

TAFF TALES



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1955 TransAtlantic Fan Fund Trip Report

H. Ken Bulmer

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1955 TransAtlantic Fan Fund Trip Report Third (Expanded) Edition

H. Ken Bulmer

Published by

Ansible Editions

94 London Road, Reading, England, RG1 5AU

ae.ansible.uk

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This Ansible Editions ebook first published May 2015. That text was taken from the second (expanded) print edition published by Ansible Information in 1999, with minor corrections to footnotes and endnotes. The first collected print edition appeared from Ansible Information in 1998. Further material – see [Credits](#) for details – was discovered and added in 2022 and 2023.

Cover illustration by Atom (Arthur Thomson), *circa* 1988.

Ebook ISBN 978-1-913451-27-1

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Introduction

Walt Willis

*Excerpted from Walt's state-of-play article "The Life of TAFF" in Yandro #50 (March 1957) edited by Buck and Juanita Coulson.
[Ed.]*

This election was won easily by Ken Bulmer; there was now enough money in the Fund for the two-way boat fare; and we started to try and arrange a passage.

We ran into tremendous difficulties, and in the end all Ken could get was a berth on a cargo boat with an uncertain sailing schedule. So uncertain, in fact, that in July Ken got a telegram that the sailing date had been advanced to the 25th of that month. The Bulmers rose to the occasion and travelled overnight to Dublin. Madeleine and I and Chuck Harris, who was staying with us at the time, took the train down to Dublin to see them off and took photographs of the historic occasion. Then we went back to Belfast and airmailed a hastily mimeographed appeal to a dozen or so prominent East Coast fans. It was headed URGENT, and read:

“On Monday evening, the 25th July, the dream of the Transatlantic Fan Fund became a reality. The successful candidate, Ken Bulmer, along with his wife Pamela, sailed for America on a tramp steamer, the M.V. *Inishowen Head*... belonging to the ‘Head Line’ of Belfast. The ship sailed from Dublin and Madeleine and ourselves went down there for the day to see them off. We all lolled about St. Stephen’s Green for awhile after lunch and then went down to the docks, a confusion of cranes, trucks, shouting seamen and seagulls. We holed up in the Bulmers’ cabin talking for a couple of hours... probably the largest number of fans ever in the same boat... while they changed hawsers in mid-scream, and then we had to get off. (‘Ask that man in the peaked cap if he knows a good place to stow away.’ [-crh](#)) Later, in the warm calm of a summer evening in Dublin, the ship sailed out on its long journey round the Irish coast and across the Atlantic.

“It’s just an ordinary tramp steamer with accommodation for perhaps half a dozen passengers – half a dozen small passengers – but the Bulmers’ cabin seemed nice and the ship looked as if it might last out the voyage. The Bulmers were happy and excited, but naturally a bit tired and worried. They’d had to leave London on a few hours’ notice and travel overnight, and had spent the last few days in a hectic rush to get ready. This was because the sailing date of the ship was suddenly brought forward by more than two weeks on account of a large scale dock strike. They knew that if they missed this sailing, there’d be little prospect of another one, and that it would be a bad blow to the Transfund if everything fell through at this stage. But the result of this bolt from the blue from the shipping company is that through no fault of their own Ken and Pamela will be arriving in the States three weeks early, with very little money, no arrangements made for their accommodation until the Convention, and possibly even no one to meet them when they arrive in Baltimore.

“That’s why we’re writing this. We’re airmailing it to representative fans in Baltimore and the surrounding area in the hope that we might find somebody who will be able to help – perhaps by meeting the boat, or offering accommodation for a night or two, or helping with transport or something. It’s pretty rough landing in a strange country where you know nobody, and we are hoping that fans will rally round and help them both to Cleveland. The Bulmers have done all they can... they’re probably the only tourists who ever brought tinned food to America... but they’re not rich (both of them gave up their jobs to make this trip) and the Transfund only covers the trip to the States.”

As it turned out, the only problem the Bulmers had was which invitation to accept. Their visit was an immense success, and a fine advertisement for TAFF.

March 1957

Note: crh is Chuck Harris.

Prologue – Around the Bend in Four Days Joy Goodwin

It was early in July when Pamela Bulmer, the beautiful editor of *Ugh*, and her husband really settled down to getting ready to go to America. They had received a letter from Ghod which told them that they had just scraped through in the TAFF vote, one vote for them and none for anyone else – can't think why Vin¢ bothered to vote for Ken, but I suppose that since he proposed them for the trip he'd better show willing and vote, too. Pamela nearly collapsed from shock and though I pulled the rug out from under her, she still didn't fall down the stairs. Ken sucked his pipe and muttered, "I suppose I'd better get a job to pay for this woman's trip." After Pamela recovered she opened the wardrobe door and shuddered.

"Joy, I'm going to need some help." *I* shuddered. I knew Pamela's ideas of helping... we'll just alter this neckline here and take out these pleats and add a little bit on the hip and alter the waist, oh and this blouse wants to be altered and I've a number of nightdresses and underclothes to make. If I just tell you what I want doing you can do it can't you?... Numbly, I nodded. After all, if I did alter them and they didn't come out right, I'd always be able to say, "Well, I didn't understand how you meant."

Gradually, she got her lists of clothes ready – hers taking up three foolscap pages and Ken's written on the back of an envelope. Ken was having trouble with shirts – he had about a couple of dozen but Pamela appropriated three quarters of those out of which to make blouses. We started sewing. Daphne came up and started sewing, even Audrey-across-the-road came in and started sewing.

Then at the end of June, they heard they would have a ship in the last two weeks of August – at the beginning of July they heard the ship had been moved forward to between the 6th and 10th of August. On the 20th or so of July they heard it would be the last week in July – PANIC! Sewing till midnight oil was gone and morning oil was going, too. Two days later Pamela realised that the last week in July was – oh horrors, next week. Then on the Thursday they heard that they were to leave on Sunday, 24th July.

When Ken got the tickets, he found no steamer reservation tickets inside. Friday he rings up Euston to sort it out and couldn't get any satisfaction but muggins here says, "Well I've got to go to work tomorrow. I'll drop in and sort it out. It won't take a minute." That's what *I* thought!

