The Squirrel's Tale

Ron Ellik

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TAFF 1962

Ron Ellik

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Cover photo of Ron Ellik in squirrel costume from the Ethel Lindsay collection; photographer unknown.

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Introduction
David Langford

Ron Ellik (1938-1968), nicknamed “Squirrel”, was a popular US fan active on multiple fronts. His many fanzines included *Fafhrd* for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association; the Hugo-winning newszine *Fanac*, co-edited with Terry Carr; his solo news-and-chatter zine *Starspinkle*; and, in a 1962 co-editing stint, the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society’s *Shangri L’Affaires*. Both *Fanac* and *Starspinkle* brought a welcome note of light-heartedness to the grim business of sf/fan news reportage. With Bill Evans he wrote the monumental Doc Smith concordance *The Universes of E.E. Smith* (Advent, 1966). He won the eastbound TAFF race held in 1961 – the other candidate being Dick Eney – and travelled to England for the 1962 Eastercon in Harrogate, later nicknamed Ronvention for Ron Bennett (of whom much more below), who was half the convention committee. Here is Ron Ellik’s TAFF platform as written by his nominators:

> We’d like to nominate Ron Ellik for TAFF because we like him. His history with *Fanac*, which, during his co-editorship was awarded the fanzine “HUGO” in ’59, and his long service as an officer of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA) prove him a capable publishing fan. He’s a convention fan because we’ve seen him travel cross-country to attend World Conventions and Midwestcons. He reads science-fiction because we questioned him to be sure he did; he even collects a little bit. He can associate with young-fans, and with old-guard-fans equally well. We would be proud to have Ron Ellik as a representative to Britain in 1962; however, the best reason for nominating him, and sending him, is that the British fans will like him as well as we do.
>
> *Nominated by: Bjo Trimble, C.L. Barrett, MD, Larry T. Shaw, Arthur Thomson and Ron Bennett.*

Alas, Ron Ellik died tragically young in a January 1968 car crash; he was only 29.

> In the death of Ron Ellik by one of those senseless accidents that always seem so unfair; fandom has been robbed of a universally popular fan. A young man at the height of his power, with a

glowing future before him – this is always the hardest death to which we can reconcile ourselves.

I think one of the reasons Ron was so well liked was because he had a basic seriousness beneath his happy extrovert appearance. Ron could seem so carefree – and yet be so capable and efficient. During his time as TAFF Administrator he was seen at his best; full of bubbling enthusiasm and very practical ideas. TAFF has never been conducted so well before or since.

His style with words was inimitable; I cannot remember, anyone who made me laugh so often as I read. In particular his newszine *Starspinkle* can stand as a shining example of how to convey facts and news and entertain at the same time.

He was a good friend to many fans like myself who have kindnesses to remember. I never knew him but he was helping with something, or giving help to someone. He smoothed the way for many of us. I never thought of Ron but I smiled and felt good – I am so glad that I knew him.

– Ethel Lindsay, *Scottishe* 47 (March 1968)

The tragic death in a January car crash of Ron Ellik is still far too close to view impersonally. Good looking and a witty conversationalist, Ron was truly a giant on the international fannish scene. He was connected with numerous conventions during the past twelve years, was a fan of note in FAPA and the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society and had been the editor of two highly successful fannish newszines, *Starspinkle* and the highly acclaimed *Fanac* which won a Hugo for Ron and his co-editor, Terry Carr. Ron was the 1962 TAFF Delegate to my home-town Convention in Harrogate and was our first house guest after our marriage the previous month. A welcome opponent in any brag or poker school, Ron had also been the co-author of the authoritative Advent book, *The Universes of E.E. Smith*, had been the author of the long-running fanzine column, "The Squirrel Cage", and was such a part and parcel of my own fannish existence that even as I write about the death of this twenty-nine year old Golden Boy I am shaking my head in disbelief.

Our sincere and heartfelt sympathies to Ron's fiancée, Lois, to Mrs Ellik, and to Ron's many, many friends around the world.

– Ron Bennett, *Skyrack* 95, May 1968

The Squirrel's Tale was serialized as four of Ellik's regular "Squirrel Cage" columns in *Shangri-L'Affaires*, from #62 in November 1962 to #65 in May 1963. The last section, not included in the collected edition, ended as follows:

> This winds up four installments covering three weeks of travel to and from England in the spring of 1962, focussing on the Harrogate convention. I'd like to thank the staff of *Shangri-L'Affaires* for their continued willingness to publish it, and the readers for their comments and encouragement; especially those who corrected me on things I sadly fumbled.
>
> It seems as though an unruly mob of loud miscreants would like to see this report published as a single volume; if any of them would like to do the work necessary to prepare it (it would run approximately fifty pages with illustrations, and I might be persuaded to expand some sections for the edition) I can always be reached at 1825 Greenfield Avenue, Los Angeles 25. Perhaps we will announce such a grandiose attempt next issue, and start selling it then – all proceeds beyond publication costs to go to TAFF.

The text was revised by Ron Ellik himself in 1965, adding the new Afterword. The complete *The Squirrel's Tale* was published posthumously by a LASFS team led by Bruce Pelz: see Publisher's Note [1969]. It's still lively reading with plenty of good anecdotes. A characteristic Ellik line, not found in the report itself, was quoted in the post-Eastercon issue of Ron Bennett's *Skyrack*: "Neither one of us knew what we were talking about but I was louder."

Thanks as always to Rob Jackson for his eagle-eyed proofreading skills, to Fanac.org for making *The Squirrel's Tale* available online (see below for link), and to Rob Hansen for advice, suggestions and the cover photograph. I have added a very few clarifying footnotes signed *[Ed.]*.

David Langford
December 2022

Links

- Ron Ellik at *Fancyclopedia 3*
- *The Squirrel's Tale* at Fanac.org
- *Shangri-L'Affaires* at Fanac.org

- Some Ellik letters about TAFF

The Squirrel's Tale

"Al," I said, "this is Ron."

"Ron?" he bellowed in surprise. "Where the devil are you?"

"Down at International Airport. Can you come down and get me?"

"Sure," he said, "but how come you're there now? We aren't expecting you until three a.m.!"

"Well, in the first place, I got tangled up in the London subway system, so I missed my plane. And then I had a stop-over in New York, where I picked up an earlier plane that was late. And here I am in Los Angeles."

There was dead silence for a minute on the other end. Then he said he'd be down as soon as possible.

Half an hour later, just as I'd reclaimed my luggage, a Volkswagen and a Peugeot, both bursting with fans, pulled up in front of the TWA terminal at L.A. international, and out piled John and Bjo Trimble, Steve Tolliver, Al Lewis, Bruce Pelz and Jack Harness, full of questions about England and news from Ella Parker and Eddie Jones about my wild adventures transmarine.

We got back to 1825 Greenfield, and I started unloading my luggage. They gasped at the beautiful artwork sent by Ted Carnell to the Chicon, and again when they found that one of the paintings was mine – his gift to me. And while they were looking over pictures, books, fanzines, British money and other souvenirs of the trip, they kept insisting to hear how I had gotten home three hours early by taking the subway. So I told them the story of my travels as TAFF representative to the 1962 British Convention in Harrogate, and it turned out to be a long story.

Three weeks earlier, Bjo, Al, Eleanor Turner and Steve Tolliver had seen me off at the same terminal. My tickets had been bought months earlier, and I had told everyone of my travel plans – a weekend in Philadelphia and New York, and then the bulk of the trip in England and North Ireland. But it wasn't until we got to the boarding gate that Bjo looked at the flight destination and really believed me.

"You're not going to England at all!" she accused. "You're going to spend the whole time in Philadelphia with Peggy Rae McKnight and make up a phony TAFF report!" I sighed, reminded her I'd told her a long time before that I was going to Philly first, kissed her good-bye and whispered, "You're right – but don't tell anybody."

I boarded the plane, my crew of bon-voyagers left the airport, and as always TWA announced that there would be an hour delay before take-off; so I wandered around the nearly-deserted Terminal building alone until we re-embarked; and finally, after anticipating the trip since September when Don Ford told me I'd won TAFF, I was in the air and on my way to England.

Figuring on a lot of uneventful travel time during the three weeks, I had brought along Le Sage's *Gil Blas*, figuring that an episodic eighteenth-century novel ought to keep me in reading matter for a long time; the first few chapters brought me sleep, and I woke in Philadelphia.

Philadelphians are generally in a hurry; it must be an effect of living so near Manhattan, where people are always in a hurry. I was rushed about the airport by people until I found myself, with luggage, outside looking for transportation into the city. A stout, grizzled old man was stamping up and down before a limousine, wherein sat three timid people.

"$1.35 to Philadelphia," he spat at me. "If you don't like it, you can take a cab for $3.50."

Starting, I realised that staring at him wouldn't get me any nearer town, so I paid him and loaded my suitcase and self aboard. I tried to get a shot of him, because he was a fascinating caricature of a man with a hideous scowl spread over his broad, heavy features, and a great black cigar – but unfortunately this was the first time I'd tried to set up Al's camera for a real shot, and by the time I'd remembered how to arrange filter, speed, focal length and aperture, he had scared three other people into the limousine and was getting in himself. He should have been by Dickens.

When my Barkis deposited me in the center of Philadelphia, I made my way to the McKnight apartment, where I got a very funny greeting. Peggy Rae had spent the night there so I wouldn't have to go straight out to the farm, and about two hours earlier she'd gotten a telegram. Telegrams are always bad news, but this one said:

SHAGGY WANTS YOUR TRIP REPORT STOP UNICORN PRODUCTIONS WILL BUY ALL FILM RIGHTS STOP TELL HIM TO GET RID OF THAT UGLY TIE STOP JOHN BJO AL STEVE ELLIE

She showed that telegram to everybody we saw that weekend, including her parents, Terry Carr, Pat and Dick Lupoff, and the Shaws. But besides that, it was an enjoyable weekend. We spent Saturday in Philly baby-sitting her nephew David, and went out to the family farm in Lansdale that night. Sunday, Buddie McKnight made her table groan gently under a burden of oriental food for Dinner, and in the early

afternoon Peg and I took a bus to New York.

She stayed Sunday night with Larry and Noreen Shaw on Staten island, and I went back to Manhattan where I was guest of Dick and Pat Lupoff. The Lupoffs and Snoopy (their decadent dog) and I stayed up talking most of the night, and Dick convinced me to take a dozen copies of *Xero* to England for him, saving several shillings in postage.

In the morning I actually got Al Lewis's camera working, and took some shots of Pat and Dick. After Dick went to work, I walked up Second Avenue to the high Eighties, and back down Third to their home, looking for (1) book stores, (2) something photographable, (3) a tobacconist's. The third was easy – but the first two completely threw me. I don't think people in the Eighties read, and I'm sure they lack any idea of exterior decoration.

About ten, Peggy Rae came over from the Shaws' and we went down to Greenwich Village to visit T. Carr, one-time co-editor of a great fanzine.

Terry is now a filthy pro, living in a comfortable flat on Jane Street in the Village. He's grown a beard once more, is selling science-fiction and working on serious fiction, seems remarkably happy with his current lot and was glad to see us. Carol, Terry, Peg and I ate lunch before Carol had to go back to work, then the three of us took a subway up to Times Square and walked back down to Washington Square.

A long walk through a strange city is a great way to carry on a conversation. Terry had lived in New York less than a year by then, Peg had never been there any length of time, and I had visited it only twice; so we walked for hours by the Empire State Building, Soldier's Memorial, Herald Square, and while we walked I ran through a roll of film and we talked about nothing of any consequence. Eventually we wound back to Terry's door.

Rush-hour traffic on the subways getting back to the Lupoffs' was pretty exciting – it left Peggy and me exhausted, and more than ready to tear into the Good-Bye Ron Ellik dinner Pat had prepared. Dick brought out enough beef to fill twice as many people, and began carving great steaks from it – one serving quelled all appetite either of the ladies could muster. He and I took care of more of it – and there was lots left. I think my reputation as a member of Food Fandom has grown since I was in high school, because Pat and Dick had obviously expected me to inhale all the food they could burden their table with. Those are two of the finest hosts in fandom.

Finally I had to break away from their hospitality, say good-bye to the

last American fans I was to see until I met Ajax Hoch in Harrogate, and head for the BOAC Terminal at Idlewild.

-oOo-

In reflecting on my first overseas trip, I think less of the actual airport happenings than I do of the preparations. When fans are preparing to go to London for the 1965 World SF Convention, they should know some of the things I learned and have some of the help others gave me.

Late in 1961, Don Ford sent me a copy of *TAFF Baedeker,* his account of his 1960 travels to England, with the sound advice that I read of his preparations for travel. Such things as trousers might never have occurred to me as a problem – but he had taken wool slacks, and found that extended walks in them wore the hair off his legs. I accordingly took clothes suited to long walking, sitting, and fanning. (I think that last is general enough to cover anything excluded by walking and sitting that you'd do in your clothes.)

But his most valuable advice to the travelling conventioneer was about American Express. The AmExp people, he said, are in business solely to make your foreign travel arrangements as you want them made, and to ensure that you don't make plans which will get hopelessly complicated or crowded when you get overseas; and you know what? He was absolutely right.

In February I went to AmExp and threw myself on their mercies. They asked me where I planned to go and how I wanted to get there, and worked out an extremely convenient travelogue at the lowest cost possible. And when I asked about the English tour of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, they even went out of their way to get me a schedule of the tour... but that, unfortunately, proved beyond them or anyone, and I saw the Company for the first time months later on their American tour.

In short, however, when I arrived at Idlewild, my vaccination and passport papers were in perfect order, and I boarded the 707 Astrojet with no difficulty. To my distress, they served us a complete meal on that flight – I was so full from the steak dinner at the Lupoffs' that I couldn't eat a thing until morning, and had to refuse the free meal.

Gil Blas of Santillane occupied me until the wee small hours, and I dozed off dreaming of escapades in a Spain that existed solely in Le Sage's imagination, wondering how much of the style was auctorial and how much due to Smollett's translation. I woke over London, with hardly a cloud between me and the earth – the dawn of a beautiful spring day.

BOAC had no convenient connection to Manchester, so American Express had transferred me to BEA. I fell asleep in a Douglas jet late on a

bright London morning, and woke in haze and rain early on a miserable Manchester afternoon, with Eric Bentcliffe waiting for me in a huge overcoat at the baggage claim area.

No problem in recognition here – we had met just nineteen months earlier at the Pittsburgh convention, and recognized each other the minute I stepped through the door. After getting my luggage and horsing around taking pictures of each other (a peculiar old British custom originated by Dave Kyle), we took me for my first ride on a double-decker bus.

Everywhere I looked, things were just slightly different. The roads were narrower, the hills lower, the people a bit smaller than in America. In London airport I had drawn amused smiles from an elderly couple by staring at the change I received from a ten-shilling note... I knew what those funny coins were, but I had never seen them before. This feeling of freshness lasted throughout my visit – I always felt right at home, after a brief flash of newness. Once Eric explained the system of fares, I could hop on and off buses, cabs and trams with ease – but the first time a conductor asked for "two sixes," I would surely have given him two-and-six had not Eric paid the fare – with a shilling.

It works this way: you say where you're going, and the conductor (who is not the driver) tells you the fare, from his memorised schedule. "Two sixes" means he wants two six-penny fares, or twelve pence, or a shilling. "Two-and-six," which is what I thought he meant, means two shillings and six pence, or thirty pence.

The correct fare was 14¢ US: I would have paid 34¢.

In two transfers we got from Ringway International Airport through the city of Stockport and out to the part of Stockport where Eric and his mother have lived for years, called Great Moor.

