger rushed at him and in an ungentlemanly manner butted him straight in the stomach. I winced as it connected and the Mauler slid once more down to his favourite position on the floor, and the Tiger got back to sitting on the Mauler's head and rubbing his face into the canvas.

The crowd went wild and so did Ella. She gripped the sides of her chair, straining sideways to it as she helped the Mauler cast out the agony of the hold. Her face was a picture: something like a section of Dante's inferno. Then it became transformed as the Mauler in some strange fashion (like the other fighter letting him) managed to throw off the Tiger and with a screech clamped his legs around the Tiger to throw him from one side of the ring to the other, rushing after him to push his head through the ropes and with a twist leave the Tiger strung neatly in between the two top ropes of the ring.

The bell for the end of the round rang then, or ghod knows what might have happened next. The two fighters needed the rest – and, so did Ella. She sank back into her seat with a sigh, mopped her brow, tucked in a strand of hair that had come loose in the heat of the battle, and then lit her thirtieth cigarette.

Somewhat shamefacedly, she cast a glance in my direction and murmured "It's wrestling." I nodded.

Then the bell rang again for the start of the next round and she and the two fighters were out of their corners like a flash. The crowd roared, Ella whooped and the Tiger and the Mauler leapt at each other to meet head on in the middle of the ring with a crack that shook the tv set four inches up from the table. Both wrestlers became angry with each other, and screaming lustily, they hurled themselves forward once more, the Tiger being just that bit faster. He seized the Mauler in a mighty grip and deposited him on the floor once more then jumped into the air and landed right on the Mauler's head. Ella was jumping up and down before the set, gibbering with rage at this, and I could only see parts of what happened next, but it appeared that when the Tiger tried to do the same trick again on the crushed Mauler, the Mauler rolled out of the way and locked a knee hold on the Tiger to bring him crashing to the floor where the Mauler proceeded to try and stretch the Tiger's legs further apart than I cared to think about. Ella, back in her chair again, had her arms through the cushions, thrusting with the Mauler – but at the same time screaming for the Tiger to "Put a double reverse Indian Death Lock on!"

Again, it seemed that the Tiger was in some strange way in telepathic communication with Ella, for he rose up from the waist, butted the Mauler

straight in the breadbasket, then rolled over to whip his arms round the Mauler's neck in a most cunning way. All the Mauler did was to loose his hold on the Tiger's legs and put his tongue out whilst his face went red.

I stole a glance at Ella. Somehow she was curled up in the chair in the same position as the Mauler, with her hands trying to get the Tiger off her back, just like the Mauler, and I confess it was then I started to become a little apprehensive about the whole outcome of this.

Somehow, Ella and the Mauler managed to get away by holding on to the ropes and dragging themselves through the Tiger's grip. As the Mauler jumped away the two fighters came upright and seized each other in a terrible hold that seemed to hurt them, the crowd, and Ella, for everybody – including the referee who happened to be between the fighters – gave a horrible screech of agony.

This went on for several more rounds, with Ella getting more and more excited. She was living the fight now, each throw and fall was hurting her, she was being thrown and falling, each grip that was put on hurt her, sometimes when she was applying the grip. I tell you, it was a powerful thing to watch, and a sight I would not wish to be seen by the younger members of the SFCoL.

Finally, it all came to a head. The wrestlers had become more and more ferocious, Ella had got more and more into the fight, and in one horrible cataclysmic leap the wrestlers fell to the floor in the reverse Indian Arm Lock with a combined Japanese Death Hold.

The crowd went wild. Ella, who for the past three rounds had been engaged in a life and death struggle with herself and her chair – during which she had also bent two teaspoons in half and twisted the tv aerial out of recognition – went wild, and I must confess I too had become fascinated by the thrilling finale and had my eyes glued to the screen.

The fight ended there though, for the two wrestlers had so enmeshed themselves that the referee had to summon the seconds into the ring to help him untangle the Mauler and the Tiger. I was brought back to reality as the commentator announced the end of the afternoon's viewing and the scene switched back to the tv studio by several embarrassed coughs from the back of the room.