Saturday I roll in to work, on time for a change and very sweetly explain to the boss just what's happened and could I take half-an-hour off to go to Euston and sort it out. Well, an hour later I'm standing in a queue with about a dozen people in front of me trying to get seat reservations for them on a train on *Saturday* night – there were no steamer reservation tickets in London for the Sunday train, in fact there probably wouldn't be any in Holyhead either when they got there. I started to sweat. By dint of smiling rather sweetly and looking pitiful I managed to wangle two tickets for a train leaving on Saturday. When I got back to work the boss was less a lot more hair than usual, but anyway we finished on time and I got back to Tresco. Pamela then lost some hair when I told her that instead of a day, she had a minimum of six hours in which to get ready.

She was still sewing. Ken was still finishing off promised articles and Vinç was there tearing round collecting laundry, handing in medical cards and buying ear-rings to Pamela's order, etc. We all swallowed some dinner at double quick time, and Audrey-across-the-road came in and Sid her husband promised to take the luggage down to the station when we were ready. Come four o'clock and the sewing's finished and Vinç and Ken are tearing the cases to pieces believing that they have elastic sides. I shove them out of the way and pack one with toilet essentials, and permanent wave lotion and so forth – even the box camera contained toilet gear.

[LINO] Hand me my camera, Ken. I want to spend a penny. – Pamela.

By five o'clock we had managed to bully Pamela into the bath and by six she was actually drinking tea and swallowing sandwiches, feeling nervous and seasick at the thought of being seasick. Dorothy and Jimmy Ratigan had dropped in to say goodbye and wish them all the best. Audrey and Sid collected the cases and phew! it was time to leave. Vinç and I stayed behind to clear up – clear up... hah... knee deep in remnants and wreckage, empty boxes and tissue paper, dirty clothes that hadn't had five minutes to be washed in. I filled the sink with water and dumped into it all the dirty crockery. The dirty clothes got pushed into the washing machine and the wreckage into a corner.

Monday I get a card – safely aboard ship, sailing 5-6 Monday evening.

Last night Pamela laid her best suit on the bed and during the night it fell into a pool of water on the cabin floor. Oh, well, at least if the ship sinks they'll drown quickly. And there we leave our intrepid fans, sailing across a heaving sea, heaving, heaving, heaving....

Air Letter

To A. Vincent Clarke, postmarked 11 August 1955

H. Ken Bulmer, c/o Larry Shaw,
135 W 84th Street,
New York City 24,
New York.

Dear Vince,

The above address should convince you that the good ship *Inishowen Head* did manage to batter her way across the grey and gale-lashed seas of the Atlantic. We are recuperating in the flat (whoops, apartment) of Dave Kyle, who is out of town for a while. We have the run of the place, which is a sort of latter-day Epicentre. In fact, we cast anxious glances at the ceiling off and on. There is no fan stuff to be seen, of course, but even so the resemblance is quite nauseating. The journey. Well, the trip was smooth, uneventful and most enjoyable. We went into Dublin on Monday morning and accosted Walter, Madeleine and Chuck walking down Eden Quay. Much natter was in order. They saw us off, a sort of delegation to make sure that we did, in fact, go. We had thought of sneaking off and going to Brighton. At Baltimore we were met by scads of mail; but no hint of how we were to find our way around the great USA. Don had told us that we could get money in 2-3 hours from him by wire so we envisioned getting a bus to NY. There was a letter from John Hitchcock which said that a welcomittee might be at the dockside, but that if we received the letter that plan had gone astray, We fell down the gangplank, to tread upon American soil, and were surrounded by three Americans. They said: "Are you the Bulmers?" We were forced to agree, and they identified themselves as John Hitchcock, John Magnus and Bob Pavlat. That is, *Umbra*, *Varioso* and fanzine index. They had not one, but two cars. We drove in style to John Hitchcock's place, a real southern colonial mansion. When we were all staggering down the dock side the American agent had leaned over the ship's rail and shouted something which his fellow countrymen said was, "Dick Ellington is driving down from NY today." Well, after I'd phoned Don Ford and made contact, we went down to the docks again and were very fortunate to see Dick Ellington, Larry Shaw and Phyllis Scott walking towards the ship. We met in a dust storm. We

adjourned for food at Johnny Wu's Chinese restaurant, where we ate American food. The tension was noticeable between the Younger Baltimoreans and the NYorkers. Pamela and I were the bone and they the determined contenders. Anyway, it was eventually decided that we come on to NY as had been originally planned, and I'm rather afraid that that incident may be just the forerunner of what lies in store. Walter had a basinful; but Walter is so much more diplomatic than I am. He could explain to the Archangel Gabriel that he'd lost his return ticket and get in Heaven for free, could our Walter. But we must just hope that these things pass over. Went over on Sunday to ESFA* where we met Sam Moskowitz. Also Jean Carrol and Allen Howard, the director. I spoke – some of these guys are real Vargo Statten fans – yeah! Wanted to know about Volsted Bedpan, too. Seth Johnson wanted me to pass on his kind regards to Mike Wallace, and was tickled pink that I knew Mike. Had a minor fan party last night in Dick Ellington's place, with Larry Shaw and Den Curran. Drank vodka. Larry and Dick are two swell people and we're hop ing already that Larry's new prozine, the name of which may now be spoken, will be a great success. We're already rooting for him in a big way. Oh – he smokes a pipe about four sizes larger than mine, and needs a shoe horn to get it in his mouth. Tonight we are going with Jean Carrol to dine with Willy Ley and thence to the Hydra Club. Damon Knight wants us to go see him. We look as though we shall be very busy indeed. Pamela is writing to Joy about *Fez* etc. Make sure the house more or less stays where it is, huh? Tell Ted, both of 'em, I'll be writing later, regards now. Same to Bert if you contact him.

* The New Jersey-based Eastern Science Fiction Association, founded in 1945 by Sam Moskowitz and others.

TAFF Tales

Thorn on the Rose

Ella* wants me to tell your waiting lugholes something of what occurred to Pamela and myself during the months of August, September and October, and parts of the months of July and November, in the year of Our Lord 1955.

* Ella Parker, editor of the fanzine *Orion* in which many of these chapters first appeared. See also [Notes](#) on this chapter.

That's a long time ago, now, and, not having been able to blackmail a horde of willing writers into writing my trip accounts for me, as has rollicking Ron from Leeds*, and because of many other factors, some of them to be found in the TAFF report, we now say: 'ere goes. At first I shall attempt only to pick out a few highlights, or, in other parlance, a few choice plums can be dredged up and regarded as they shine moistly between prying finger and thumb.