Eric, of long-standing reputation in British fandom as a bachelor, had been recently benedight, and his newly-minted bride Beryl and he were still staying at Alldis Street with the warm and wonderful middle-aged Mrs. Bentcliffe and the Corgi bitch, Flossie. For two days I was an extra mouth and bed, and much more trouble than I had expected to be because of an attack of biliousness which left my supper on their stair-well; but through all this, the crowded Bentcliffe household never seemed disturbed by the noisy, hungry American visitor.

I got off to a good start with the Bentcliffes right away. When Eric and I walked into the house, Flossie ran to meet us and sniff Manhattan and London on my shoes. I'm a rebel fan in that I prefer dogs to cats, so she and I were getting along pretty well until I asked Eric, "What kind of dog is she? She looks like she's dachshund and toy shepherd."

Flossie drew back from me haughtily, and Eric said sadly, “She’s a full-bred Corgi. We have papers.” I explained that I had never seen a Corgi before, and he assured me it was quite all right. Floss stayed a distance from me for a while, though, and I think she never forgave me.

Mrs. Bentcliffe, Eric’s mother, began the moment I entered her kitchen to try to stuff me with food until I burst. It was three in the afternoon, but she put on a rasher of bacon and some eggs, and watched eagerly while I put them down with some toast and jam and milk for company. She worried constantly that the strain of travel to strange countries would upset my eating, and except while I recovered from my mal-de-air, she made absolutely sure I was stuffed all the time.

Beryl came home from work in the late afternoon, and we got along fine right off – we had both just been vaccinated for smallpox, and mine hadn’t taken. I’ve been vaccinated many times since infancy, and it never takes; but the disease has ravaged England recently and first-time immunizations were quite common, and Beryl was not immune. During my stay she fought day and night to keep from scratching the red area around her shoulder – more to show me she had the will-power than because Eric and I convinced her to leave it alone. She’s a smiling, slim girl with terrific endurance under teasing – and fortunately the effect of the vaccine had worn off by the time she got to the con.

That evening the four of us, with Flossie sitting much too close to the fire, sat down to play Rummy. Eric had taught the ladies the game, and to keep from losing he kept inventing new rules. He was dismayed when he tried to teach me the game... it seems I already knew it... and he had to stick to Hoyle. After a couple of hours Mrs. Bentcliffe and I had each won thruppence, and Eric’s natural good humor was becoming a little strained. Beryl thought the whole thing was delightful.

My sickness that night, I’m certain in reflection, was due to the reading on an extended jet flight, combined with excitement of travel. The next day I lay abed until the afternoon – try as I might, I hadn’t the strength to rise until nearly four. I got down some tea and bread, and Eric and I sat in the front room before a warm fire, with Floss almost in the coals, showing each other slides and talking TAFF business.

I had become US TAFF Administrator since winning the election, by agreement with Don Ford, whose personal life had required too much of his time for him to continue to handle the Fund. That afternoon, Eric and I talked about plans for TAFF’s future, with an eye toward scheduling the next few trips and encouraging people to stand for election.

We agreed on two definite points at the beginning, and from them we

formulated the calendar which we hope will guide TAFF until 1965. First, there is too little enthusiasm and too little time to plan for an American to go to the 1963 British convention (which would be, we thought, in London – little could we prophesy!); second, while TAFF is decidedly a non-partisan organization in all things fannish, we both wanted to see another London WorldCon, and agreed to help this cause as much as we thought consonant with our rather public office.

The result was almost no change at all in the policy of TAFF. There has been an average of one trip per year, lately – two one year, none the next. So we agreed to have no trip in 1963, and two in 1964 – an American to the ’64 British convention, and a return trip to the World SF Convention in the fall, which will be on the west coast. The next step was easy – we blithely assumed that the 1964 East-West traveller would bid for and receive the 1965 convention for London, and we have scheduled the next trip for fall of 1965 from America to London, via the (hypothetical) charter plane, just as Bob Madle went to the 1957 LonCon on the charter plane, with TAFF buying his ticket.

Farther than that, of course, we didn’t even try to plan. Each pair of Administrators makes their own rules, and we were only formulating guides for the future. Ethel Lindsay and I may change what Eric and I set up – and Ethel and the next American Administrator may change that.

That night Eric, Beryl, Mrs. Bentcliffe and I played more Rummy, and I lost tuppence. I watched British television (“telly”) and tried to convince Mrs. Bentcliffe I was completely recovered, even if I didn’t want two suppers.

That was to be my last night there, so Eric took me to a telephone booth to call Norman Shorrock and make arrangements for me to go to Liverpool next day. On the way, walking the streets of Great Moor at night, I spied a car driving with its parking lights on. I didn’t think – I never do think – but I yelled “Lights!” at the driver, to tell him to turn them on full.

Brie looked at me in wild surprise. “What did you yell?” he asked. When he started to laugh at my explanation, I was surprised – until he told me the car had had full city lights on – higher lights would only be used in the country, where roads aren’t illuminated. I doubt I could drive with only street lamps and parking lights – but I never was offered the right-hand wheel of a British car, and wouldn’t have taken it if offered, so I never found out, and it’s only a myth that my shout made the driver swerve off the road and wrap himself around a lamppost.

The next morning I rose after Eric and Beryl had gone off to work,

and talked with Mrs. Bentcliffe until time to leave for Manchester. We had many amusing differences in dialect and outlook which had come up during the two days, and one will always come to mind when I think of her cheerful Cheshire attitudes.

One morning or afternoon when Eric had been out, I was scratching Flossie's ears and Mrs. Bentcliffe was sewing. "D'you like a wee drink?" she asked, looking up brightly over her work.

"Why, thank you," I said, "I'll just have some water." And as I walked over to the tap with my cup she looked up, and set down her sewing.

"Sure you don't mean to drink it cool?" she asked, and I stopped with the drink half to my lips, realizing that I hadn't been offered one cold drink while there.

"I – I *like* cold water," I said, apologetically, and at once she was afraid she'd hurt my feelings; it seems that this pleasant, hard-working North Country woman has never in her life taken a drink of anything cold, and my strange tastes had quite startled her. We laughed about different customs, and she explained that she partially accounted for her good health with her liking for drinks warm.

During that morning when I was about to leave, she went to the sink to get some hot water, and turned the tap; while waiting for the hot water to flow, she asked, "D'you have geysers in America?" She pronounced it geezers, not guyzers.

I looked up. "Oh, yes," I said, and began telling her about Yellowstone National Park and Old Faithful, and was brought up short when she pointed to the hot-water unit over her sink. "Nay," she said. "I mean like that, as we get hot water onto our dishes and things."

And you know, I didn't understand what she meant... It seemed such a matter-of-fact thing to her to have water heated by a geyser that I just nodded dumbly. I actually thought she meant her dish-water came by way of a natural hot-spring near the city, and it wasn't until the last night of the convention, four days later, that through the kind contrivance of Ron Bennett I was thoroughly initiated into the truth of geysers.

-oOo-

That morning I was left to myself on the British transportation system for the first of many times. Eric had given me thorough directions to Liverpool, via diesel from Manchester. My eyes were open all the way – the English architecture does not change, so much as it takes on strange flares. Buildings are usually wall-to-wall with their neighbors (as in residential San Francisco), and dusty grey in color – frequent churches,

public buildings, theatres and parks, with their sudden rush of open space, continually caught my eye. The moving vehicles and my own fickle attention, however, kept me from photographing anything. Too, billboard advertisements drew my gaze – they are radically different from open-air advertising in the States... and I find myself at a loss to describe the difference.

I found Piccadilly Circus in Manchester dissatisfying – it covers more ground, I saw two weeks later, than the area of the same name in London, but I was there on a weekday morning and saw nothing to match the bustle of London's amusement center. Eric had forewarned me, the previous day, and I used it as it was meant – to change buses, for a tuppenny ride to one of Manchester's two railway stations.

Both stations are run by British Railways – i.e., the government. It wasn't until I visited Terry Jeeves in Sheffield that the system was explained to me in detail. All during my travels in the United Kingdom I saw with wonder and a touch of horror multiple railway lines crossing and crossing again, and wound my way through a labyrinth of multiple stations, with all England playing my Ariadne as I asked questions of each passer-by and every policeman or public transport official I could catch.

The problem all began when Eric tried to tell me how to get to Liverpool. "Take such-a-bus to Piccadilly in Manchester," he explained, "and from there go to the Central or the Exchange, and take a train to Liverpool."

"What are the Central and the Exchange?" I wanted to know – and he told we that both were railway stations, both were run by Her Majesty's government, and both ran frequent trains to Liverpool. I accepted this as slightly silly and perhaps a foible of the Bloody Provincials, and a week later Jeeves explained that all England is so connected, for the train system sprang from many independent transport companies, each of which established its own lines and own stations – only to be absorbed later into royal rolling stock... leaving still the separate lines and separate stations.

In this way, it has become common for a traveller to find himself travelling much more than necessary in having to change stations at intermediate cities. I found myself thinking the system more than silly – and comparing this form of royal non-competitivism with the U.S. system which struggled with greater distances during the last century and came up with the western part of the country – from Chicago to the Pacific Ocean – linked by well-planned lines. We were, of course, not hindered by a complexity of land-holders; where the British couldn't cross someone's ancestral manor, the American government gave large land-grants to

railroaders from public holdings.

It was Eastertide while I was in England, and everywhere the trains were crowded by schoolgirls looking like alumnae of St. Trinian's; a little old, perhaps – the average around fourteen years, I should say – but all very innocent looking, as if they had just set fire to the rector. The scenery by train from Manchester to the sea is amazingly uninteresting – I used the time to change film, clean camera, filter and spectacles, and read a bit more Blas. A good book, that – you can pick it up with only a hazy recollection of what has gone before and continue with zest. I feel sure it could be read quite at random, and fifty pages would yield three interesting adventures of barratry, kidnap or romance, all thoroughly self-contained.

-oOo-

Norman Shorrock was easy to spot in a crowd – he stands tall, looks like he has a cosmic mind, and carries himself with the dignity appropriate to a Grand Master (L) of the Order of St. Fantony. Besides, I'd seen a picture of him at Eric's, and I easily recognized the black hair and the sleepy but amused glint in his eyes.

It was just before eleven on Holy Thursday, and Norman walked me through the streets of the city to his office, explaining that I must get about on my own while he cleaned up last-minute business prior to closing for Easter.

"Do you fancy you can get about in a strange city without getting lost?" he asked, looking at me sharply.

"Colleague," I said, drawing up to my full height and trying to look confident in that tangle of a shipping town, "I hitch-hiked three thousand miles at the age of seventeen to a metropolis I had never seen, spent five days there and went home. No road map." He seemed to like this.

We stopped by John Roles's bookshop – he wasn't in – and went on. On this walk, we saw a particularly imposing statue of Britannia atop a civic building, and I paused to photograph it. Norman asked a question about my exposure reading, and we compared views on how best to shoot an object against the sky. He finally talked me into taking two frames with different exposures – later, they were very interesting to compare – and he closed his argument by saying that he used a fixed-lighting moving-picture camera most of the time.

"Oh," I said, "I'm quite willing to listen to opinions from anyone; I'm just using Al Lewis's camera – I'm not a photo bug, you know." At this his mouth dropped open.

"You know," he said, "I was quite impressed, by your flinging ASI's and focal lengths about like that. You'd convince anyone you are a camera

bug, of the most thorough-going type."

And so we wound up at his office building. "That window on the second floor is mine," he explained, "and we'll see you here at 1:30 sharp, to go across the water to Wirral."

And so I wandered for close to two hours through the dirty, complex, and very busy city. I went down to the wharf area to capture the Liver Bird in my camera – and found, later, that the distance had been too great. Several of the shots of Liverpool did come out well, though – and through using the camera in no haste and with no worry about expense through the kind offices of Don Anderson, who had donated great amounts of film to TAFF, I learned a considerable amount about photography that day.

Near the waterfront is the commercial area, and the side-streets are dotted with bookstalls. Through two or three of these I wandered aimlessly, finding one interesting book – and finally I discovered a place that could keep me entertained for days... maybe months. It was a high-ceilinged, narrow-but-deep shop, crammed with books.

Suddenly, through the dust of ancient tomes in which I was burrowed, I heard a church bell ring once.

Sure enough, it was 1:30 – and Norman was waiting at his office to eat lunch with me – and I had no idea where I was.

I paid for my books and asked that they be wrapped so I could manage with them – the proprietress called it a "wee bundle" – and thanked the lady for her help in looking for some books I had asked about.

"Don't give up," she said, "we get new books in all the time." (Where do they put them? I asked in blank amazement of my spatially-conscious inner self.) "Come back in a few days or a couple of weeks, and maybe we'll have the book you're looking for."

"Oh, I couldn't," I said. "I'm leaving Liverpool tomorrow – probably won't ever return."

She peered hard at me. "But you come in often. You've been in before."

"No," I laughed, "you must be thinking of two other people. I've never been in the city before today – why, I've never been in the country before this week. I'm from California!" I shouted over my shoulder, making for the door while she stared unbelievingly after me.

It was a clear, warm day on the first diazomaic hills above the center of Liverpool, along which I walked for elevation to look down on the city. Finally I spotted her – Britannia, riding proudly on a large whitestone building in the center of town, and I headed right for her, triangulating, as I approached, with a large monument to Victoria which I had photographed

earlier. And, as I turned a corner, expecting to be a block from Norman's, I found myself lost again. I looked around in despair, and a mile away was a second Britannia, flaunting her trident at me as if in jest that I had followed her imitation up wrong streets. I turned on my false friend, and headed immediately to the waterfront, where a policeman directed me to [?]Water Street, and I arrived at the Liverpool Stamp and Coin Company twenty minutes late.

"Eddie Jones just left," Norman announced, and I looked properly shamed after my boasts. "But you'll meet him tonight at club," he continued, and we talked about my adventures in Liverpool while we walked – without getting lost – to a restaurant called the Alligator. It was my first Meal Out in England – but not my last by a bit – and not so radically different from Yankee food as I had expected. It was chicken-in-wine, muchly enjoyed, at a price so low I raised my eyebrows most impolitely.

After, we took a ferry across the water to Wirral, in Higher Bebington, where I met the second of my British hostesses, Ina Shorrock, and the Shorrock family, of whom the eldest is Janet, nearly a fan in her own right, and the other three – Linda, Roy and Alan... Alan was still in arms. Ina seems not at all unhappy with her lot as part of a focal point of fandom, and though I was there only one night she made quietly sure that I felt to be one of the family. In the early evening, before Jeff Collins showed up to take Norman and me to the Liverpool Group meeting, she spread her table with sausages, bacon, vegetables, hot muffins and assorted fringe-items, and called it a snack to keep us a while; I stowed as much as I could in keeping with my policy of appreciating food, while a guest, and wondered if the appetite of Tolkien's hobbits was not taken from knowledge of Cheshire folk.

Collins is a burly, brown-haired artist with an interest in some fans but not in science-fiction or fandom. He came by about 7:30 to pick us up – but we drove in the Shorrock car, a fine old black automobile with a chauffeur section and running-boards – an Austin, vintage 1936. It may have looked odd to see an unliveried, bushy-bearded chauffeur in such a car – or odder still to see his passengers leaning against the partition, talking to him, instead of reclining back with the glass closing him off – but that's how we proceeded through the underwater tunnel back to Liverpool that evening, and Collins went off to tend to some business while Norman and I went up an endless flight of stairs to the fourth-floor pair of rooms occupied solely by the Liverpool Group.

Eddie Jones, who looks like the Shepard pictures of the Mole from

The Wind in the Willows, was bartending, and handed me a drink, saying "How 'bout a vote for me for TAFF, mate?" It's a fine mustache he has, and well kept – but it's a good thing Ethel won TAFF, because Jones would have taken every US fan's money at poker dice before his trip was up.