I turned and found Ella peering up at me from under her overturned chair. So enthusiastic had she become during the last thrilling minutes of the fight that she had in some way managed to put the reverse Indian Arm Lock combined with the Japanese Death Lock on her chair and, as the fighters had done, become completely tied up and helpless. She glared at me through the arm of the chair and made motions with her eyebrows at

the tangle. I went over and after a couple of minutes of shoving arms and legs here and there managed to get her free. She stood up finally, and hobbled over to the tv set, then switched it off. We both went into the fan room and didn't mention wrestling anymore. I left shortly afterwards. Well, I had to get home by seven-thirty; you see there was an hour-and-a-half of professional boxing on TV and I *never* miss that, though how anyone can watch *wrestling* beats me.

– *The 1961 SFCoL Combozine* (ed. Parker)

Afterword

The Secret Life of Ella Parker

Roger Parker:

Frederick Parker was my uncle, the brother (possibly half-brother) of my father, Herbert Harry Parker. (I say half-brother because my uncle and father were both born out of wedlock with no fathers named on their birth certificates, so they may have had different fathers.)

Uncle Fred married Ella Anderson Gray in London on 1 January 1941, and she, I believe, had been born in Edinburgh on 1 January 1916, but I can't be certain. They had no children and their marriage must have run into problems at some point. They continued to live together and chose to call themselves brother and sister. In the 1960s, during the school summer holiday, I spent a month staying with Ella and Fred in their flat in Kilburn. Fred spent a lot of time showing me all the sights of London, and Ella spent time advising me how to take better photographs!

I knew she was into science fiction, but I didn't know she had chaired the World Science Fiction Convention in 1965 nor that she had benefited from a fund to take her to the US in 1961. However, I do know that she took a trip to the John F. Kennedy Space Center in Florida in April 1972 to watch the launch of the Apollo 16 mission to the moon. She sent a postcard to us (which I still have), saying the trip had been "worth every penny" and if she could save enough she was hoping to go back for the launch of Apollo 17 in December that year.

I was in Birmingham until late 1974, and in June that year she came up to Birmingham and took me to hear Isaac Asimov give a talk to the Birmingham Science Fiction Group. It was held at a hotel somewhere in the city centre, I think. I believe this was Asimov's first and only visit to the UK. After the passage of so many years I can no longer recall what Asimov spoke about but I do remember being impressed by him at time – I was just finishing a chemistry PhD and it was wonderful listening to a real scientist extending his thoughts into the world of science fiction. I remember that another SF author present at the meeting was Brian Aldiss.

She was also fascinated by President Kennedy and had several books on him, one of which she gave to me.

The deceit about Fred and Ella being brother and sister seems to have persisted throughout their lives and when Fred died in 1975 she was the

informant named on his death certificate, giving her qualification as “sister”.

My parents and I lost touch with Ella after Fred’s death. She was quite a strange woman – strong-minded, abrasive and assertive to the point of seeming rude, but I generally got on with her. Fred was much quieter in comparison with Ella and I imagine it was Ella’s idea to pretend they were siblings.

I suspect Fred’s father’s name in the marriage certificate may be fictitious and intended to cover up his origins. (Curiously, when he got married, my father named his father as Herbert Harry Hailstone and I believe that this was his true father – he was hardly covering up his illegitimacy by using a different surname.) Both Fred and my father were born in Workhouse institutions – 88 Hallam Street was the West Bromwich Union Workhouse but its street address was typically used to avoid shaming the child.

Strangely, I’ve never tracked down a birth certificate for Ella Anderson Gray so I wonder if that was her name at birth. The only evidence for her date and place of birth comes from her death certificate, and obviously the informant supplied that but where they got it is a mystery. I think Ella was a person of many secrets!