* Ron Bennett, TAFF delegate in 1958.

Right, then, to our onions. Many of you must have heard of the rumours that Bulmer was arrested in the States, that he was sent for a term to Sing-Sing, that the FBI trailed him everywhere, etc., etc. Here, then, is the truth, to set beside other accounts of my clash with the American law.

At the time Don Ford was living in Sharonville, which is a charming little – what? township, village, booming suburb of Cincinnati. Although typically American in its arrangement of frame houses along wide roads with lawns, minus hedges or fences, leading up to the houses, the shopping arrangements and the narrowness of the main roads were quite familiar to us English types.

An interesting tie-up also occurs here. I may rightly have felt called from the plough, i.e., work, to travel to America, just as much in fact as Lucius Quinctius, back in the days before Ancient Rome shouldered sufficiently into the limelight to attract the attention of Hollywood, was minute-manned from his fields to go off to rescue the two consuls who were in the usual mire consuls found themselves in when legends were in the making. What's the tie-up? Well, friend L. Quinctius was generally called Cincinnatus and 'tis from this noble example of sturdy republican stock that the fair city of Cincy takes her name.

That's no tie-up, you say? Wait.

As you all know, I was sporting a beard at this time. Don and Margaret were more or less accustomed to it, I suppose, as were the children. But they'd taken the sensible precaution of arranging for Pamela and me to bed down in a friend's house in the next block. We were very comfortably housed there, and used to arise in the a.m. and roll around to Don's for breakfast and meals, and then out for the day. It was very hot. You recall that wonderful summer of 1955? Well, in Ohio just about then it was hotter. I forget the exact day (it isn't important) when I had to leave Don's house and walk around to our lodgings to pick up some trifle or other. I walked along the sidewalk and, succumbing to the temperature, took off my jacket and slung it over my shoulder. I walked on quietly, thinking. (Would-be joke makers form queue to the left, please.) A black car whined along from the horizon and then slowed down. I paid it scant attention; I mean, if a car isn't three or four contrasting colours in the States and a block and a half long, no one notices the thing and they tend to get trampled underfoot.

The car paced me. I was walking on the left-hand sidewalk and so the car, being to logical Englishmen on the wrong side of the road, was able to cruise gently parallel with me. I approached the turning to the left down which I had to go. As I reached the corner the car accelerated smoothly and swung across into the sideroad and pulled up so that it was blocking the path of anyone attempting to walk straight on down the main road. Bulmer glanced at it and then angled off down the sideroad and ignored the car. This seemed to incense the occupants.

"Hey, you!" a voice called. A hand supported by a wrist poked through the open window and beckoned. Mildly intrigued, I walked across.

"What're you doing, bub?"

Now I'm not going to attempt a facsimile reconstruction of the ensuing conversation. At first it was in true Hollywood cops-and-robbers style, with me as the tight-lipped hood. I saw at once that they were police, and probably because the weather was hot, I felt a rush of blood to the head and decided to be (a) dumb, (b) unco-operative, (c) dignified and (d) a bloody Limey and to hell with these peasants.

I told them my name. They remained unimpressed. They asked me if I lived here. I said no. They asked me where I was going. I told them the house where I was lodging. Did I know the people? No. The driver was youngish, obviously swollen-headed over the fact that he wore a uniform and had a

powerful car under his hands, a badge and (a) a tommy gun down by his leg, (b) a pistol at his belt, (c) a riot gun in the back seat, (d) and probably an H-bomb in a SAC B-52b on call from his car radio.

I showed them my driving licence. The youngster started to tear off each year's licence as though the thing were a book. "Don't be stupid," I said, or something even more wounding, and snatched the thing away. He bristled. The older man at his side said a few quiet words to soothe him down and then casually, as though exercising Herlock Sholmesian craft, mentioned the word "English". Still icily dignified, I agreed that I was English. I didn't add "and proud of it"; I felt that to be redundant. I suppose the crown, the coat of arms, the *Honi soit qui mal y pense* had something to do with the deduction process. After that we got on like a house on fire.

I gradually thawed, and they ceased to mention third degrees and suchlike and I asked to look at their armoury and they obliged, and we spent an interesting ten minutes or so chatting. We parted on at least pre-Suez terms. The older man really seemed quite a decent type; the younger just needed a little more understanding of life and a little less TV and film impressions of himself.

And, too, here I was, a stranger, bearded, coat over shoulder, strolling along when literally no one was walking out. These men had a job to do, protecting the community from hobos and bums; and that was just what I was to them. Don swore I was joking and no one believed me until I mentioned that the older man had his arm in a sling. Then Don sat down slowly – and that's a seven-foot sight, too – and said : "That was the Police Chief; he broke his wrist." And so I was believed. Then Don wanted to go down to the precinct house and raise Cain, but I said I wasn't able to worry, and so we all laughed and passed it off. But those cops figured in a story, yessir, they did too!

The tie-up: Cincinnatus, long hair down to his shoulders, was also initially misunderstood. He went back to noble poverty.

New York Garrett

This was a few weeks before the con, and Pamela and I were undergoing indoctrination and inoculation, carrying out exercises such as testing for amount of heat, alcohol, loss of sleep and noise toleration that could be taken. We were engaged upon a field test of this nature, surrounded by a screaming, laughing, drinking, generally high-living group of fen in an apartment. The door opened, and two men entered.

There was a slight, foetus-like pause.

I stared quizzically at the two newcomers. One was large, rubicund, shaven-headed, round and red-faced, filled with an alarming energy. The other was small, thin faced, dark haired and filled with an alarming energy.

They clasped their arms around each other's shoulders – quite a job for the smaller but he did it, nonetheless, and advanced upon us, singing. What they were singing made no sense to me. That may have been because they were using different keys, weren't quite in tune, weren't quite sure of the words – and the tune was a little shaky too. However, I managed to maintain a politely frozen poker face. They stood before me, singing directly into my face. I began to wonder if this was some special tribal rite that was perhaps the preliminary to a ritual scalping. I held my composure and put on the polite expression Campbell must have assumed when he heard where the *MofF&SF* came out at the Solacon.*

* At the 1958 World Convention, Solacon in Los Angeles, the Hugo usually awarded to John W. Campbell's *Astounding* went for the first time to *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

People about me were sort of applauding in a stunned, awed fashion; I scraped up memories of Waterloo, Trafalgar, Minden and Balaclava to set against Bunker Hill and Saratoga.