Among the Liverpudlians present were Stan Nuttall, Joe Navin, John Nash, John Roles, and a chap name of John Campbell... a monster fan. He reads *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, and he sees every horror and monster movie he can; he's in his late teens, and very red hot about horror movies. Roles is a quiet, booky sort who carries a conversation remarkably well if you slow down to listen; we talked about Tolkien for quite a while, calmly finding out in each other the same sort of interest in the Ring trilogy, and tracing almost the same pattern of discovery of the books. To carry further the simile of the Mole and Eddie Jones, I should say that John reminded me of Disney's interpretation of Ratty... tall, with long, narrow moustachios, and a quiet mien.

Before the meeting started, I was shown around the two-room clubhouse. On the ceiling is the longest interlineation in the world; an entire wall is devoted to signatures of visiting dignitaries; another wall is menage-decorated with Jones art, newspaper clippings, Bonestell prints, and anything else the Group could get their hands on. And they have a record player.

I had told Norman that the *Goon Show*, with all the music and crazy humor, is played frequently on privately-subscribed radio stations on the west coast, and that from exposure I had become a Goon fan; he accordingly told the Liverpudlians, and they wound up the record player.

Yes. They wound it up.

"How do you like your Goon records?" asked Eddie. "Loud or soft?"

"Oh, loud," I said. "I don't hear very well in British."

"Fine," he said, "I'll turn up the volume." And so saying, he demonstratively leaned over and opened the doors on the front of the cabinet. The ancient Victrola spun into action, and for the first time I heard a half dozen 78's recorded by the Goons; devastating folk ballads, heart-rending love songs (such as "I'm walking backward for Christmas/To prove that I love you") and many other old familiar tunes, all out of key and just as – well, I think "uninhibited" would not be too strong a term – just as uninhibited as the regular radio shows. And played on a mechanical record player.

Eventually the group and I went into the smaller room for the LiG formal meeting, with Norman Shorrock directing and Stan Nuttall as

secretary.

The business of the meeting was swiftly disposed of – as it was convention time, attendance was very small and business was smaller. Then they turned on me, elected me an honorary member of the Group, and opened a bottle of Ackerman wine purchased especially for the occasion. Honorary membership, it seems, was the least expensive honor they could bestow – it would cost me only fifty pounds annually, payable at my convenience to Nuttall, plus a skimpy ten bob for each meeting attended.

They were allowing me to buy the Ackerman wine for only thirty pounds. A right sociable crew, the Liverpudlians.

After the meeting, Norman, Eddie, Stan Nuttall and I went to a night club. Eighteen months earlier, Parliament had legalized slot machines throughout the country, and night clubs had taken on a new life. Jeff Collins was interior decorator to this particular club, and Norman held a key. The interior was dark and moody, with a glass-brick dancing floor, small tables, and a torch singer-and-combo at one end. Very Hollywood – but they served good stout and filling hamburgers. And it was fun playing slot machines with sixpences instead of dimes – it doesn't cost nearly as much.

After the pre-meeting drink, the Ackerman wine, and at least two stouts under my belt, Norman and I steered each other back to the ferry boat... running the last ten yards to follow an old British tradition invented by Dave Kyle. We talked about A.E. van Vogt all the way across the water and up to #2 Arnot Way, and at some late hour we found our way to our couches. I knew nothing until late the next morning.

Long after the sun, I rose, struggling off my back to take a cup of unbelievably black coffee from my host, who was wondering how I would fare that morning. He had heard somewhere that I don't drink. After my rest in Manchester, the night out had been a good way to shake me into convention condition, and before I could relax out of condition we were packed into the Austin (which Jeff had kept the night) and down to the train station where I had met Norman.

The Liverpool Group had a new method of travelling to conventions – they had hired a Minibus (the Rootes version of the Microbus), and a driver. Norman, Ina, Janet and Alan Shorrock, Eddie Jones, Roles, Weedall, Nash, Navin, yours truly and several long tons of luggage were all loaded up, and off we went over the rolling English countryside for three hours – up and down knolls on the Great Harrogate High Road, a narrow country lane. Two simultaneous poker dice games were going in

the van, and I must say I have seldom enjoyed a con trip so much. It only cost me six shillings to learn to play poker dice, and as they would not accept money from me to pay my share of the trip, I count it the most enjoyable, least expensive, and quickest trip across country I've ever taken. We arrived in Harrogate at the West Park Hotel just past noon on Good Friday, and the convention was already in swing.

-oOo-

The 1962 British national Science Fiction Convention opened in Harrogate, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, on Good Friday morning. The Liverpool crowd and I arrived in their hired Minibus at almost exactly noon, and the West Park Hotel was already churning with fans. Having no preconceptions of what a British convention should resemble, I was pleasantly surprised to find myself at home immediately: the Liverpudlians knew everyone and made sure I didn't wander alone, and before I'd been in the hotel an hour I was into a game of Brag with Dave Barber and Phil Rogers.

Barber, Rogers and I half blocked the entrance to the hotel lobby, and from that vantage point I met everyone who entered at least for the rest of the afternoon. From time to time Rogers (who was working as Ron Bennett's right arm on the convention committee) would be called away, and Dave and I would talk. He was astounded by my waterfall-shuffle, which is something any child in the States can do – but it made him think he was against some card-sharp. Each time the shuffle fell to me (which isn't often, as the cards remain ordered for a good while in a Brag game) I would riffle them together without thinking, and look up to see Dave staring wild-eyed at my hands. Then, of course, I'd do it two or three more times, telling him how I learned this at the age of twelve while dealing Blackjack on a Mississippi riverboat.

The afternoon had not worn long when the door opened to admit the man who taught me Brag, the chairman of the convention, the editor of *Skyrack*, and the 1958 TAFFman, all rolled up in the person of Ron Bennett. We had a soul-stirring re-union ("You've grown taller," he said, with one eyebrow raised, "and you've let your hair grow out from that beastly crew-cut you had in South Gate"), and exchanged information and goods. I had bought him a carton of cigarettes in New York, for which he paid me in sterling, and he owed me 28¢ from our last Brag experience together. He has a long memory, and paid me with a quarter and three pennies – American.

"What the devil use is this?" I stammered, holding four coins that could do me no earthly good for weeks. "This isn't negotiable – it's play

money!"

"We played for American coins," he pronounced, "and I owed you 28¢, not shillings and pence."

Ron then introduced me to several people, among whom were Mr. and Mrs. Tom Boardman, Harry Harrison, and Ajax Hoch – Americans all, under varying circumstances.

Tom Boardman, of Boardman Books, was Guest of Honor, and was an unusual combination: an American, living in England since the age of six months. He retains his citizenship, and accordingly has served in the U.S. Armed Forces – he's now an officer in the reserves, having to travel to an Army base in Europe every summer for two weeks active duty for training. He seemed both British and American, and it is probably this peculiar combo which had made Boardman Books so immensely popular in the fiction market in England. His attractive wife is also American.

Harry Harrison, of course, is the author of *Stainless Steel Rat* and the Hugo nominee, *Deathworld*; what I didn't know until we started talking after the Fancy Dress Party the next night was that he also used to be an active fan in the U.S., up to 1951 or '52; his conventioneering stopped just before mine began.

Ajax Hoch, of course, is a one-time Philadelphian I had met at the Pittsburgh convention eighteen months earlier. He is employed by R.C.A., and stationed currently at the U.S. base outside Harrogate – very convenient for the con. Bennett had already mentioned this base to me – it seems Liz Humbey teaches school to dependents there, and she had tried to get some root beer for me.

At some point in the afternoon, someone – possibly Pat Kearney of London – heard me complaining to Bennett about the 28¢ he had burdened me with, and purchased the coins for two-and-six, a tidy profit. Bennett howled at this and demanded them back, shouting that if he'd known the fool things were worth *money* he'd never have let me have them. I laughed, and at about this time dinner was served.

Meals at the West Park (part of the room charge) were pretty poor. Very flat, uninteresting food, often cold by the time it was served; we all sat down in the dining room, and were served the same meal, and of course this meant the tiny kitchen was strained to bursting to get it all cooked and served simultaneously. A very economical situation, I'm sure, but not inspiring, even to a crude meat-and-potatoes man like me. At one meal I was served a bun (or roll or biscuit or something – I can't remember what the British label is for what I call a bun) with some dried ground meat inside. I ate it with all the inattention it deserved, only to find after the

meal that I'd just consumed my first Yorkshire pudding.

Fortunately Valerie Jeeves fixed me a Yorkshire pudding less than a week later. Tasty, if done right and served fresh.

Friday evening was the opening session – introduction of celebrities including me because I had hitch-hiked around the globe, said chairman Bennett; of course he also did me the favor of introducing nearly everyone else in the room which was in the Clarendon Hotel, a short walk from the West Park; most of the program was there, as it was the slightly more attractive of the two hostelries.

We mingled in the meeting hall after the session, and I made good use of the introductions with a round of hand-shaking and good cheer. I met Sid Birchby, Ken Slater and Archie Mercer, among others that evening. Mercer has a furious brown beard which has gone untrimmed since he began it in June 1961; he seems to be a marvelously hirsute individual, because it is easily longer than Walter Breen's growth, untrimmed since before Mercer's began. This great brush obscuring half his face, and a large frame for an Englishman, give Archie the appearance of great strength and ferocity – but to my amazement he turned out a shy, modest individual with (he claimed) such a fear of the spotlight that my suggestion that he stand for TAFF was rejected out of hand. It's a shame, too – his timidity seems an obstacle, but he is certainly one of the most universally well-liked British fans, and has probably been of more service to American fandom in his quiet way than many more active souls.

Slater was the dickens of a surprise – since I recall him as Captain Kenneth F. Slater, RAF, from the letter-columns of *Startling* and *Thrilling Wonder*, he had assumed in my mind a striking military bearing. But the truth is out: Ken Slater is a ruddy-complexioned, stout, smiling man with a van Dyke, and a twinkle in his eye. Sid Birchby saved me from thinking all Anglofandom a set of contradictions by being an extremely normal fan – quiet, of moderate height and appearance, obviously soaking up the convention as a memorable experience.

About ten, the Clarendon quieted down to small conversation and I had had a few words with most everyone; Barber suggested Brag, and we took ourselves back to the lobby of the West Park, where we sat until I lost my limit about midnight. Jill Adams of London was most helpful in telling me how miserable a Brag player I am – if she hadn't kibitzed, I probably should have stayed on for a few more hours/shillings. I believe I lost a pound that night, at thruppenny Brag.

My room, number 2, was very comfortable despite the cold night, because Ella Parker had brought me an electric blanket. That's a bit of

hospitality I've never seen equalled on either side of the Atlantic – good old Ella had remembered the sun and warmth of California and reasoned that her comfort here had a good chance of being at least matched by my discomfort there. The blanket connected with the light-socket, my head connected with the pillow, and before I knew it Saturday was upon me.

I missed breakfast, of course, and expected to starve out the morning or find some coffee somewhere; surprised was not the word for me when Ella and Ethel Lindsay grabbed the landlord on his way through and demanded tea and rolls. He seemed startled that anyone should miss breakfast, but off he went and in jig time he was back with chow for an army. The three of us surrounded it.

That innkeeper was a fine fellow, by the way, name of Bert Harman, a personal friend of Bennett (in Harrogate nearly everyone knows Bennett); he broke his back making us happy for the weekend – for instance, besides the extra breakfasts he made up without charge, when Dave Barber and I wanted cards Friday he got out a deck and made us a present of them; further, he was always interested in how the convention was going, how I was enjoying England, and like that. More of him later in this chronicle, to be sure.

Some time before noon, I walked downtown with the Slater family – Ken and Mrs. S. and eight-year-old Suzy... They were seeing the city, I was looking for flashbulbs; as it developed, I saw some of the city and they helped me look. Harrogate is a spa, possessed of some 88 mineral springs (chalybeate and sulphur), with only light industry to surround the tourist-focused activities which keep it going. The Stray, a huge public park and garden protected by act of parliament from being built upon, fronts the main line of buildings and formed the scene for our walk to the business section, Suzy dancing ahead of us and swinging around tree-trunks. It's a small town of approximately 60,000, and combined crowded, old-fashioned buildings with more modern department stores ana restaurants. It sports a large J.J. Newberry's – incredibly American, with the prices all in sterling being the only difference – and a food I've never seen elsewhere: the Wimpy.

On my return to Harrogate after Sheffield, Bennett and I discussed this oddly-named hamburger.* Hamburgers are known in England and are nothing new – but recently an American-style chain of Wimpy stands has sprung up. I can't explain why I saw them only in Harrogate, either, as Ron assured me they would be in London. Perhaps I wasn't too interested in eating hamburgers while in England.

** Ron Ellik added the following comment at the end of the third instalment of his report: "Thanks to Archie Mercer for his note explaining that hamburgers in England were named Wimpy for J. Wellington Wimpy of the Popeye comic strip; as Ron Bennett was surprised when I mentioned the possibility, I had assumed that there was some other etymology." This wasn't included in the 1960 collected edition. [Ed.]*

Leaving the Slaters, I investigated several photographic supply shops, and found they had no Kodak flashbulbs of the H type at all; all I could find as substitute was an F series that worried me – they had glass bases, not metal, and I know too little about cameras to experiment. I decided to take available light only, and chance the results. As you know who saw my slides at LASFS and New York this summer, many of my indoor shots were overly red, but almost all were properly lighted because of the versatility of Al Lewis' camera.

Returning to the West Park, I reasoned from its emptiness that the programme must have started, at the Clarendon. I went to my room to drop some things I had picked up and to change film, and bumped into two gigantic young gentlemen, each well over 6' 3" tall, obviously looking for fans.

"The convention is starting in the Clarendon," I said, whereupon they looked at one another in surprise. Just as I pondered what I had said wrong, they sprang upon me – they had spotted my slovenly American accent instantly, and introduced themselves as James White and Ian McAulay of Irish Fandom. They were late arriving – their luggage had not come through on the plane with them, and they'd finally had to leave Walt Willis to wait for the next plane. We talked about travel and my visit that week to Belfast as we strolled over to the other hotel, and I was in the unusual position of introducing these seldom-visitors to England to the few fans I could name.

E.R. James spoke about then, beginning with a definition of science-fiction as stories with definite groundings in logical, scientific fact. He then went on to claim that the oriental mystics thought of science-fiction before anybody on our side of the planet, and he drew gasps of astonishment and delight by removing his jacket and all the change from his trousers, and standing on his head. My attention was diverted by someone speaking to me at this point, and I missed the connection between his gymnastics and the continuity of his talk – but it was as effective as lightning would have been in that crowded room.

Brian Aldiss introduced Tom Boardman with a very witty talk about

s-f, fandom, and pre-historical anecdotes. Boardman himself spoke quietly, as a man with little stage presence but a great deal to say. He explained the history of his publishing ventures and detailed at some length the picture of science-fiction publishing in the British Isles today; he was asked a number of sharp questions, and replied most honestly concerning the ethics of reprints and the frequent lack of bibliographic information given in paperback reprints.

I was supposed to talk about TAFF that afternoon, but things got a bit hectic in there when the speeches ran on towards dinner. Everybody wanted a break, and I was shuffled about to the next day, which didn't bother me a bit.

During the afternoon sessions I met J. Michael Rosenblum, one of the nearly pre-historic British fans, sustainer of Britain's famous *Futurian War Digest* throughout World War II when publishing fanzines was an almost impossible task. Mike is no longer the youngster described by Joe Gibson from a war-time meeting – he is now a robust, cheerful businessman with a quiet, clear speaking voice and an interest in almost everything.

More meetings: Brian Burgess of London, another towering giant, who reminded me of Bre'r Bar of the Joel C. Harris stories; Brian Aldiss, Hugo-award-winning Oxfordian who was helpful in my almost-meeting with Professor Tolkien; and – surprise – Eric and Beryl Bentcliffe, my hosts of two event-filled days earlier. Eric was wandering about with camera in hand, busy as a bird-dog and happy to be actifanning again; Beryl rolled up her sleeve to show me her vaccination had disappeared with hardly a scar, for all her irritation earlier in the week.