From emails to Mark Plummer
February 2025



Ella Parker and nephew Roger, 1960s (photo courtesy of Roger Parker)

Images and Links

Scans of the original *Orion* and *Compact* can be read at Fanac.org, and *The Harpy Stateside* (including *Parker's Peregrinations*) is an ebook in the TAFF Free Library:

- <https://fanac.org/fanzines/Orion/>
- <https://fanac.org/fanzines/Compact/>
- <https://taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=Harpy>

All cartoons are by Atom (Arthur Thomson) for fanzines edited by Ella Parker:

- Cover – *Compact* #1 (March 1963)
- “[Before *The Harpy Stateside*](#)” – *Orion* #22 (July 1959)
- “[After *The Harpy Stateside*](#)” – *Compact* #3 (December 1963)
- “[February 1962: John Glenn](#)” – *Orion* #29 (April 1962)

Photo credits:

- “[Atom and Ella at the 1960 Eastercon](#)” – Norman Shorrock
- “[Ella on the balcony of William Dunbar House, mid-1960s](#)” – either Ted Forsyth or Peter Mabey
- “[Ella Parker and nephew Roger, 1960s](#)” – via Roger Parker

The End

This free ebook is exclusive to the unofficial TAFF website at taff.org.uk. If you enjoy reading it, a donation to TAFF is a fine way to express your appreciation.

Table of Contents

The Compact Ella Parker
Contents
Foreword Rob Hansen
Before The Harpy Stateside
January 1960: London Brawling
February 1960: Joy Clarke
March 1960: Introducing SFCoL
April 1960: Countdown to Eastercon
April 1960: Not an Eastercon Report
April 1960: Hello and Farewell, Don Ford
July 1960: The Main Event
August 1960: Slow Burn
September 1960: Late Summer Madness
September 1960: BSFA
November 1960: Hyde Parker
March 1961: The BSFA Tug of War
March 1961: We Had a Convention!
April 1961: A West Kilburn Microcon
April 1961: On APAs
July 1961: Autobiography
After The Harpy Stateside
January 1962: Back in Blighty
January 1962: On Books
February 1962: John Glenn
April 1962: Conventional Wisdom
March 1963: The Big Move
March 1963: On the Matter of TAFF
March 1963: Through New Eyes
June 1963: Light and Dark
September 1963: Duperollinatomsfcolellaparkerdocious
October 1963: At Fifty Eight in Sixty Three
November 1963: JFK
December 1963: Appreciating Atom
April 1964: The Bard, the Harp, and the Eastercon
April 1964: Hwyl Jr
June 1964: Opinions

1972: Lowdown on Liftoff
Remembering Ella
Prolapse Memories
William Dunbar House
Her Secret Vice
Afterword The Secret Life of Ella Parker
Images and Links

Table of Contents

The Compact Ella Parker	2
Contents	3
Foreword Rob Hansen	5
Before The Harpy Stateside	8
January 1960: London Brawling	9
February 1960: Joy Clarke	12
March 1960: Introducing SFCoL	14
April 1960: Countdown to Eastercon	17
April 1960: Not an Eastercon Report	24
April 1960: Hello and Farewell, Don Ford	28
July 1960: The Main Event	31
August 1960: Slow Burn	35
September 1960: Late Summer Madness	40
September 1960: BSFA	43
November 1960: Hyde Parker	47
March 1961: The BSFA Tug of War	50
March 1961: We Had a Convention!	52
April 1961: A West Kilburn Microcon	61
April 1961: On APAs	65
July 1961: Autobiography	71
After The Harpy Stateside	76
January 1962: Back in Blighty	77
January 1962: On Books	81
February 1962: John Glenn	87
April 1962: Conventional Wisdom	88
March 1963: The Big Move	93
March 1963: On the Matter of TAFF	97

March 1963: Through New Eyes	99
June 1963: Light and Dark	102
September 1963: Duperrollinatomsfcolellaparkerdocious	104
October 1963: At Fifty Eight in Sixty Three	106
November 1963: JFK	110
December 1963: Appreciating Atom	112
April 1964: The Bard, the Harp, and the Eastercon	115
April 1964: Hwyl Jr	118
June 1964: Opinions	120
1972: Lowdown on Liftoff	125
Remembering Ella	139
Prolapse Memories	140
William Dunbar House	149
Her Secret Vice	153
Afterword The Secret Life of Ella Parker	158
Images and Links	161