The song sputtered to a close. Both men were sweating with the fierce energy they had put into it, and their faces were fixed in tight grins while their eyes searched mine with a febrile, expectant hunger. The last words of the song, literally shouted so that they should penetrate the stuffed cotton-wool in my head, were : “For he *is* an Englishman!” No doubt William Schwenck would have admitted some familiarity with the words; but it is highly unlikely that Sir Arthur would have cared to own acquaintance with

the music.*

* William Schwenck Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan: Gilbert & Sullivan. The song is from *H.M.S. Pinafore*, Act II.

I realized with a sincere and stupefying sense of grateful shock, that these two were paying me – and my country – a compliment. I managed to garble out some sort of embarrassed reply, and said that I'd never heard the song before. This was, more or less, true. Not the way they had sung it, anyway.

And these two fine flowers of our rebelled colonists?
Randall Garrett and Harlan Ellison.*

* But see the [Notes](#) on this chapter.

The large, crop-headed man of energy was Randall Garrett, he had but lately left the U.S. Marines. That, alone, should tell you a great deal. Of Harlan, more later; this cameo will be devoted to Randy. At that time he was battering his way into *Astounding* and the first Robert Randall stories – Bob Silverberg and Randy Garrett – were rolling from their combined brains. Ye Gods! When I think of that fantastic summer in New York – I believe I am right in saying that nothing like it had hit the li'l ole metropolis in years – I am immediately whisked back into one of the most adventurous – in special terms – most enjoyable and most hectic periods of my life. For, you see, Pamela and I *lived* in New York. We didn't just pass through on a visit centring round a special affair. But back to Randy.

After this first meeting we met the incredible bouncing bundle of energy many times. Pick out a few high spots. One, in particular, remains burning brightly at the altar of memory – all right, then, I'll write this the way I want; you wanna read fannish writing, flick the page, bub! One evening after a full evening's entertainment, Pamela and I wound up with Randy and he decided that we ought to go out on the town. We, weak-willed, agreed. A taxi was forthwith hailed and we sped downtown to the residence of Katherine Maclean. This lady is well known to *ASF* readers. There was a chance that she would have a free evening and Randy was all for hitting the high spots. He'd just been paid, not ellessdee but slashed-through esses by good ole JWC*, and the money was burning a hole in his pocket.

* John W. Campbell again.

We arrived downtown, paid off the cab and walked a short distance

through the side streets that, we were informed, were habitually filled with just the sort of hood that the American B-picture industry portrays so faithfully. I held Pamela's hand.

Later on, going to a meeting of the Hydra Club, we were reliably genned up on the official price-list for jobs. It went something like this: "*One beating up*: 10 dollars; *One broken leg*: 15 dollars; *A hospital case*: 20 dollars," and so on, all neatly price-tagged, until there was something like: "*One Chicago overcoat* – check current pricelist."

We arrived at a small block, about six storeys or so high. Everything seemed in darkness and repeated bell-ringing produced nothing. I brushed off a furtive offer of a "smart razor job, guaranteed messy" thinking of various friends who would undoubtedly benefit from a little expenditure on my part, and asked Randy what next?

Well – you've seen films of the US Marines landing on Pacific Islands and wallowing about in Korea? Randy was fully up to scratch and showed himself worthy of the silver star they gave him. He would have left the Seventh Cavalry still sweeping out the stables. Up the side of the building – a midget for New York but a towering giant if set down here – ran a fire escape. Ah-hah! But the end of the fire escape was a goodly distance from the ground. The Yalu River's a good way from Peoria; but the boys got there just the same.

Randy gave me no time to argue. The next instant I was staggering about the sidewalk with Randy Garrett – all fifty stone of him – perched on my shoulders.

"Stand still till I get a grip!" he shouted in the Tone Of Command.

"If I stand here I'll be driven into the pavement," I gritted out. The force of Randy's fists on my head prevented me from parting my jaws; so I gritted it out. I managed to weave back to the iron railings and steadied myself. Then an Atlas ICBM took off from my shoulders. (Note that cunning dragging in of Atlas without the tired old mythological stuff?) I almost went to my knees; but the Garrett was airborne!

With a sirening wail the fire escape descended under his weight. He was up over the rail and then – truly – he went up those treads like a cat. Well, for a big man he moved in the best traditions of big bulky men in fiction – fast. Then we heard him hammering on a window. He yodelled a bit, too. I'd already suggested that Katy Maclean might not want to see us; but the Marines had overruled all that shy nonsense.

Some time later the window opened and Randy disappeared inside. Now – here I must be honest in my memoirs – I can't recall if Pamela and I went up via the front door and inside stairs or if we nipped up the fire escape. It is of little moment; we entered the Katy Maclean apartment.

Well! This was a garret to which Garrett had brought us, and I refrain from any other comment except for a casual flick of the eyebrows in the direction of the wheels of IF*, and to do it justice would need an extended novel à la *Trilby*.

* IF was Irish Fandom, notoriously addicted to puns.

One long narrow room with a small window was literally covered in pictures. Pieces of hacked about plaster and suchlike stood about, a couple of divans looked as though Elinor Glyn had just gone out. Piles of books and papers – well, they're standard equipment for all sf folk. Pots of paint and brushes were kicked underfoot. Empty frames, canvases, stretchers, paint – and pictures. A busted fridge to keep ours at Dave Kyle's company. Empty coffee cups and fag ends. A sort of bivouac in the centre of a painter's garret studio, if you follow.

Katy had rented the place from a painter who was returning the following day and Katy and her typewriter were seeking alternative accommodation. Here is no place to go into all this – even if I could recall half the arrangements that went on in NY at that time – and so we pass on to the search for liquor, the cajoling, and finally the sallying forth into the NY night. We had quite a ball that night too, winding up back home – Dave Kyle's place where we were living on our own – somewhere around 4am.

And another spot. Tom Lehrer was all the rage then, and Pamela and I brought back his record (a gift from Dick Wilson) which went the rounds over here, being tape-recorded by many fans until the BBC caught on a number of years later and did a Third Programme on him; with most of the best bits cut out.