It was pleasant to meet the Cheltenham crowd, too – Eric Jones, with whom I used to correspond as early as 1952, and who turned out to be an alive, outgoing man and the sustaining prop of the Cheltenham SF Circle; Peter Mabey, the hard-working Librarian of the BSFA; and Audrey Eversfield, Bobby and Bill Gray, and John Humphries. They made sure I was thoroughly invited to visit Cheltenham (little did I know to what devious ends they worked – stay turned for the final installment wherein I reveal their plot) and somehow at about that point I found myself upstairs in the Clarendon losing a small fortune to John Roles and Ina Shorrock while Norman clucked at my eagerness for Brag. It wasn't until the next night (Sunday) that I began to win back my losings, a change at least partially due to that session in the Shorrocks' room, and Norman's comments about my playing. He has the most irritating manner of raising his eyebrows when I do something wrong – a sure-fire teaching system.

During the later afternoon I took advantage of a counter at one side of

the assembly hall downstairs to set up with my camera taking fairly candid shots of many people intent on the programme. These shots with late afternoon lighting directly on the subjects were among my best – particularly one of Mercer, full-face, looking rather startled as I call his name, snapping the shutter a breath later.

Eventually we West Park inhabitants wound our way back to dinner; by this time Walt Willis had arrived from the airport, and I was privileged to meet him ahead of most other American fans by four months. He was tired and rushed from the hassle at the airport, and I don't recall him saying anything deathless that afternoon; as he and the other Irish fen were at the West Park, I saw much of them for the next day and a half, but as I was to visit Belfast the next weekend we naturally spent much of our time meeting others. The Irish boys are nearly as unfamiliar with English fandom as I am because they have attended very few conventions: Walt has been to two conventions in America, for example, and only three in the U.K. John Berry is an even wilder example – he has never attended a British con, and the only ones who have met him are those fen who've visited Belfast; but he's an extreme, and Walt, James and Ian certainly knew their way about.

Saturday night was the fancy dress ball, highlighted by a number of events reminiscent of the Variety Show at the Pittsburgh Convention. To start it off somebody bought me a drink and dealt me three cards and I learned some more about Brag. That was broken up shortly, though, by Ella who wanted me to meet Terry Jeeves; Terry and Val had to shout at me by then, though, for the Gerry Pool trio had started up in a corner, and the party was really warming. They shouted hello and I shouted hello back, and they roared an invitation to visit them in Sheffield after the convention, and I cheerfully bellowed back acceptance, just as Bennett came up and informed me that the panel of judges was supposed to have an American on it to lower the standards of judging. I contemplated slugging him but as I set my glass down someone filled it; so I picked it up and elbowed my way through the dancing crowd to where my fellow Areopagi sat.

We had fun judging that group; the costumes were few, and Ethel Lindsay agreed with me later at Chicago that they were less spectacular than the American costume parties, but choosing from among them offered some interesting problems – for one thing, we had to invent categories as we went along. Mr. and Mrs. Boardman and Harry Harrison were the other judges – Bennett had stuffed it solidly with Americans. As the monsters and girls paraded before us we talked and judged intermittently, taking our

own time about it; and when we finally handed out the lavish prizes (Bennett out-did himself there, believe me) we pleased everyone and were well satisfied with our work.

And the noise level continued rising.

After that was the spa-water drinking contest. I don't know whether those waters were chalybeate or sulphur, but Norman Shorrock and I tasted a wee drop and agreed roundly that they'd have to catch us and throw us before *we'd* enter that contest. We watched and I worked the camera while Brian Jordan won by downing perhaps twelve ounces of the vile fluid, leaving his nearest competitor half a cup behind, spitting and grimacing horridly. Jordan was carried insensible from the room, uttering weird sounds; he should be available for comment within the sixmonth.

Right after the spa-water drinking contest I tried to have a word with Harry Harrison about American fandom; we actually did exchange a few phrases, at the top of our vocal ranges, but the music had started up again, and a conga line began. I was invited to join in right behind Ina Shorrock, and no gentleman could resist being in a conga line behind Ina Shorrock; the wildly swaying crowd of over two dozen fans wound its way about the hall, upsetting the remains of the Brag game and overturning tables, and suddenly the leader decided it was stuffy and we were bumping and singing through the lobby of the West Park, and I forget what happened between then and the party in the Parker-Lindsay room around two ayem.

I mentioned earlier that Liz Humbey had tried to get root beer at the U.S. base near Harrogate; she had failed. She was abject, she was frightened, she was mortified – but I forgave her, because I was getting a bit scared that everywhere I went my hosts would have heard of my taste in soft drinks and stocked up on root beer. Fortunately I was guaranteed that her strongest efforts weren't good enough – and, of course, that cinched it.

So I wandered into Ella and Ethel's room, and Ella leaped up, elbowed the Brag players out of the way, and opened one of two CASES of Hire's Root Beer, in tins.

I was astonished.

The explanation was simple enough: Ajax Hoch, that sneaky American stationed at the same base, had civilian canteen privileges; Liz, as a British national, had none. He and Ella had contrived to surprise me and hadn't thought to tell Ron or Liz. Ella watched in glee as I chugalugged a can of brown carbonate, and then announced that, finally, she would let someone else try some. The room full of adventurous souls didn't exactly crush me in their press to this strange drink – especially

when I told them it wasn't alcoholic – but my careful eye found about 50% favorable reaction among those who did try it. Ella, for instance, hates the stuff and insisted that I wasn't worth the trouble and should be made to drink all of it, right then; but Ian McAulay and George Locke rather liked it. Dave Barber says no respectable fan would drink anything like that and try to play Brag.

Sitting on a small segment of one of the beds, I spent much of the night talking to McAulay, James White, Ted Forsyth and Peter Mabey. Ian and James were curious about my mathematical abilities – Ian is a physicist from Trinity College in Dublin, and James adopts the pose of a curious observer. It seems that all of Irish fandom was interested in relativity, because Ian had tried to explain Einstein's concept of the four-dimensional universe to Berry and failed.

They told me Berry refused to accept relativity until Andy Young, far-wandering astronomer, had happened to be in Belfast and told him the universe was shaped like Marilyn Monroe. Berry immediately brightened towards this visualization, and decided to undertake a life-time study of relativity in order to find out what part of the universe he was standing on.

Walt claimed to have defeated Ian in a physical sciences type argument by deductive logic, and Ian turned to me for help. "You are a mathematician," he proclaimed, "and mathematics is the servant of the sciences."

"And the queen," I insisted. "Eric Temple Bell says it's the queen and servant of the sciences. Yes."

"Well, queen and servant, then, but you admit it's the servant. What I want you to do, servant, is help me get out of this pickle with Walter, who wants me to explain –" and so help me, gentle reader, that was at three in the ever-loving morning, and I can't for worlds recall the problem Walter and Ian were having.

All I recall clearly is that I considered the problem with a furious grimacing and wiping of my glasses, stared hard at Willis and harder at Ian, then turned quickly about and glowered at Liz Humbey, who cowered from me. Then I grimaced some more, muttered under my breath, and made my pronouncement.

"There is a simple, decisive answer to your dilemma," I said. "You stop relying on physics, and turn to logic and rhetoric, remembering that the true scientific method is eclectic and shuns no discipline where it may aid the advance of certain knowledge. And you tell him to define his terms." Having spoken, I had to sit still while Walt roared in anguish – it seems he hadn't really known what he was talking about, almost as much

as Ian hadn't known what he was talking about.

Somebody asked me if I was so smart, what was a Klein bottle, and I told him it was a bottle with its inside on the outside and both of them the same side, sitting on its top, and able to hold a liquid. That brought James White up short, and he stared incredulously while I attempted, a detailed hand-waving description which was interrupted by Willis bellowing "Define *your* terms!" every few minutes. Amazingly, I think White understood when I was through.

And then Dave Barber and Sid Birchby (I think) taught me nine-card Brag, which is in my estimation an extremely expensive game with no fun attached. It seems you get to pay sixpence for nine cards from which you assemble three Brag hands and you start betting to out-Brag your opponents' three hands. After I tired of giving Barber my shillings, I talked to Bill and Roberta (Wild) Gray about Arthur's grave at Glastonbury which unfortunately wasn't on my itinerary, and then I spent an extremely interesting hour or so talking the international fan scene over with Forsyth and the busiest fan librarian in the world, Peter Mabey.

The BSFA and the N3F started to get in communication with each other a couple of years ago, but I guess it just wasn't time for the idea then. At one point there was a new set of BSFA officers elected and no word about the N3F was passed on. We decided to talk about this with the entire BSFA slate the next morning after the Annual General Meeting, and at some time near dawn I found I wasn't looking at Mabey but at the inside of my eyelids. I sought my couch, grateful for the electric blanket.

Easter Sunday night have dawned gloriously in that northern city, but I didn't know about it; until vastly after the fact I lay insensible, and of course I missed breakfast again – but that didn't matter, because I was up just in time for lunch. Sunday was a muchly relaxed day, despite piling-up of programme items scheduled on from Saturday; the judging of the photo contest was over before I got to the Clarendon, and I was just in time to go back to the West Park for the BSFA Annual General Meeting.

During the AGM I sat still and listened – the concept of a national fan organization holding all its business during one annual meeting startled me, and I learned quite a bit; I was also entertained by the first competition for the next consite in the memory of British fandom. London had come to Harrogate expecting to take the 1963 con away with them – but that was because no one has ever wanted a convention in advance, and they figured to break a tradition.

Amazingly enough, Peterborough (it's 40 miles* north and slightly east of London) also wanted the convention – so they had to shake the dust

off the rule book and actually hold a vote. My notes say it was 39-25 for Peterborough, and at this writing Ken Slater, the 1963 Chairman, is well along with preparations for the convention, which will be held next Easter in the Hotel Bull.

** Actually 85 miles, as Rob Jackson pointed out. [Ed.]*

BSFA officers were elected, and Tom Boardman made a surprising offer to publish a special anthology professionally, proceeds to go to the Dr. Arthur R. Weir Memorial Fund to establish a Fan Recognition Award in Doc's name. There are some fourteen pounds (about $40) in the Fund now, and British fandom has high hopes for a fitting memorial to that surprising and well-remembered fan.

That afternoon I spoke to the new BSFA officers about the N3F/BSFA alliance, and we determined that first steps would be made with small-scale exchanges of publications and information about activities sponsored by the groups. Afterwards, I set up in the assembly hall of the Clarendon again, fixing myself to a doorway near Slater as he conducted a scientifictional quiz game, bringing fan after fan into the range of my camera.

When the game was over, Mike Rosenblum brought out a great store of ancient fanzines and photographs, and talked for all too brief a time about Britain's past in the s-f fan field. He went back to pre-1937 fan days, covering the Leeds SFL Chapter and the first convention in England, the SFA and the old BSFS*, and a hatful of other things of intense interest to natives and visitors alike; perhaps it was the tight packing of the crowd, perhaps it was that British fans know each other so well, but I'm sure Mike's talk would not have held a U.S. assembly as well. The lot in the Clarendon was totally attentive, intent on the reminiscences of one man; there are too many strangers at American cons, and too many differing types of fans.

** Hugo Gernsback's Science Fiction League, whose Leeds chapter was formed in 1935; the early (1937-1939) UK Science-Fiction Association; and (according to fan historian Rob Hansen) a likely typo for BFS, the wartime British Fantasy Society of which Mike Rosenblun was Director. [Ed.]*

In the evening Eric Bentcliffe and I entertained the (seemingly) entire mass of attendees with a talk about TAFF, its future and its problems. We had quasi-rehearsed this at Eric's home a few days before, and it went off like clockwork, corny jokes and all. In fact, I daresay I have never played to a better audience. One of the most interesting outcomes of this talk was

a short list of American fans whom the British would like to see nominated for TAFF – it amounts to a mandate.

Later a mob filled the West Park assembly room (where the Fancy Dress Ball had been held) to watch a Guinness movie, *A Matter of Life and Death*.* Then we all charged over to the Clarendon for a wine-and-cheese party, brightened considerably by some of the hoariest old silent pictures I have ever seen – Tarzan from before Weissmuller, and Popeye cartoons like you have never imagined.

** Not in fact an Alec Guinness movie (David Niven is the star), but there may be some forgotten fannish in-joke here. [Ed.]*

When the cheese and movies ran out, I found myself in a flying wedge headed for the lobby of the West Park and you guessed it.

That game was an extraordinary event in itself; we must have settled down around midnight, when someone asked us if we intended to stop early or late. We replied that the cards would stop being dealt when the sun's first rays illumined the lobby; and we paid no heed to cries that the lobby opened westward.

During the night, at least the following people sat in from time to time: Norman Shorrock, Ron Bennett, Liz Humbey, Phil Rogers, Sid Birchby, Dave Barber, Pat Kearney, Jill Adams and myself. I don't believe more than six of us were at the table at any one time; if anyone else joined, he was there for only a brief span.

By this time I had gotten the hang of the game – you don't play your cards, you play your opponents'; I was winning fairly regularly, and if Norman had thought I was keen the day before, he was goggle-eyed at my enthusiasm for the game when I began raking in chips – *his* chips. He played casually, as always, and won heavily from Bennett on some of the most fantastic hands I've seen: hands where the bet went up to a pound, where pots often totalled more than five pounds, and where tension all around the table was incredible. I learned how to be out-Bragged, and I learned how to laugh insanely at my cards no matter what; but mostly I learned how to rake in Norman's chips.

By the way, I am deliberately not describing Bennett's style of play. Anyone who has engaged in any game of skill or chance with him will appreciate the problem – and you who have not would doubt the most conservative description. Let it be said merely and stand as inadequate but all stencil can convey that he is the most disconcerting opponent possible, and also a subtly skillful player; whenever I thought I had the game cold, Ron would completely upset me in my complacence and while doing so

would take a big pot.

At something like two o'clock Sid Birchby sat down with us, and by three or so he conceived the idea that nearly destroyed the West Park Hotel – he suggested coffee.

"But there'll be no hot water at this hour," muttered Norman, much more interested in cards than coffee.

"They have a geyser," insisted Bennett, "and it's worked just as one I have at home." And you know, it didn't register that he had said "geezer" instead of "guyzer" – the same pronunciation I had noticed when I had trouble understanding how Mrs. Bentcliffe procured hot water. No, I just wrote it off to tapping the heat of the aforementioned Harrogate mineral springs – the alert reader will observe that I am a peculiarly unscientific sort.

So Birchby and Bennett trundled out to Birchby's auto and retrieved his camping equipment, which just happened to contain some essence of coffee (a romantic name for instant coffee – it's what the British call it) and they set up in the kitchen to serve the rest of us. Bennett turned the geyser to "fill" and went about getting tea and tea-things out of the cupboard; and, when the clear-plastic water-container was rising to full, he reached up –

And turned the knob the wrong way.

It continued to fill, and he turned the knob more violently the wrong way, letting out a squeal while Birchby laughed hysterically, insisting that it was identical to one Ron had at home. At this point the card-players came charging in to the rescue, to find Birchby doubled up in laughter and Bennett struggling with the infernal geyser, which was letting huge gouts of warm water all over him and the kitchen.

Norman got the fool thing turned off, and Liz helped Ron to a chair, while the remainder of us looked for pans and cloths with which to mop up. All the time Bennett was swearing at the geyser and laughing alternately, and the situation was getting funnier and funnier, as such things do at three ayem. Liz was trying to calm Ron a bit, but she kept bursting into gales of laughter; it was all anyone could do to mop up.

In this incident I learned the meaning of geyser – it's a small, wall-mounted water heater, gas-operated. This was what had been on the wall above the sink at the Bentcliffe home, but it was metal and I didn't understand its use; it must have held at least three imperial quarts, while the West Park's geyser held perhaps one, to be used for single pots of tea or to infuriate Ron Bennett.

And so we mopped up, and Norman started the just-full geyser

heating, and Liz helped Sid fix tea and coffee. As I was carrying my fourth tin of water from the room, I noticed the water beginning to bubble, and pointed it out to Ron.

"Don't pay any attention to the dirty little thing," he snapped. "You have to wait until that little red light goes out." And, since he has one just like it at home, I took his word for it. On my next trip with a tin of water, as we were getting the last of it off the floor, I mentioned to Ron that the water was coming to a gentle, rolling boil.

"When that light goes off," he said, "the water is ready. It has a thermostat which clicks the light off at just the right time." He was still shaking from his hysterics about shutting the thing off, so I made another trip. As I re-entered the kitchen, I saw steam rising from the far wall and boiling water spurting out the top of the geyser; nobody else was paying it any attention. "Ron!" I shouted, "the geyser is boiling]"

He looked at me as if I had not a brain left, "That red light –" he began, and turned to look at it. "Oh, my ghod!" he screamed, suddenly hysterical again, "that light must mean it's *finished* heating!" And with a cry of "But I have one like it at home!" he leaped across Dave Barber and grappled once more with it – only this time every control was being doused with scalding water, and it took a seeming eternity to get it under control.

He had no help this time, because one and all we stood gasping for breath, holding our aching ribs and nearly collapsing with laughter. And of course we had to mop up again, but Bennett and I had to go to the lavatory about this time. When we returned, nearly recovered, the group was put into fresh paroxysms of hilarity by Sid Birchby, who unthinkingly picked up an unusual spoon, with half the bowl missing for some reason, and attempted to spoon instant coffee with it. He stood there inanely with coffee spilling out of his utensil, while we stared, and pointed, and laughed.

From then on to dawn, someone might say spoon, or water, or geyser, or "I have one just like it at home," to find gales of laughter.

At dawn the Irish boys descended from a party in Ella and Ethel's room which had lasted the night, and we told them the story. One by one British fandom filed downstairs then, as the day brightened and sobriety returned to our all-night Brag game. The Slaters set up their stand for Peterborough on the card table, and someone suggested breakfast. It was Monday, and the night was over.

After breakfast my main task was co-ordinating with the Jeeves family, with whom I was to travel to Sheffield that morning. This may

sound easy, but I had to keep moving to keep awake once I'd eaten, and I did it by walking from one of the two hotels to another all morning.

Early off, Suzy Slater came into the West Park with a popsicle; "penny ice", I think she called it. It was a muggy, hot day, and it seemed that all fandom turned on that pretty child to rob her of her tiny, but cold, popsicle. She looked frightened for a minute, then in a very businesslike way she took sixpences from everyone and went out to get more. I have a picture of Jimmy Groves very soberly working at a "penny ice" (at sixpence?), with the red coloring that many of my photos took when indoors – he looks preposterous.

And I said goodbye to one and all – to the German fans, the Cheltenham fans, the Irish, the London, the Scot fans – and Terry, Val and Sandra Jeeves and I headed south to Sheffield. The convention was over.

-oOo-

The ride from Harrogate to Sheffield after the British Convention is embarrassing to remember – Terry Jeeves was at the wheel, with Valerie keeping their babe-in-arms Sandra amused, and yours truly was sound asleep in the rear seat except for a few glimpses of scenery and a stop for some incredibly black British coffee. Some things crept through that I remember – the Yorkshire countryside, for instance, is prettier from the road than it was two days later from the railroad. And I remember Valerie trying to talk Terry into driving south by way of York, and Terry insisting that that wasn't south at all, but east.

"He can't go back to the States without seeing York," she kept saying. And all the time I was with them she was pushing York, which I gather is a great town, with a fabulous museum of Yorkshire history – but it was out of the way. We went south by way of Bradford, down to Sheffield on the Don, a growing, complex city.

London is big and complex, but Sheffield is small enough to walk about and see myriads of conflicting elements side by side. The center is a combination of Victorian and modern architecture – the town hall, where municipal officers sit, is straight out of the last century, while right next to it is the 1932 city hall, used for meetings and concerts, and, as you see nearly everywhere in England, there are air-raid ravaged buildings, showing their reconstruction in two shades of brick. Terry, Val and I spent Easter Monday and Tuesday in and around Sheffield, and that's a great way to recuperate from a convention.

Monday we met the relatives who had sat with the Jeeves children not able to go to the Harrogate convention – only Sandra Jeeves was able to go. That afternoon Terry and I walked through the Botanical Gardens

which stretch from behind the Jeeves home for a mile or more in a beautifully landscaped expanse of lawn, ancient trees, and statuary. I wished then for a daylight filter for the telephoto lens, because the little 35 mm. lens on Al's camera is very poor for distance. It's fine for con-going, because it'll fit a room-full of people into one shot; and I'd only brought the 135 mm. lens for portraits.... But it was a field-day anyway, and my slides of those gardens are among my best non-fan exposures.

If you see any blackmail shots titled "The Squirrel Caged" from Jeeves, be warned now that I didn't really get thrown in jail on my British trip – but when we walked into the aviary in the Botanical Gardens, the birdsmith in charge watched me trying to photograph a cockatiel – and asked me if I would like to try it from inside! I spent several minutes inside the cage, snapping two ivory cockatiels and a giant red parrot, while Terry, with black and white film, stood outside photographing me.

The one sad shot of the day was a group of black, twisted trees that Terry calls "The Enchanted Forest". I started toward the group for a close shot, but Terry caught my arm, looking cautiously about. "They machine-gun you for walking on the sward," he said; so I got a hundred-foot shot, and shouldn't've.

That was the day Valerie cooked Yorkshire puddings, as they should be. While we ate she apologized for the fine, summery weather that seemed to bless my trip – Eastertide in England is usually cold, and always wet. "If you can cook these little pastries," she said, "and chill them when done by setting a plate of them on a dish on the snow out the window-sill, they stiffen just at the right time and are much lighter." Comparing hers with the botched biscuits at the Harrogate con, I decided these more than met snuff.

After supper we cut a tape to Betty Kujawa. Her most recent tape to Terry told of the Kujawas' fabulous winter vacation, and was so entertaining that we decided to entertain her in return – but you wouldn't expect us to do it straight, would you?

"Hello, Terry," I said into the microphone, "this is Ron Ellik, taping to you from sunny southern California; thanks for your latest," etc., etc., for a few impromptu minutes. Then, of course, Terry got on the mike, and Val chimed in, and we told her about the con and some of the weird things I've recounted in the previous pages. It was fun, because I didn't meet Betty for the first time until six months later, in Chicago – when, of course, she told me about getting a tape from Terry with me on it, and how she believed everything up until I said I was recording at the bottom of the Pacific, holding my breath.

Terry showed me some of his home-movies – mostly fan-stuff from previous conventions, because he has a great distaste for people who show all their home-movies whenever they have a captive audience; but Val made sure I saw films of York. “Since you’re going back to Harrogate anyway, you really ought to schedule in the side-trip,” she insisted – but I politely assured her that York so attracted me I couldn’t spend less than a week there, and I didn’t have the week to spend. With much joking about the irresistible lure of York, we went in the living room to peruse some really lucrative fanac – the Soggy cartoons that Terry has sold to movie-making magazines, tape-recording magazines, and hi-fi magazines. It seems he does pen-ink cartoons springing from his hobbies, sends them off unsolicited, gets pounds sterling in return, and is now doing it regularly. His side income now must be reported to the Crown for tax purposes, and he’s staff contributor for a taping mag, with capsule biographies among the scrapbook clippings from his publishers’ pages.

And at some point in the evening I could sit up no longer; the convention was long toasted to quietude, but its effects were on all of us, and we slept on to late the next morning. The Jeeveses are teachers, and Easter vacation in England is three weeks – they were glad there was no need to return to work, because Harrogate had been as busy a convention after programme hours as it was during, with no scheduled sleep time.

Tuesday we visited Chatsworth House, near Sheffield, a manor and gardens eleven miles in circumference, with statuary by Paxton, and unbelievable waterfalls and fountains. We spent the afternoon on a leisurely walk through the old place, unfortunately not on a day when we could tour the house itself – from the film I shot and the duration of our walk, I’d think the gardens alone worth an afternoon’s excursion. Someday I’ll make it on a day the house is open; but I’ll take along extra film and a telephoto lens, if only for the panorama of the stepped waterfall.

The sun went down as we left Chatsworth to head back to Sheffield for supper and letter-writing. Not only did I have Stateside obligations to dispose of, there was also the letter to Professor Tolkien. After a talk with Brian Aldiss at the con I’d made up my mind to write and ask for a few moments in which he might autograph my copies of his trilogy, giving Ella Parker’s West Kilburn address as a return, for that’s where I’d be in a week.

It seems a mundane thing, but not a small thing, that Val did a tub of laundry for me Tuesday, so that I entered the second half of my travels with a suitcase full of clean clothes. You can offer no finer hospitality to far-travelling fans, by my lights – it underlines what food or shelter you

may offer: it's something extra that every TAFF host would do well to include when he's thinking of parties, tours and other items to make his guest welcome.

-oOo-

Wednesday morning bright and early the Jeeves entourage took me to the station, to ship me back to Harrogate (by way of Bradford, unfortunately, not York), heavier by the Jeeves art that was on display at Chicago and completely rested. The trip was uninteresting, enlightened only by a forced change of lines (and stations) in Bradford, through arriving a few minutes late for my connection. My thoughts on British railroads got blacker and blacker as I scrambled across downtown Bradford to the other station.

Travelogues won't interest you, but believe it or not it was the mundane side of colorful Harrogate that I saw for the next two days. You might enjoy picturing Ron Bennett, Liz Humbey and me going through the city by night and day, hamburgering at a Wimpy stand, and currying at a Pakistani restaurant; Ron and I touched down at the several bookstores, and Wednesday night the three of us had a side-splitting session at a British movie – the movie wasn't that good, but we could hardly keep a sober mien during the frightfully bad comedy and amateur Guinnessing that was going on. And, of course, we sat up to all hours playing Brag.

Thursday Ron ambled around a corner and down a side-street with me, and stopped in front of a dingy store. "This is a notable bookstore," he said. "It doesn't sell books."

"Yes." I agreed, "that sounds remarkable enough. It's full of books, you know." And in point of fact, it *was* full of books. Books seemed to leak from.it. Behind the double bay-window front you were met with shelves and shelves of books, between which you could see into the store itself – where there were books piled on the floor, stack-and-stack, piled at least man-high and often all the way to the ceiling.

"Suppose you wanted that book," said Bennett, pointing to a random book on a shelf up against the window. "How would you go about getting it?"

"Harrumph," I said, weighing the situation, and wishing I could simply ask him to define his terms or something. "I would, ah, enter that door, there, and walk about, so, to behind that bookcase, and –"

"But you see, you couldn't do that. That door is locked, and the man who owns and operates this shop comes into the city perhaps once a week, at irregular times, to open it. You would have to be here when he was, and even then, when you stepped in the door, you would find *books*. There is room for a man to stand, inside that door; to stand and reach up, and

remove an armload of books. If you wanted to get into that store, let alone all the way to here to get that book, you would...."

"Ron," I exploded, staring with new insight into the crowded shop and at its dusty contents. "Do you mean I would have to excavate all the way around until I reached this treasure?" The book in question, of course, was a history of some dry decade, or perhaps a third form arithmetic primer.

"Not only that, but as there are ordinances on littering you'd have to arrange for removal of all the books as you burrowed through – you couldn't have them on the streets, and in the last consideration, I'm sure that it would be physically impossible to obtain that book. A man would starve or expire from removing so many books. If you really can't live without that book, you'd do better to sit here and buy the books as the proprietor makes them available, hoping he would someday get to your prize and put it up for sale. But generally speaking, he doesn't sell books, and the shelf or so he brings down each time isn't of great commercial value."

We stood and stared at the bookstore that doesn't sell books, and we walked on to one that does – that did, in fact, sell me a copy of T.H. White's *The Goshawk*. The owner was garrulous and enjoyed showing his books and talking about them; while we stood in his garret looking at boxed editions we talked about the strange bookstore a few blocks away.

"I'm afraid of Mr. ——," he said, naming the curious proprietor of that stuffed store. "I'm afraid that someday Mrs. —— is going to come to town, and come to me, and tell me of his death. She is going to ask me to inventory those books, and make an offer. I'm afraid of that."

Bennett and I looked at each other, and I thought about the store and what it would be like to inventory that collection. "Surely," I said, "you'd stand a good chance of making money."

"No, I'd not make much money. I'd have to find the volume of the lot, and make her an offer just under the price I'd get for that much pulp paper. The sorting would be more work than a shilling average per book would be worth. But that single store isn't all I'm afraid of – you see, somewhere near Harrogate he has three warehouses full of books, just like that store."

I expressed a degree of astonishment.

"Yes, but it's true; but the worst part of all this is that I ate dinner with Mr. and Mrs. – one evening last year, and he told me they have lost the address of one of those warehouses." And Ron and I left about then, marvelling at the concept of a rogue warehouse somewhere near

Harrogate, bulging with old and dusty volumes – lost.

And we walked back across the Stray to where Liz was preparing steak kosher-style. (Kosher steak is soaked and salted to drain the blood completely, and then fried to a fare-thee-well – it's not much as steak when you're used to goi beefsteak done medium-rare, but considered as a food apart, it's pretty fine work.) And we played Brag again, until two and three ayem, and I continued the winning streak that had begun at the convention, that riotous last night. I won enough from Shorrock the last night of the con, plus what I won from Ron during the post-con stay, to bring me even with my previous losses. A very enjoyable pastime, Brag.

Liz, of course, was the damper on the Brag parties, because she had to go to work each day. Ron, like Val and Terry Jeeves, teaches school and has three weeks Easter vacation; Liz works at the US base near Harrogate, teaching English to dependents of servicemen, and gets only US-type vacations. Ron and I sat up to all hours talking and tending to miscellany, but we could only really play Brag when Liz was around. One night of hilarious card-playing terminated with me asking them to pose for pictures – Bennett was outraged that I wanted him to pose for a ridiculous photograph at such an unearthly hour, so he stood with a sign saying, "O.K., I'LL PLAY YOUR SILLY ONE A.M. GAME." and Liz wore one of the wildest hats I've ever seen. Appropriately zany pictures of a zany duo.

During that stay, too, we published the convention issue of *Skyrack*, which purported to be the 99th issue of *Fanac*, but was really a detailed report by Bennett, with only the cover page by me; and we, Ron and I, had long talks about fans *we* both knew, in England and America. We talked a lot those two days, not having talked since 1958, and I think there have been few gab-fests that enjoyable.

Thursday night when we finally gave up the ghost over at Cold Bath Road, we walked back to the West Park, where I was staying but not eating. Bert Harman, the innkeeper, had given me a key so I could go and come at will, and we entered quietly to raid the icebox. He caught us – from the geyser episode in my convention report you can imagine that the kitchen was available to guests at odd hours – and instead of letting us make tea and snitch cookies to go with, he broke open three bottles of grog, and we settled into the lobby for another hour. It was nearly dawn when Ron left and I went upstairs, and of course I didn't rise until nearly noon.

Bert made sure I had eaten, and I walked to Bennett's; we made our way to the station, and with much forward-looking to London in '65, when

I might perhaps visit Harrogate again, Bennett saw me off to Liverpool, by way of Leeds and many hours of railroad.

-oOo-

As usual, I employed the train ride to clean my camera lenses and to sleep. British railroads have a uniformly dismal view, consisting of the backs of tenement districts, rundown fields, and sludgy rivers.