Randy fits in here only as a sort of flashlight picture that the memory picks up and hangs on to. We were riding through the NY night, en route to another party, in Larry Shaw's car (ah! Larry Shaw's car!) and Randy was in the back seat singing Tom Lehrer's songs at the top of his voice. We all joined in at the bits we remembered. Especially the "ility" part*, which is supremely wonderful.

* From Tom Lehrer's spoof love song *When You Are Old And Grey*: "An

awful debility, / A lessened utility, / A loss of mobility / Is a strong possibility. / In
all probability / I'll lose my virility / And you your fertility / And desirability, /
And this liability / Of total sterility / Will lead to hostility / And a sense of
futility....”

If you don't know Tom Lehrer then grab the record; it's worth it. We first heard it at Dick Ellington's, when we were talking to him and a gang including Dan Curran, Bill Donaho, Art Saha and like that.

Randy always seemed a little put out by my beard. When I told him, truthfully, that I'd grown it to prevent worry about shaving on journeys and therefore not looking respectable, he took the moral to heart. Some time later a whole gaggle of the lads grew beards: Bob Silverberg, Harlan Ellison, Ted White. We had an appointment, arranged by Randy, with Arthur C. Clarke. Larry Shaw drove us down to the hotel. Randy was the only fan in NY who knew that Arthur was in town, having had the information direct from the West Coast. The idea was to greet Arthur, and then shock him by showing him two other Londoners. (I know Arthur kums frum Zummerzet, but the idea was there.)

Well, we met Arthur, who was pleased, I think, to see familiar faces. Pamela and I hung about down below and then jumped out on Mike Wilson and scared the living daylights out of him. We had a good meal, during which a good deal of “smoke-filled room” activity was done in arranging with Arthur to be Guest of Honour at the New York con, for the following year.

Then Randy went along to the drug-store in the hotel and bought a razor and blades in a plastic case. This he wanted to present to me. I explained as politely as I could that by this time I was attached to the beard, and, anyway, if I started shaving now I'd have to keep it up. (As, circa 1959, I jolly well have, curse it!) He was most hurt that I'd refused his offer to clean me up, but it all passed off well enough. He left the razor in Larry's car. A letter I had from Larry reasonably recently informed me that he was using the razor himself, as he'd gone away for a weekend and forgotten his – and discovered the Garrett/Bulmer razor lying in the crevice of the upholstery! So everything has its uses.

Randy Garrett and a glass of alcohol went hand in hand, if you follow. The amount of liquid he stowed away was matched only by the amount that seeped through his skin when he was engaged – as he usually was – in doing something extraordinarily energetic. He and Bob Silverberg thrashed the faces off their typewriters, turning out material which they rushed off hot-foot to Campbell. Then the whole NY fannish community hung about biting its

collective fingernails waiting for The Decision. If “Nay”, gloom and despair struck all. If “Yea” – well, on one of the very first occasions of this nature I had an appointment with Randy to discuss a story that had been cooked up by a gang of us during one session. I went uptown to the block where the fans lived in various apartments – Bob Silverberg, Ron Smith, Harlan Ellison – and where Randy Garrett bunked down on any convenient floorspace.

I waited, passing the time of day with Harlan who was busily fanning instead of writing pro stuff – just as I am now, squanderer of time! – and eventually, gave up. Randy was missing for three days.

There was a knock on one of the apartment doors. It was opened – and Randy stood in the doorway for only an instant, and then pitched forward full length on to his face.

Quite a guy.

Perhaps the latest news we have of him merely fills out the character portrait we have. He has taken up religion in a big way, becoming an Anglican, and religiously attends all services. He refused to attend the '57 con, because he would have to leave the US and his church. The fact that Anglicans started here didn't, apparently, enter the calculations.

Why should Randy join an English church? I think it was part of the Gilbert & Sullivan and like that mania that was around NY. I wouldn't like you to imagine it was me – I am not Church of England. But whatever it was, I feel convinced that Randy is sincere and genuine about it; he doesn't do things by halves.

SF NYC

Seems to me, sitting here in the calm of a Savannah afternoon, that there must after all have been a great meaning to Science Fiction Fandom. Not just the ordinary, mundane, “have a good time” meaning. Not just the sf is escapism meaning. Not even, spare the phrase, the “sf has a message” meaning. There is, it seems to me, trying to think coherently after two months of frantic wandering and holing up, something about fandom that lifts it out of the here-and-now, the mundane, the ordinary – even out of the exceptional, by the standards of the world’s exceptional.

New York by night, a howling brilliant wilderness. The ant heaps of industry in New Jersey. The miraculous pasting of parkways and roadways against the sky, where they swoop over and below and through each other like the threads in the clashing lives they carry. Television and radio masts, spearing into the sky, each one, like trees of an unnatural metropolitan life, trying to choke the others and rear itself and its message alone. The inevitable doorsteps, with their inevitable freight of apathetic humanity. The crap games. Poker with greasy cards and nimble, brown fingers that alone carry any semblance of beauty in a world of sordid pride. Kids playing ball on a Police Athletic League lot – a gap-toothed playground in a row of tenements – and instead of receiving the impact of New York you think at once, poignantly, of a bomb-site in London. Skyscrapers – how small! Until you walk past a doorway, and look up, and see the whole mass falling upon you.

Rockefeller Plaza. A second island sprouting from the rock of Manhattan Island. Does anyone ever think of a cosmic pair of pliers, ready to twist, to break, and to yank? The deserted El. The East Side. Now so respectable and sedate – but that’s because you see it from a speeding car. Wait until the lights go up on the Broadway of the 90s. And Broadway? Times Square – and, idiotically, you think “it’s not a square!” And, somehow, Trafalgar Square seems more grand, and fine – and tragically foreign in that moment of self-revelation.

Harlem. Quite normally, you eat at an Indian Restaurant – and laugh when real sari-clad Indians walk in and the waiter doesn’t understand them. And a Red Indian face on the subway – the subway! – sitting beside a face that drooped its heavy eyes from the Inca carvings lost in the jungles. All the

nationalities you see. The United Nations building – A glass tile on edge, with diamond-hard personalities scratching their pathetic marks upon it. A maelstrom of characters, New York spreads tentacles that grip and bind and cling with a strength you thought impossible. Perhaps it's the fans you meet. Perhaps they, really, are the heart of New York. All you know, when you can think, is that Fandom does have a meaning even if you can't quite put it into words that mean anything.

Pow Wow at Indian Lake

During the con, numbers of tentative suggestions were made as to the future plans of Pamela and myself, but as we survived to write of these notable events it seems that the suggested modes of disposal were not effected. At least, this seems to be a corporeal body with which I write, even though I recognize the possibility that it may, as one wit suggested, have been decomposed and now consists merely of disembodied atoms.

Doc Barrett, who is a Good Man, and who is a long-time fan, con attendee and firm friend of the Cincinnati Fantasy Group, asked Pamela and me if we would care to go to his place on Indian Lake for a week or so before moving on. This idea was eagerly grasped by us as Doc had proved himself the best of companions, and as we had a long-standing invitation from Jesse Floyd to stay with him in Savannah, a stay timed to begin about the time Doc would be driving down to Florida for a surgeon's conference, Doc very kindly offered to drive us down to the Deep South.

We set off from Cleveland and travelled along the shore of the lake for a time, where ships existed that would have been quite comfortable in the Atlantic. With us was Doc's secretary and her girl friend: these were most anxious to see the house of a man who had just been found out and prosecuted for some crime or other, murder or sump'n of a similar nature. We cruised along with the ladies saying things like: "you'd never believe he could do it," and "he was the Mayor," and with Doc making sarcastic remarks about his lady friends' penchant for the gruesome. They were not in the least put out. They took up an American trait of indulging at the least opportunity in the sort of wit called "insulting humour" which, although practised over here, has not reached the heights – or depths – that it has in the U.S.

We were heading for the town of Bellefontaine, Ohio, a name which reminds many fen of the Midwestcon of infamous memories. Dusk fell. The car – a large Detroit wagon of impeccable comfort – howled along. We reached signs of work along the road. We bumped over the dirt to a white new-made turnpike. Turned left and shot off. Doc wasn't quite sure where we were or where we were going, but we were humming along anyway. The road was not yet open to traffic and was unlit. The white concrete glimmered

ghostly in the light of the headlamps. Apart from car noise – a minimum – all was quiet. This was a most eerie experience, hurtling along a deserted white road on the wrong side and expecting any minute to bump into the bulldozers and concrete mixers where the road ended. Eventually the map told us that we were travelling in the wrong direction, so we reversed course and fled back, discovering that the dirt track over which we had bumped led us across the new road by the side of an unfinished flyover, and so brought us to our correct route.

Doc lives in a large chalet type house on the shore of the lake. The rooms are divided by folding doors. Everything is modern and up to date, with deep freezers, laundry works in the basement, elaborate cooking arrangements, central heating – the lot. With all this luxury spread around – “what meat shall we have tonight? We have all sizes in the deepfreeze” – I suppose we should not have been surprised at the standard of living. Pamela decided that a Yorkshire pudding might not come amiss to our transatlantic cousins and promptly made one. When we discovered, to our horror, that the Americans throw good beef dripping away, contemptuously dismissing it as “fat” and Pamela had made the Yorkshire, we heard that a grand barbecue had been laid on. This entailed the whole family and us going down to a shelter on the lake shore and barbecuing beef over charcoal fires, all the rage at that time. The journey from house to shelter was considerable. The Yorkshire was made, beautiful in its golden fluffiness and swelling contours. It was then hurried down the garden path in the teeth of the lake breeze, whacked out on to plates until the meat was ready. I’ve a strange suspicion that the Barrett family still haven’t tasted the joys of real Yorkshire.*

* *Cooking Out of This World* (1973) edited by Anne McCaffrey contains Pamela Bulmer’s – previously and later Pamela Buckmaster’s – own story of how she prepared the Pudding and... “watched with mounting horror as the dish was passed from hand to hand and subjected to the most intense scrutiny, as if it were a dead cockroach. I gasped out that it didn’t perform, that it should be eaten hot, straight from the oven with gravy, roast beef and roast potatoes. Before my eyes it shrank until all that remained was a tired, deflated, cardboard-coloured lump. It just died from the indignity.”

Barbara, the daughter of the family and a girl to make some man happy for the rest of his born natural, took us out on the lake in a speedboat belonging to Doc. I was scared. We opened up, the bow rose on the step and we went scudding along between islands and sharp-fanged rocks, scattering mere sailing dinghies, etc. There was some discussion among the Barrett

children as to the efficacy of the engine, which growled to itself as though in pain. The boat stopped, the engine hatch was ceremoniously opened and the guts of the job indecently displayed. I began to eye the land and work out the number of strokes I could manage before sinking. However, after some technicalities and a withering look from the younger Barrett boy in my direction at my unspoken but obvious ignorance of the internal combustion engine – knowledge with which every red-blooded American boy is born – we resumed our hectic course, and arrived safely back if rather wet.

On another day Doc drove us over to a local college football match. This, it goes without saying, was American football. The ground was a tastefully decorated greensward and the bleachers were gaunt against the trees lining the road. Popcorn and other delicacies were on sale. I took a walk around and observed in a field across the way gangs of lads in crash helmets and body-padding prancing high-kneed, darting about, kicking footballs and generally working up. This, as I saw it, was all a good build up and loosening of the muscles before the game. Out on the field one of the famous American marching bands went through its paces, followed by three others, each from a competing college, four taking part in two halves each. The marching bands were pleasant, with the drum majorettes curving around in the van. Then, the first two teams passed me to enter the field and I saw the state of the lads.

They had quite literally been worked up into a state of nervous and physical hysteria. They were jumping up and down, moving their arms like boxers, sweating, nervously shouting, showing every symptom of drunken troops readying themselves for a bayonet charge. There was a holdup. The last of the marching bands had not yet cleared the arena, and the troops were growing impatient – and showing it. “Let’s go,” they shouted, and variations on this. I had a fleeting impression of a chained team of horses dragging at a stubborn stump, or of a dynamo struggling to turn against an impossible force; and – comically – came the memory of Don Bradman walking quietly out to the wicket.

Then the avalanche was let loose and the boys poured out on to the field, looking like spaceship pilots heading back to their ship on an alien and hostile planet.