From the same station where I had first come to Liverpool a week and a day earlier, and again departed with the LiG to the con, I found my way to John Roles's bookstall and spent perhaps half an hour with him; he asked me if I was so keen on books that I spent much of my British vacation puzzling through musty piles of the things, as I was even then doing in his shop, what was I looking for? I couldn't answer, of course – I named some authors that attracted me, but explained that I didn't even really expect to find a copy of *Bab Ballads* by Gilbert – I just like to look at books and buy the occasional one that attracts my eye. After bookhounding through Liverpool, Harrogate, Belfast and London, I mailed only a dozen books to the States before leaving.

But of course John went scurrying into a dark corner of a dark room, and triumphantly rose with the book of Gilbert poems, from the bottom of a man-high stack of such things. We talked about Gilbert and Sullivan, and Tolkien, and Jim Cawthorn's superb Tolkien illustrations, and in the end I decided to hold out for more of the Ballads than the fifty in that volume; we put it down and went up to Norman Shorrock's stamp and coin store, to gather Norman and go to dinner.

While we were sitting in the stamp shop talking about my trip since seeing them last, I told them the story of the remarkable book store.

But I should have known they'd have one to top it. The two of them are apt to close up shop and spend days at auctions or touring bookstores in the North Country, and out of this came an anecdote which beat the Harrogate bookstore (of which Roles had casually heard) all hollow.

It seems there is a man living in a house near Liverpool who has books. He has generations of books, books throughout the house. The stairs are three-deep in books, the floors are covered with them, and to sit or stand anywhere you have to move books aside. John has been in this house – he found a back room with a corridor through which children were used to run, which was floored with pulp paper – books were there, so old and so pressed and mauled by youthful play that they were unrecognizable. Books in the kitchen, books in the upper rooms, books, books, books. The excavation of this motley pile of paper would be, as with the Harrogate establishment, not worth it – John has turned down the offer because he

couldn't stand to spend weeks picking up one tome after another and throwing 90% of them into a pulp-paper truck.

The two of them treated me royally that evening; we hit a restaurant of fine quality where service was the keynote, and I was so stuffed when they stopped serving cheeses and coffee after a meal of several courses that we staidly strolled to the boat to Belfast, instead of skipping down the street as Norm and I had done the previous week. At eight p.m. I said a hearty thank-you for the meal, regretting I hadn't seen Ina or Eddie Jones or the others on my return to their city, and said goodbye to the Liver bird and the north of England. I was consigned to the steamer until the next morning, and spent the latening eve writing postcards and letters home, and packaging film to be shipped to Jon Anderson. At a modest hour I grew tired of the drawing-room atmosphere in the drawing-room, and the icy Irish Sea air on deck, and went off to my tiny billet amidships where I slept until just dawn, when the steward knocked, presented me with black, black coffee and hardtack for breakfast, and I rose to meet Ireland.

-oOo-

A lot happened in Belfast, more perhaps than anywhere else on my trip. It began the minute I set foot on the island, when I failed to recognize Bob Shaw. I knew Willis – I had seen him as recently as Monday morning – but I had met Bob and Sadie in Los Angeles in 1953, when I took Bob over to Forry Ackerman's for an evening of talk and touring the Ackermansion. In 1962 Bob was heavier, and Walt had to introduce us over again.

They took me to Oblique House that Saturday morning, and I drank coffee and met Madeleine, and Carol, and Brian, and discovered that seven tins of the Harrogate root beer had been smuggled past customs back to keep me in the stuff on my trip. Madeleine solemnly informed me that they were mine to drink while there, and I would please get on with it, as she wanted a wee sip from one. But you can't drink that stuff in the morning, I said, and it waited.

James White, Ian McAulay, Walter and I went on a tour of the south of Belfast, down to a prehistoric cairn preserved by royal edict as a monument of the Picts or Gaels or something – a great stone slab, set on two others, a piece of engineering that would have taken many men to effect, but might, just might, have been done in prehistoric times without wheels or pulleys or like that. We poked around at it and Walt explained the royal philosophy of monuments – you preserve them so that people will be able to visit and take away a rock or chipping or something, and eventually they'll be out of the way. This one was taking up good grazing

area, but the future looked cheery, as someone was always taking away a bit of it.

Further south we came to Scrabo Tower, a medieval keep of colorful design, open to the public (if you want to walk the endless circular stairs), wherein tea and crumpets are served for a small fee. Ian and I, scientists both, measured the height of the tower by dropping rocks over and timing them. I think we calculated 360 feet, listening to the click of the rock as it hit, and the concierge told us it was 385 feet high. Two of my finest photographs were taken from the base of Scrabo, one with, and one without, the Irish boys in the picture, dwarfed by the pinnacle. It was a very clear, calm day, and I've never read a lightmeter more accurately.

That morning the three Wheels of IF began a pun-session which didn't end while I was there – if it ever ends. It had been going on for a few miles of the drive when Walter asked me if I'd caught that last line.

Now, drives invariably put me to sleep, and of course I was finishing the first two weeks of constant vacation, so I had been a bit out of things anyway; but I had to admit that that wasn't the entire problem. "I haven't understood six words since we started this drive," I said. "I'm sorry, but you folk talk too fast."

They went over the recent exchanges for my benefit – unfortunately, all is now lost to memory – and by the end of the morning I was understanding Irish as she is spoke, through exposure and because my drowsiness left. Ian was easiest to understand – people sometimes accuse him of being American, in fact, while he is actually from Dublin.

On our way back to Belfast we stopped at a pub and Ian and I imbibed some Irish-variety stout while James and Walter talked about teetotalism and I smirked into my glass about my reputation for teetotaling Stateside. It had been a liquid trip to then – little did I know as I sat in an Irish pub that when I returned to California I would face the news that I had drunk Eddie Jones under the table in Liverpool and wenched and wined my way across the British Isles; but we swilled away at that innocent malt liquor, and wound our way to the home of George All The Way Charters.

We spent a couple of hours at George's, talking and taking tea, and seeing his collection of brown-paper-wrapped magazines – a croggling thought, but one that might appeal to Steve Schultheis or Doc Barrett. I got some pictures of the four Irish fans under ideal conditions there – proper exposure, soft lighting, etc. By this time I was getting good shots almost all the time – little did I know that only my available daylight shots would be colored properly, and that fully a third of my frames were shot in

tungsten light and were off to the red.

Later we drove back to Oblique House, to a fine supper from the talented stove of Madeleine Willis, and a brief tour of the Fan-Attic on the fourth level. Ghoodminton was obsoleted some time ago by Scrabble as an indoor sport (it's less strenuous, and you can take tea while playing), but I saw the scene of those Ilidian tourneys, and Willis's Honorary Swamp Crittur certificate, etc.

After supper we went to the Shaw home for talk, with the Willises, James, Ian and George Charters. The Shaw child I recall as being in arms at the Solacon was present as a much larger individual, and Sadie was unquestionably a diligent hostess, despite an imminent addition to the family. The ladies of Irish fandom produced a superb tea that evening, much more than I could eat. Fortunately I had the assistance of the almost legendary appetites of the male Belfans to almost casually dispose of lumberjack-sized portions.

It was that evening I noticed that my British hostesses were trying to overfeed me. It was fine fare, but all at once I realized that from Eric Bentcliffe's mother to Madeleine and Sadie, not one female had let me in her home without trying to stuff me to the gills. It seems it's hospitality to be expected in England – but it's the sort of thing that kept me eternally gosh-wow about the trip.

I showed my slides again, the slides I had brought from Al Lewis's collection of American fan faces – and the slides of Joni Cornell, too. Bob and George hadn't seen them before, but I noticed they weren't the only ones using the viewer. For some reason Ian, James and Walter were renewing their memories of American fans – and once again it was obvious that if Joni were to stand for TAFF, she'd carry every male vote in the United Kingdom.

Sunday morning early, we were off to Giant's Causeway. The Willises and I in their Minor, with the Shaws and Ian in another car, drove north from town around Belfast Lough along the seacoast of Antrim County, by way of Glenarm and Ballycastle, to the spectacular hexagonal rocks of Giant's Causeway.

We parked a respectable distance from the phenomenon, and walked down a long path and over a beach to get to it. Basalt rock stands in columns, some two feet in diameter, closely packed and roughly hexagonal in cross section. The natives attribute it to a race of giants who built it as a pathway to Staffa, island of Fingal's Cave, where similar columns occur. You can get good color photos of the Causeway anywhere – but I have a slide taken with my back to the sea, showing the rocks descending from

my pinnacle position just at the extremity, with Bob Shaw and Ian McAulay about to push me off into the water.

After our brisk hike down and back, we were quite ready for lunch. It was an amazingly clear day (Ian kept apologizing for the scudding clouds on the horizon, saying he felt bad about my visit being ruined by bad weather; Madeleine tried to keep from laughing and told me confidentially that Easter is usually heavily overcast and wet), and we sprawled at our leisure on the sward of Dunluce Castle.

The Willises like to show Dunluce to visitors – it's a long drive from Belfast, but well worth it. It is actually the ruins of a medieval stone castle, with tourneying green, banquet hall, donjon and balustrades clearly distinguishable. It's separated from the mainland by a tiny creek, and a pittance of two or three shillings gave us the grounds for the entire afternoon.

Madeleine and Sadie broke out picnic baskets enough to feed a small army, and tea and root beer, and we spread out over the lawn and basked in the sunlight as if born to the manor.

That evening we spent at the home of John and Diane Berry, where I said hello again to John, last seen at the Detroit convention in 1959 – and he told me to leave.

It happened as you would imagine – Shaw had let the word out about those pictures of Joni Cornell in my collection of slides. Before Ian, the Willises and I arrived. Bob and John were watching a ballet by a very undressed young lady (John maintains a high cultural level in that home). "That girl," said Bob, wiping his breath off the televid screen, "is wearing a bit more clothing than the girl in Ron Ellik's photos," and on the spot John Berry decided he must see my slides. When we knocked at the door, he opened it and admitted the Willises and Dr. McAulay, and beamed jovially at me.

"Ron!" he said, "good to see you again, man. Have you your slides?"

At last I stopped laughing enough to tell him that I'd forgotten them at 170 Upper Newtownards, and with a frightful visage he insisted that I fetch them. Since only I knew where they were, Ian drove me back (it is perhaps a five minute drive – ten minutes with anyone besides Ian at the wheel), and I got an entirely different welcome on returning.

And you know, John was the only male there who hadn't seen the slides, but for some reason Walter, Bob and Ian felt they ought to take one more look.

We had no scrabble board with us, but word games are a rage in Irish fandom, and as a good substitute we used part of the evening with

GHOST. John and Diane and I had the advantage that the others there were long-time co-combatants, and were out to get each other. I forget how the game ended, but I think Diane and I had the lowest scores; it's hard to remember the scores, because the confounded words that kept building in the game were hilarious.

Diane spread another tea for us, and I began to wonder if it were the hard work of feeding the Irish Fans that keeps the Irish Fannes in such excellent shape. All three (excepting Sadie's temporary stoutness, which hardly disguised a naturally good figure) are graceful and slim – and they certainly have a happy and well-fed collection of husbands.

Monday was my day in the bazaars. I took the Upper Newtownards bus into the city of Belfast late in the morning to look around and get a jutting nail in my shoe repaired, and found the place even more interesting than Liverpool had been. I walked around in the tremendous quayages and shipbuilding areas that have made Belfast famous, and through the business districts that keep it ahead in the linen and damask markets. In looking for bookstalls I was directed to a great open area which has been set aside for sellers of all manner of goods, and covered over with tenting – it has a name, like Farmer's Market in L.A., but I don't remember it.

More-or-less permanent stores have grown within this fair over the years, and you can probably subsist for weeks without leaving its shelter. A leprechaun fixed my shoe, and I spent two hours hopelessly lost in miles of books and maps – which seems rather contradictory in memory, because I don't remember buying a single book in Ireland.

Belfast, full of beautiful churches and public buildings side to side with modern, ultra-American department stores, and miles of old, established shops, is on the list of cities I would like to wander for days. I was late for tea.

Ian, Walter, Madeleine and I played Scrabble on the lawn in front of Oblique House that afternoon, and I lost ignominiously. They have their own rules – that is, anything in the dictionary is a word. John Berry wrote an article about Scrabble that should have warned me – but you just can't be warned enough to play on equal terms there.

It wasn't so bad when they pulled ST as a word (it appears in their dictionary, the one with typeface that looks so much like the old *Slant* fonts) but then they started using foreign words, like DE.

"DE isn't English," I yelped, but they showed me ESPRIT DE CORPS in the dictionary as a non-punctuated English word.

"If we could get all of that on a single Scrabble word, it would count – and DE appears in it as a single word, so it's a word that appears in the

dictionary," said Walter.

"Quot erat demonstratum," quipped Ian.

"Reductio ad absurdum," I mumbled back, and went on to a smashing loss. I only gained my own back when Ian introduced me to "Mischmasch," a game invented (or at least formulated in writing) by Lewis Carroll in 1882; he asked me if I could discover a word with SKS appearing in it.

"ASKS," I snapped back.

"No, no – I mean, yes, that's a fair answer, but – well, dammit, try OSKS. Can you think of a word with OSKS in it?"

"KIOSKS," I said instantly. "That's a snap."

As I said earlier, word games are a rage in North Ireland, so naturally I didn't come off 100% ahead – Walt Willis asked me for a word with RWH in it. I finally had to give up – so he told me about NARWHAL.

And that evening Walter drove me to the air terminus for the last leg of my journeys – to London for the rest of the week. While waiting for the bus to take me to Belfast Airport (at Nutt's Corner, behind the hills), he and I sat in the depot and talked about TAFF and traveling and fans. From this I conceived an idea for an article I intend to write some day, wherein I can philosophize about TAFF like Ken Bulmer. On such a note of righting the world's wrongs we said good-bye until we should meet again in August in New York, and I left to fly to the land of smoke.

-oOo-

Flying from Belfast to London, I read T.H. White's *The Goshawk* (and became a falconry fan), ate all the sandwiches the stewardess would put in front of me (and became a bit fatter), and watched the Irish Sea crawl beneath me (and realized that jet travel has spoiled me). When we set down at London airport early on a mild but overcast Monday evening and the girl in the opposite seat was met by a hulking monster of a boyfriend, the sun fell and I took a bus to a west London subway terminus.

Once I got below the surface, things changed; I left the weather behind me and found I didn't know all there was to know about subways after all. In London each car has a map of the entire subway system, and several smaller maps, all about, color-coded to show you the route that particular car follows. The cars move incredibly fast, but my trip across town was over an hour, and my way was clearly marked; by ten p.m. I was at the West Kilburn station with only one wrong change of cars and a single backtracking to get back to the right route.

And the cost? Nothing. Nothing to me, that is – because the Science Fiction Club of London had given me a seven day "Go As You Please"

free pass to any and all public transportation in London. For this they paid thirty shillings (four dollars), and the moment I stepped on a bus at the airport I began noting on an envelope how much I would have spent had they not done this superb thing.

The trip to Ella's, in particular, would have cost me a little over fifty cents.

When I arrived at the Pen – Ella's flat, shared with her brother – Ella and Len Gleicher were sitting up talking, worrying about me. It *was* getting late, but I hadn't been worried; then they told me that at midnight, sharp, the subways just pull into the next station and stop. If I'd still been aboard one, there's no telling where I'd have ended. With coffee and cookies, Len and I met after ten years of correspondence – we sat and exchanged notes about life since the correspondence flagged a bit some time ago, and just sort of nattered about fandom and work and things. It seems he's got married and works in a travel bureau, and like that; it's a long time since he was attending London Circle meetings at the White Horse Inn.