American football is an exact science, and not one that needs to be gone into here. I picked up the rudiments of the contest – it is scarcely a game – and found that, in truth, it is interesting in a cold, calculating way. The cheer leaders down front were not, it seemed to me, of the best quality, but then I’m

no judge of that. When one team was penned in before their goal and was struggling to prevent the other team from crossing the line for a try, the cheer leaders started the chant of: “Hold that line!” To me, this seemed rank bad psychology.

But it was quite clear that, as was pointed out to me, American football is designed as a catharsis for the onlookers. An American wants to go there and shout himself hoarse – on instructions – and generally let his hair down. Not being a patronizer of British league football where no doubt a similar condition obtains, I cannot compare the two. Anyway, the day was great fun and the football expedition a great success.

Don Ford brought Margaret and the family up for the weekend and we spent a very pleasant time talking over the con and other fannish affairs which at the time were in the forefront of everyone’s mind. When we saw Don off it was, as we knew, probably the last time we’d meet, unless we went again to the States or Don came to England. This thought, not surprisingly, affected us at the leave-taking, but here is not the time to go into the story of Don Ford and his work, as this can be dealt with in the chapter on the CFG.*

* Cincinnati Fantasy Group.

Doc’s life at this time, apart from his medical work (which we gathered ranked him a pretty big bug in US surgery), revolved around the Shriners and their parade, which this year was to be held in Bellefontaine, and which was a great honour for so small a township. Everyone was infected by Doc’s high spirits. His deep voice, rasping chuckle and big cigar chased away any of the old morbid spirits that had the temerity to look in on us. His secretary had just bought a brand new car, and she took us driving around in pouring rain... there we were all snug in this big luxurious boat on balloon tyres, with Detroit marvels all about us – and with a contempt for sticking in ruts full of mud that made me, with memories of the old fanvan, wince. One measures a man in the way his subordinates regard him; in this respect Doc had a first class secretary.

On the great day we went along to her house, met her family and friends, and sat on the porch watching for the parade. Bands, bunting, flags, symbols, costumes, cars, bands, a host of fun and games paraded through the streets of Bellefontaine. The Shriners is one of those semi-secret orders like the Freemasons, and the men wore red fezzes with golden half-moons and other secret symbols. There were cowboys, Indians, sheikhs and other

American ideas of the Middle Eastern way of life. We were tickled pink with it all. As an Englishman I was naturally reserved and cheered in a minor and dignified key – until Doc himself rolled along in an open car seated beside the bigwig of the order. Then I let rip a few yells to show that as far as fandom was concerned, this mobile con was put on for Doc’s benefit and was his baby. The bigwig looked up at the porch, caught the yell and said something to Doc. No doubt it was to the effect that his locals were a rip-roaring bunch of wildcats and quite unlike the civilized citizens of the great metropoli.

On top of the worldcon and the organization of the Shriner parade, Doc was going south for the surgeon’s con; he was a very busy man. Yet he had time to run me out to a farmhouse he owned to show me the rooms literally stacked to the ceiling with old mags and books. Doc probably has one of the biggest collections in the world; certainly I have seen no larger. Not having had the pleasure of visiting the Ackerman garages, I cannot compare, but anyone who wants to stand his collection against Doc’s must have three separate homes in which to store it all. There were bound copies of the three main zines – *ASF**, *Amazing* and *TWS** – stretching around his surgery shelves for the edification of visitors. The surgery basement contained boxes loaded with treasure. The farmhouse groaned under the weight of books and mags and, back at the lake, the house possessed the *pièce de resistance*.

* *ASF*, *TWS*: shorthand for *Astounding Science Fiction* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. As any trufan knows.

Having seen Jack Williamson’s study, Doc had decided that this was the thing, and had constructed a facsimile in an upstairs room. Evelyn, his wife, had carpentered it herself, and a very fine job it is too. One wall was solid bookcases with a sloping desk for current periodicals. Through the maze of books ran a railway system, this, of course, belonged to the son; but I recall that on a tape we cut and sent to Ted Carnell, I was more enthusiastic over the railway system than over the sf side – a reflex defensive action.

Looking back I regret that I didn’t have the energy to explore Doc’s collection more fully, in particular the very old fantasy magazines he possessed, which are indeed rare and precious items to any sf fan. But after the con and its attendant excitements, Pamela and I were trying to recuperate in preparation for the balance of the trip.

On the day we were to travel south, Doc piled us all into the largest of the family’s cars and we set off in fine fettle, first calling on his elder son at

college.

Doc's son greeted him from the steps of a building from amongst a group of friends, and came over to be introduced. He was quiet and subdued; but that may have been merely because parents were in the offing. During a school play a short time before, the students had fixed up a magic trick which involved having fumes rise in the background, and for the purpose they had used a jar of acid which gave off suitable fumes. When the props were being dismantled one lad at the top of a ladder clumsily dislodged the jar of acid and shouted a warning. Doc's son looked up and got the lot in his face. He can still see from one eye but Doc, as a doctor, scoured America for hope for the other; the last we heard there was none. Comment here is superfluous.

Driving down to Savannah, from where Doc was going on to Florida, was an experience. Pamela stopped off to pick real cotton in a field and the obvious crack about keeping her cotton-pickin' fingers off – whatever she was touching – was duly made. We still have this cotton ball – but, perhaps fortunately, no boll weevil to go with it.

At one point somewhere along the route we stopped for gas and a Coke; they had jugs of cider for sale too. These were bought but turned out to be apple-juice rather than cider. I couldn't understand a word the natives were saying – this must have been Carolina somewhere – and they couldn't savvy me. I asked Doc what they were saying and he wasn't 100% sure. So much for the English speaking union. Yet, in Kentucky it is claimed, the natives still speak Elizabethan English. Although this claim has recently been shown to be a wishful-thinking daydream, the moral is clear.

Along the Blue Ridge mountains of ole Virginia we stopped for the view, which was immense and grand. I kept thinking of the battles that had raged here during the Civil War – or, as we were going South – the War between the States – and this ground was as much history-drenched to a thinking man as a deal of the Old World. (Which seemed a hell of a long way off.) Just to keep up our spirits I showed the younger Barrett son how to bowl an off-break guaranteed to remove Hutton's bails. He kept bending his arm as though indulging in baseball pitching. I would not have been surprised if the stones we bowled had pitched near a rusty sabre or a blue or grey kepi.