After he left, Ella and I talked. You know Ella – everybody in England and America has met Ella – you know that she can sit down with a virtual stranger and in half a cigarette be plunging conversational depths undreamed. She looks flighty, and her direct drive makes you think she'd be hard to relax with... but we settled down to a long natter, and I guess we could have sprawled talking all night.

In fact, it was morning when we exhausted the topics of American fandom, England, English fandom, my ostrichism about current events, and subways. I think we talked about science-fiction, too.

Tuesday morning, Mayday, might never have been. It was after noon when I woke, and Ella came in about one with black, black coffee and the morning mail. Professor Tolkien had answered my letter, regretting he was not at Oxford over the holidays; to make up, he thoughtfully enclosed four specimen autographs – and, plonkingly enough, in the same mail came the big package of my copies of his books, which I had sent to myself c/o Ella a month earlier. I re-mailed them without opening, and cancelled the trip to Oxford I had planned.

One of the packages for me was one I recognized – it was from John Trimble, and had five dollars in airmail postage on it. Under Ella's eye I very neatly placed it, unopened, next to my suitcase – and left it there until Friday night. She will never forgive me for that, I'm sure.

Ella informed me that the SFCoL had provided her with an (unspecified) amount of sterling to ensure that I paid for nothing while in

the city; that she had, further, arranged for me to meet Ted Carnell that afternoon, so I would get dressed to travel into town immediately; and that I would, further, please state succinctly and without ambiguity my desires for the evening.

"Shucks, Ella," I said, flabbergasted at all this, "I dunno. What's to do in London, anyway?" She stared incredulously at me.

And so we went downtown. I had gotten my camera ready just after rising, and kept it ready as we travelled... but because I abhor photographing things like Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus (sites you can see in any travelogue) and also because I'm not really a camera bug regardless of Norman Shorrock's opinions, I took few pictures that day. As we made our way to the editorial offices of Nova Publications (then still in London S.E.1) I happily rubbernecked about at all the things you can see in any travelogue – after all, I was actually there.

We found Maclaren House easily enough, and doggedly made our way up the narrow staircase to the seventh floor where Ella told me Carnell had his offices; we knocked, and a complete stranger came out. No, he was sorry, but the science-fiction magazine chaps had moved down to the second level! Ella roundly cursed Carnell, piling a decade of hell on him for each step on the way up and again for each down. I quietly followed, making some brief notes on the subject of native Billingsgate, and thinking she'd do better to vent all this energy on the stairs than on Carnell's spirit.

But you know Ella – she hadn't used a tenth of her fire. We all but stomped, through the door to the outer offices of Nova, with her bellowing, "Where's that blackguard Carnell?" and giving a glower to the secretary that sent her quivering behind a chair. The inner sanctum opened, and I chalked up the fifteenth charter member of FAPA that I'd net.

"Carnell, you censored unrepeatable idiot," Ella thundered, "haven't you any better manners than to let guests from America hike eighty miles of stairs before they find you down here in thick atmosphere?" As she said this she swept him from the way and with the two of us in her wake she went up to his desk and sat down on it. "This," she said demonstratively, "is Ron Ellik."

Fortunately Carnell has a staggering control of himself in untoward situations, and he rescued the day with aplomb and apology before I could stop laughing at Ella's flair for the abrupt. Before the dust had settled about us he was telling me how much he appreciated receiving a complimentary copy of Al Lewis's 1961 Magazine Index – which had arrived only a few hours earlier. I couldn't have timed a better calling card.

And then we were talking about the 1956 Worldcon where we hadn't met. We both remembered having a fine time at the con, despite the many faults for which it became famous.

During our visit Ted pulled out a treasure trove in original covers from his magazines, among which were three fine Quinns from recent *Science Fantasy*s that he wanted me to take to the Chicago convention if I would. I warned him that one was a favorite of mine, and put them under my arm before he could stop me. And then he really astonished me.

"Except for those three that have to go to Chicago," he said, "and except for – ah, this one here –" he removed another Quinn from the stack, "I'd like you to pick over the lot of them and select one you like best, as a souvenir of your trip."

Do you know, when I was a letterhack pouring out thousands of words of tripe a week to the editors of all the pulp magazines in the early fifties, I used to dream of being given the run of an editor's originals. It was so fierce a thing that at the Solacon I bid sixteen dollars (one more dollar than every cent I had in the world) for a Bergey cover that had attracted me since my early stfnal days. About that time (perhaps because I was outbid by another Bergey fan) I decided that artwork was juvenile stuff – but all my hard shell of indifference cracked when Ted Carnell stood back from a table covered with original paintings large and small and told me to take my pick. I think I spent an hour in the sorting, and I can imagine no finer gift. It's a gaudy, primary-colored beefcake-and-cheesecake by Brian Lewis, and I took as much care packing it for the return flight as I did with Al's camera.

Ella and I wound our way to Oxford Circus summat before dusk, still taking in the sights of London in a very general way. We looked up Regent Street and down Tottenham Court Road, and we walked the length of Oxford Street up and back again. Finally we agreed to see *South Pacific* that evening, and went to a Chinese restaurant for supper.

Ella hadn't eaten Chinese food since her trip to the States and both of us were interested in the differences between Chinese restaurants in the US and the UK. The hour was early and we were two of only four customers in the place; the waiters were busy setting up for the evening trade, and service was slow. But the food was essentially the same as I'm used to in California, and the only major difference was British tea, not Oriental, and the arrangement of the menu. Here, the Chinese offer only a number of dinner combinations, plus side-dishes; in London, the diner must select his entire fare from individual plates, each priced separately. The continental arrangement, capped with prices in sterling, left me at a disadvantage... but

I made up for it by giving Ella her second lesson with chopsticks.

The restaurant is named after an English boxing star – who owns it – and it's in the basement level, with a very low ceiling. And I think the waiters knew I was a tourist, because after dinner while we drank tea I took a few minutes to change film and clean the lens in case the darkening night showed me a choicer picture than twilight had.

When the waiter finished mopping up from my demonstration with chopsticks, it was show time and we made our way across Oxford Circus to the Dominion Theatre. I'm no specialist on theatre-going, but I've seen nothing in the States to compare with the service and spread we enjoyed that evening, and at prices far below what *South Pacific* was showing for in Los Angeles at the time. The only lack I found I suddenly realized had been bothering me for two weeks – virtually nowhere in the British Isles is there a drinking fountain!

It was intermission when the water problem hit me; Ella and I decided to sneak down into the higher-priced, almost empty rows of seats in front of us; and while we walked out to the lobby and back again to where we didn't belong I looked around for a drink of water... and Ella told me she didn't think there was such an animal anywhere in the building. (The only drinking fountain I ever saw in London was in the American Express office.)

We sort of floated back to the Pen after the movie, borne on a Rogers and Hammerstein cloud. Parker's Pen, at 151 Canterbury Road, is no more – it has been demolished to make way for a gargantuan housing development, and the Parkers have been moved by the city to Dunbar House; but the Pen was one of those historical fan-gathering spots, like Inchmery or Riverside Dive, and many fans knew it. Almost anyone, at almost any time, was welcome there – it was the third and fourth storeys of a tenement building, with no pretensions to grandeur (the water-closet was on the 2nd/3rd floor landing) and good cheer for all. While I was there I used the bed in the living room half of the third floor, Ella's room being on the fourth floor, part of which was the kitchen. Ella, the rock-solid realist type, admitted to me two days later that she was still humming "those bloody songs" – but you've all seen *South Pacific*, haven't you? We went off to sleep at a fairly respectable hour that night, because next day was Wednesday, my day to travel some eighty miles to Cheltenham.

-oOo-

The Cheltenham SF Circle had invited me to visit their city as soon as the results of the TAFF election had been announced. Eric Jones was on my list of frequent correspondents and prozine exchanges in the early fifties,

and it was through him that I came to know Terry Jeeves and Eric Bentcliffe, the other two of the *Triode* staff; when we met at the Harrogate convention, he repeated the invitation, and we set Wednesday the second of May as the date. Ella was worried that I would get lost (or that I'd lose the worn envelope on which I had Eric's phone number and unlimited other information) but well before supper I was walking up Hesters Way towards Barbridge Road with Eric, and that's only a few steps from the most modern home I saw in Britain, and the hospitality of the Joneses.

Eric seems not to have been contented with a typically British home. From outside it's an ordinary two-story place on a small lot; but inside you find yourself bracketed by stereo speakers and contemporary furniture. The print above the hi-fi console is not a grey landscape, but a forceful Oriental girl, outre in color and carriage. The effect of bright colors and clean lines is seemingly to increase the size of the house by fifty per cent – it's a small home with the effect of luxuriant expansion, breaking with style all around it.

Margaret Jones unfortunately couldn't get to the convention; she is small and quiet, with interest in everything, a perfect complement to Eric's stocky frame and extroversion. I wished mightily that my stay in England could stretch another week to let me get to know the Cheltenham fans and especially the Joneses better, but it was not to be. I must say they crowded more into one day than anyone else had managed (save the Liverpudlians, who had managed to include night-clubbing with their day of fannish carousal).

After a generous supper, we went to the meeting of the CSFC, who had at that time the continuous use of basement facilities ideally suited to their needs. They boasted a bar (formed by opening the top of a Dutch door to a small closet), a projection booth (apertures near the ceiling in the rear wall) and a library so jammed with bookshelves that stout librarian Peter Mabey could hardly make his way through it. When we arrived the room wasn't full, but by meeting time it was tightly crowded.

Bill and Roberta Gray were there, and Audrey Eversfield, and Peter Mabey, whom I had met at Harrogate; and John Humphries and Bob Richardson, and many others who'd been unable to make it so far. Humph is one of the quieter young fans, I thought – till somebody mentioned that he's been through military service some years back; it seems he isn't eighteen (and he looks less than that) but in his middle-late twenties.

They disposed of trifling urgent business quickly, while I found myself in a game of Brag with some newcomers to the club. My luck was holding up pretty well from a week earlier, when all of a sudden it seemed

lightning struck. At the moment I was dealt a prial of threes (the highest hand you can hold), the meeting dissolved into an initiation ceremony of the Order of St. Fantony, and I was commanded to appear before the tribunal for examination prior to knighthood.

I fumed and I writhed, but Bob Richardson was holding the biggest damned sword I ever saw and glowering furiously at me: I sadly threw down my cards, picked up the entire pot without a word from my dumb-struck opponents, and was suddenly on my knees before Grand Master Eric Jones, with that gigantic sword, blade down, resting on my neck.

It was a startling turn of events; while I knew of the Knights of St. Fantony, I knew of them perhaps as you and you do – they are a whacky lot with a penchant for armor and parties in Cheltenham, Liverpool, and London, and they have an initiation drink which will blow the top off your head unless you happen to be Rory Faulkner. In 1961 I participated in an imitation St. Fantony ceremony at LASFS, with Rory in charge as the only member of the Order present, at which we created Rick Sneary a Squire, to be Armourer's Mate to Bob Richardson. But I never expected to see a real ceremony – less, to be in it.

But there I was, and under pain of death by the sword I was made to swear my allegiance to trufandom, and to drink the water from the Well of St. Fantony.

Yes, it blew the top of my head off: and when the room steadied I was bade rise, and named Sir Ronald. Lady Margaret took my elbow to guide me to a seat.

Later, Eric showed movies of the Harrogate convention, and I showed my slides once again. This time the pictures of Joni Cornell drew appropriate wolf-whistles, but they almost (not quite, John Berry) drew less attention than the scenes from the aforementioned LASFS St. Fantony ceremony. They made certain we in California take the Order as seriously as they do, and were very pleased with the costuming by Bjo – especially Lady Rory's gown.

It was that evening and only then that I met Bob Richardson, the Knight Armourer. I'd intended to meet him again in London in '65 – his collapse and death were bad news indeed.

Next day a friend of Eric's from the Cheltenham tape-recording club came by about nine and interviewed the two of us for the B.B.C. Eric hoped that the uniqueness of science-fiction combined with my fan-sponsored visit would be sufficient to rouse local interest in the club and bring in new members; it's sadly that I here note the loss of their clubrooms less than a year later due to continued inattendance and

flagging funds; the CSFC became too small to maintain their basement quarters with the wall full of signatures (which I signed directly beneath Dave and Ruth Kyle), and to worsen the situation Peter Mabey found it necessary to go to London, and Audrey Eversfield to Paris.

-oOo-

Early that afternoon – Thursday, that was – I boarded the train to return to London. It was another uninteresting ride... the mobs of schoolgirls chewing gum and gossiping in every compartment (all very nice girls, I'm certain) drove me out onto a platform with camera at the ready on a bright, clean day. I took one picture, of a lake and some cows.

I no sooner arrived back at the Pen than it was time to eat and run – the SF Club of London, with hangers-on and anyone else who walks by, plays the Globe on Thursday nights, and if we didn't hurry we'd miss seeing Ted Tubb sober!

In plain fact things were already lively by the time we arrived. First off I was introduced to William Temple who posed politely for a photograph and then told me my lens cover was on. He blanketed embarrassment by buying me a mug of stout – he's one of the businessman-sort of science-fiction people, accomplished at conversation and banter equally, undoubtedly a superb host on his own field, and very easy to be around. Ted Tubb is a different sort altogether – he's tall and expansive, stands you on your ear with a roar of laughter, and the life of any party; he's a big, rawboned sort, and decided immediately I was worth something if the Cheltenham lot had knighted me... after all, they had knighted him.

Len Gleicher was there, with another antediluvian correspondent, Pete Taylor. The two of them with Pat Kearney, Bruce Burn and I, congealed in a corner for a while, forming a Young Fans' Clique while around us people were drinking and talking science-fiction and whatever; we talked about fandom. Pete has had a bit more contact with fans since the early fifties than Len, and is much more like a typical fan: slender, with dark hair and sober features. Bruce Burn is New Zealand's Indian-gift to London – he's very plain of appearance and slow of speech (unlike Raeburn and Hinge) and voiced opinions on London fandom that confirmed many of my own... for example, we both like most of the individuals we've met, but feel they are too widely varied a lot ever to be considered as a single group.

The Globe Tavern, which replaced the White Horse Inn as London's fan spot when Lew Mordecai the bartender changed jobs, was fairly packed with fans and at some hour later on I found myself whisked away

in a big pre-WWII limousine (Tubb's) to a Chinese restaurant with Ella, Ethel Lindsay, Ted and Mavis Tubb, and a fellow whose name I never caught.

"Ron's an expert on Chinese food," spake Ella, and Ted decided that he would buy if I would order. Once again I ran afoul of the Sino-British menu format, and it turned out that *Ted* ordered for everybody as well as paying. You don't argue with him – he's a keen wit and a roof-jostling laugh, and is just plain fun to watch. The dinner (although I'd eaten at Ella's) was yards of fun, and a great interlude in the smoke-filled evening at the Globe.

When we returned things were quieting, and by about midnight everyone was drifting off. For some reason I haven't the slightest memory of who was with Ella and me as we left the Globe – there were at least three others.

We walked past the old White Horse Inn, which I captured in perhaps the most beautiful picture of the trip, taken while slightly inebriated at one in the morning, in a half-second exposure. And then we were in a coffee shop, while waiting for a bus (the Tube had closed long since) and I was drinking some incredibly black British coffee and the whole mob of us were talking about fans and conventions. I sure wish I knew who else was there.

Friday, my last day for sight-seeing in London, broke late for me as may be expected. At some advanced hour I leapt gracefully from my couch and mumbled "Coffee"; Ella, ever reliable, furnished black coffee and breakfast until I was in some semblance of working order, and I left the Pen for another excursion by public transit.

Earlier in the week I had just asked directions and followed maps blindly, but Friday the city began to make sense – I used the Go As You Please ticket furnished by the London Circle, and hopped frivolously from bus to Underground train, flitting past Wellington on his pedestal, the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street, and Charing Cross as if I actually knew where I was going. My first stop was a shoe-store near or on Regent Street (I forget) where seventy shillings bought a fancy pair of shiny black shoes to replace the worn pair that had started giving out the day I first arrived in Liverpool. This was no more all good than all bad, because I spent the rest of the day on my feet in new shoes, than which I should have known better.

Oxford Circus (where I'd eaten a Chinese dinner Tuesday night with Ella, and seen *South Pacific*) furnished much sight-seeing and many pictures, as well as a small dinner around 2:00. I sent some postcards from

Piccadilly Circus, feeling strange because I would reach home before they did – postcards are a terrible sort of thing, rather expensive to send abroad, unsatisfactory as you send them, and hard to remember to send; altogether a bad bargain for travellers, though fun to receive.

Across the Thames from the Tower of London, I found a sight you can't find anymore – Sir Arthur Sullivan's birthplace, number 8 something or other street in a crowded residential district which has since been renovated completely. A young girl answered the bell and said visitors often asked to be shown around but there really wasn't anything to see, as the composer's things had long since been replaced by current furniture and it wasn't a museum. She was pleasant enough about it, considering she was probably weary with inquiries akin to mine; the postman was more lively, and suggested that when I was through photographing that house, there were some other famous people's birthplaces just two streets over, with plaques and all.

From there, buses and Undergrounds took me through Victoria Station, which is as hard to see in toto as Grand Central Station – they both extend in and around surrounding buildings, and underground and up, and it's quite easy to get lost in them. But it was an excellent way-station en route to Kensington Gardens – Kensington, with the statue of Peter Pan which I saw, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, which I didn't. A lightning-swift tour like mine misses the big things, can't waste time on the little things, and leaves a great ache for the glories that might have been, which is why I'm going back to England with more time to spare.

But the highlight of the afternoon was Kensington – a magnificent spread of sward and hedges, flowers and statuary, and a nice day for it, too. Close by is Knightsbridge, a tight-knit business district of little shops by the score – and, figuring brilliantly as one of the major points of my entire trip, Sir William Gilbert's town house, now called Iolanthe House.

I approached it on foot, on the other side of the street, considerably amazed at the odd architecture – it looks as though it's going to topple over on you, rising to an odd gable much above neighboring buildings. The afternoon sun wasn't positioned properly for good pictures, but I tried three angles and varying exposures, and happily caught at least the imposing height and unreal effect of instability. Then I rang.

A woman came to the door, dressed to go out, and I introduced myself; she turned to ask another young woman if I could be shown the house, then she threw down her hat and said, "Oh, well – come in, and we'll give you a tour of these two floors, at any rate."

My protests weren't heard; she *was* going out, but she'd rather show

me the house, and I hardly got a word in as I was ushered quickly (not too quickly) from room to room. Gilbert built the house with proceeds from the highly successful operetta *Patience*, and his monogram figured noticeably in the capitals of every column and in every stained-glass window on the first floor. His study was (as were other rooms) re-furnished, but copper wall decorations and the inset bookcases, I was assured, were the identical ones he had installed. The building was flabbergasting, and my hostess was charming – we walked together to a bus, and I retraced some of my steps, arriving at the Tower of London which seemed to draw me magnetically to it, an hour or so before nightfall.

Almost timidly I approached the old battlement, only to have the spell broken by a busload of tourists descending ahead of me. *Mort de ma vie*, I would have muttered had I taken up reading Dumas at that date; I didn't want to enter the Bloody Tower jostled by a dozen people and harangued by their guide. I wanted to wander in its corridors by myself, to touch the stone and act like a little kid in a big cathedral. Under a lowering sky, I turned and strolled from the gate on the Thames up around the outer wall, looking down into the broad park in back of the Tower, expecting to circle 'round and enter by a gate on the other side or, completing the circle, come back to the little gate I'd just left at a quieter time.

My new shoes weren't feeling exactly a bargain, and the weather was getting colder and darker, but three or four times I stopped to photograph the Tower as I circled it, and the pictures were, I later found, among my best. The hunched back of the Tower is a sprawling, muscled edifice with fairy-tale turrets and windows in the midst of broad expanses of stone. As I neared the front again, I had a lovely view from the rising road, straight down into the back park and over across the turrets to the Thames; and, walking painfully in growing mists and the beginnings of some rain, I suddenly realized that my road led directly over Tower Bridge – there was no way to get down into the Tower from that side, nor any way to descend to the bank of the river, short of climbing down the column that held up Tower Bridge!

It was walk all the way around again – up to which I did not feel – in a drizzling rain almost at dusk... or give it up. Mad, sorry, and a bit ashamed, I turned and headed for dinner, for Ella's, and a night of partying.

Many of the Londoners had not been at the Globe – for the first time, then, I met Arthur Thomson, Brian and Frances Varley, Ken and Irene Potter, "newcomer" Walter Gillings (a charter member of the Leeds

Chapter of the Science Fiction League in the early thirties), and Joe Patrizio. And – but no – I'd met that one before – that was Ajax Hoch! In amazement I greeted him again, and asked him if he were following me around the planet or something. Good old Ajax had brought with him four other Americans, also stationed at US bases – three of them girls – none of whom had been Stateside for over two years. One of the girls, an English teacher by trade, asked me to say something in American for her. Hoch sure knows how to liven up a party.

That meeting was a hello-and-goodbye party for me, because unfortunately I had to be at work at Douglas Aircraft the following Monday. And so they concluded their business immediately after the minutes and asked me if I'd like to say a few words or something. I very dramatically rose, and asked Ella if she would get for me the package next to my suitcase in the closet – "The one with all the stamps on it," I said, "that's been driving you crazy since it showed."

It didn't matter what I said – all eyes were glued to that package. I think I said something about gratitude, because they as a club had made my trip much more enjoyable by their gifts and interest, and I think I expressed greetings to them from the LASFS. I certainly said a hearty thank-you for the plaque they had sent us via Ella in 1961, making the Los Angeles SF Society an honorary member of the Science Fiction Club of London – and it was at that point that I finally undid the last of the brown paper and string, carefully preserving the address and five dollars' worth of airmail postage, and presented to them a big, gaudy plaque from LASFS, illustrated by half a dozen LA artists and autographed by possibly three dozen fans, extending honorary membership in LASFS to the SFCoL.

It compared well, I think, with their plaque – and they were bowled over by it, because I'd been in the country three weeks and given no hint of such a thing. The postage went to Ron Bennett for his stamp collection, and the certificate was immediately given a place of honor on one of the much-decorated walls of the Penitentiary. I was declared a national hero or something amid much excitement, and the rest of the evening was a fine club-meeting, no business, but lots of talk and root beer, and it wasn't over until late.

-oOo-

Don Geldart, a tall drink of water then in the RAF, was asleep on the floor when I rose at an inexcusably late hour. I packed in a hurry – there was just time to get to my trans-polar jet flight, and I high-tailed it for the London airport, reversing the route I'd travelled Monday night. It was after

eleven when I sat down in the Tube, and my plane was to leave at 1:15 – it was just barely possible. And as I sat and waited at a transfer point for the car to go out to the west of London I chewed my fingernails – and waited, and waited.

Finally at half past noon I asked a newsboy when I could expect the next car. "Oh," he said, "they don't run on this track but at rush hour, and you'll wait to evening before you see one." I cursed and thanked him in a breath, grabbed camera and suitcase and coat, and dashed for the door to the parallel line a level below where I'd wasted half an hour.

Needless to say, I was barely on the airport grounds by 1:15, and as I ran the length of the driveway to the terminal it was half-past, and my jet was screaming away out of sight. I collapsed in the BOAC scheduler's office to wait while they tried to re-route me.

The best compromise seemed to be via New York – the next trans-polar flight was a day later. With the later departure time and a stop I wouldn't arrive in Los Angeles until 3:00 the next morning; I thought about people who had promised to meet me at LA International at 6:00 Saturday evening – and cabled Al Lewis to call it off, asking him to be there at the later hour.

And so I cooled my heels on a quiet Saturday, and found I couldn't get interested in *Gil Blas* or the magazines at the newsstand, and it seemed all I could do was walk the empty waiting-rooms and stare out windows at airplanes, waiting for my flight, muttering about the wretched London subway system and my habit of oversleeping.

The stopover in New York was profitable – the BOAC jet arrived half an hour early, and I caught a late TWA jet that had been delayed slightly to prepare it to make a world's record NY-LA run that night. The hostess told us to hold our hats, because this was a brand-new, never commercially flown Starstream jet by Boeing; and tonight we would fly to the west coast in four hours and twenty-two minutes, shaving twenty-three minutes from the previous jetliner record. So we strapped down and waited – and waited. Eventually she told us the hydraulics weren't full and there'd be a delay. Someone wondered if this would count against the world's record.

I asked her how the pilot could estimate as close as two or three minutes in three thousand miles, and she asked me if I wanted coffee, tea or milk. When we did leave the airport, we still didn't break any records – the wheels wouldn't come up, and we circled Manhattan for forty minutes while the passengers made snide remarks. I had milk, and tried to sleep.

And so, some three hours before my cable had said to expect me, I telephoned Al Lewis and asked him to stop asking questions about three

a.m., and to come get me.

"I know I'm three hours early," I said, "but I missed my plane in London caught an earlier flight out of New York than I thought I would. It started because I trusted the London subways and my own judgement. No, I'm not crazy." And that's how the story began that I came home three hours early because I took the subway. And in a way it's true.

-oOo-

For more information about the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund... to donate to it, to vote in its elections of TAFF representatives, or to forward the cause of a friend as TAFF representative... contact the American Administrator: Steve Stiles, 1809 Second Ave., New York, NY 10028, or the European administrator: Thomas Schluck, 5 Georgswall, Hannover 3, West Germany.

– rde.

Afterword

Although neither a travelogue nor a thorough documentary about British fandom, this record serves to convey some of the pleasures, troubles, rewards, and friends mine by virtue of my trip to England and Northern Ireland in the spring of 1962. It was a short trip – from Los Angeles to Harrogate and back again, hopping from place to place so rapidly that such restful idylls as my two days in Sheffield, for example, will always have a warmer place in my memory than two weeks vacationing in the Elysian Fields could ever have.

Without the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund and the hundreds of science-fiction fans everywhere who supported it in 1961, I wouldn't have had the opportunities of airsickness, picnicking on the grounds of a ruined Irish castle, blistering my feet in a ridiculous promenade around the Tower of London, or being a kind of guest of honor at the 1962 British National Convention in Harrogate. If you want to wear your best friend down to a shadow of his former self (I gained ten pounds eating British cooking), send him abroad as a TAFF representative – he'll have the time of his life.

The greatest part of this document appeared serially in the official organ of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, *Shangri-L'Affaires*, in 1962 and 1963 (issues number 62-65). The author is indebted to the editorial staff of *Shangri-L'Affaires* for their patience with him as the installments were being written, and for their perseverance in seeing that he got around to writing them, as well as for their kind permission to publish this volume with the cartoons by Bjo. Profits from sales will be donated to TAFF.

Hopefully, this volume will tell you how it feels to go abroad the first time as a TAFF representative; at least it should show you fans and people in America and Europe as I saw them. Perhaps it will even tell you why I want to go back.

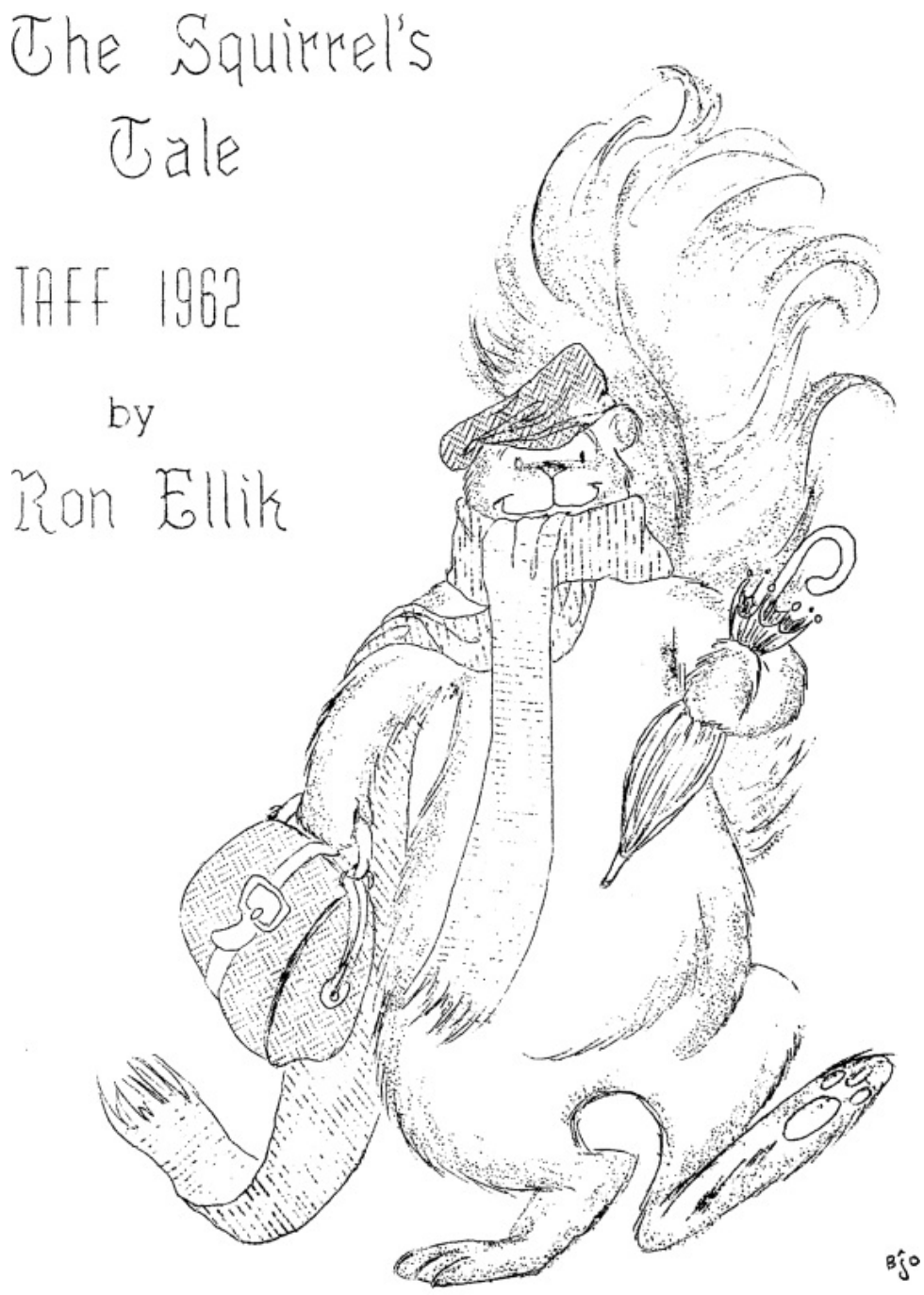
– rde.
11 May 1965

Publisher's Note [1969]

This report is exactly as Ron wrote it in 1962-63 and then amended it in 1965. The only change has been to update the names of the TAFF administrators in the final paragraph. While it is unlikely that this report will fully show how well we liked Ron Ellik, it will at least show some of the many reasons why we did. We can only regret that it has taken so long – almost a year after his death in an auto accident on January 25, 1968 – to get his report into print.

Copies of this report are available for $1 – $1.25 by mail – from the Publisher: Box 100, 308 Westwood Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90024. Artwork by Bjo Trimble (interior illos restencilled by Dian Pelz from copies of the originals in *Shangri-L'Affaires*). Stencilled by Tom Gilbert and Bruce Pelz.

– Bruce Pelz, Publisher:
7 January 1969.



Cover of the 1969 edition by Bjo Trimble

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.

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