Then looking right away across the blue plains with the mountains trending left and right, and seeing the whole vast area as though covered with trees, you could not but help picture the sleek red skin of the Indians flitting from tree to tree, tomahawks upraised, moccasins silent, and see the settlers

with axe and fire carving out their homesteads, their tricorne hats hung on a convenient branch and their long muskets handy. Yes, even though we found an abysmal and appalling ignorance of the historical progression in the youth of America, history is all about them.

At last we reached Savannah, rolling in over a fine new bridge which was recently the scene of that ghastly accident where the butane wagon went over and burned up the swimmers in the river, and then got lost. We struck off to the right and down a road lined by toppling shacks, filth, spilled dustbins and grey washing, and a general air of decay and neglect, to find we'd entered the Negro section of the city; so we about-faced and went back, striking this time through the city centre, which is a series of squares all neatly planned the day the town was started and not the result of haphazard growth. They are disliked by car drivers as they demand a succession of turns simply to go in a straight line.

We went into a high-class eatery or restaurant, full of chrome and glass and neon, where I rang the number Jesse had given me. A friend came out in a car, saying he that couldn't direct us there but he could take us. We stood on the kerb and waved good-bye to the Barrett family, as fine a family as anyone could wish anywhere, and then entered Jesse's friend's car to drive to his apartment.

Cleveland Cameo

To explain the chapter title: the 1955 World SF Convention attended by Ken Bulmer in his capacity as TAFF delegate was Clevention in the Manger Hotel, Cleveland, Ohio. The Guests of Honour were Isaac Asimov and Sam Moskowitz.

The Gift for Immortal Prose in most people deserts them the moment they put words to paper, and in retailing Pamela's and my adventures in the land of Bloch and Tucker I feel the need to put on my best bib and tucker. I shall not, I assure you, feel competent at this present juncture to regale you with the story of Tucker's next generation and L. Sprague de Camp's dental floss or of Willy Ley. As Walter Alexander Willis has said, we shall be referring to rare objects on the fannish scene as "Scarce as Bulmer's teeth." I am wounded by this, wounded to the gums. But, gritting my few remaining ivories, I repeat the fatal words "dental floss".

This thin, stringy, fluffy, twine-like substance is not as well known or as widely used this side of the Atlantic as the other. The theory is, in the land where toothpicks form part of the table decorations, that the floss shall be drawn between the teeth to remove the odd lobster claw or hominy grit.

L. Sp. de C. was apparently about to perform this intricate operation on his pearlies during a Willy Ley talk, which was probably on rockets if it wasn't about extinct animals. Now, much as we all love and admire Willy, a talk by him demands absolute concentration. Tucker, knowing this, concentrated. His offspring off-sprang. The next we saw was young David Tucker cavorting up and down the aisle with de Camp's dental floss. De Camp had apparently, in one of his juvenile-psychological-fits, given it to the Wild Talent Junior to keep him amused.

He was successful. Stunningly successful. The young Tucker wound the stuff about him, cooed over it, ran up and down trailing it behind him like a Jules Verne steam-engine rocket-train from here to the Moon. People began to look. People began to nod their heads and to pass the word along. Willy Ley carried on sternly, oblivious to the rival attraction.

It is doubtful that even he would have been impressed by my inspired comment that young Tucker was attempting to explain an abstruse mathematical point of astronautics just then being made by Willy in more

simple terms, understandable by us mere fen. On the other hand, Willy might have been talking about extinct animals. The parallel there is so bright that I refrain from comment.

At last Tucker Snr. lassoed Tucker Jnr. – it was not established if he used the dental floss or not – and order was restored. But it was the most successful Willy Ley lecture in decades, I was told.

To round off the opening remarks – and no Gift for Immortal Prose is to be expected this time round – I doubt that any pen could do justice to the thoughts that crossed my mind when talking to Bob Bloch and Tony Boucher. Incidentally, he pronounces his name “Bowcher”, so I guess that must be right.

They both have noses. They both have gimlet eyes. And – they both use cigarette holders. Now, many people use cigarette holders: Evelyn Paige, Terry-Thomas and Ted Tubb. But the sight of Bloch and Boucher with holders, sitting at the little, private, dimly lit and coloured-lighted bar in the hotel in Cleveland, aroused a storm of fancies. Imagine – the romantically lit bar, the ranked bottles, the unobtrusive waiter, tree-like decorations swathing pillars, soft seats, good drinks – and the two giants facing each other. At once – at once – they were two gentlemen from fiery Italy of the Renaissance. Their rapiers flickered, catching glints of light, flickering in and out in flashing parry and riposte. The blades clashed and rang. Or – they were two heroes from the plains of Ilium, hurling insults at each other, hefting their well-made spears, casting them in darts of Jovian thunder. Or – well, you carry on.

Two sf giants, sitting fencing with cigarette holders, still clenched between teeth (huh?). The stuff from which can be spun sf and fannish fantasies that still contain the sense of wonder that some people insist has been lost, by them.

The name of the bar was the Purple Tree and the atmosphere was purple. A sort of Pelham Groom twilight*, if you follow. The swizzle sticks were all little purple trees, and the general effect was one of jungles on Venus. I was also reminded of Niebaldskis’s Mutant. The bar was reasonably small and most select and secretive; and, to me, anyway, it never seemed to fill as you’d expect. I think this was in part accounted for by the immense quantities of liquor consumed in room parties, etc. I don’t believe Guest of Honour Isaac Asimov went to sleep from one end of the con to the other.

* The reference is to *The Purple Twilight* by Pelham Groom, a now largely

forgotten SF book of 1948.

Doc Barrett had a shirt with two pockets, in one of which he had sleepy pills and in the other wakey-wakey pills. He used to walk about prescribing as he went. Some of the con attendees set their physiological systems by Doc's pills, snapping to smart attention at the crack of a programme item with a pill, and dropping off to sleep under someone else's bed at party-low-ebb with another.

One evening, Dale R. Smith had very kindly offered to take Pamela and me to dinner, as a generous gesture showing his support of the TAFF man. Arrangements were quickly made that Chinese food was just the thing for a group of the CFG. Dale is a large, soft-spoken, very pleasant individual with the sort of mid-Western sincerity that makes every topic important. He is not to be confused with Death Ray Smith of immortal memory, and also of Nuneaton.* Dale went out of his way to be pleasant to us, as did most everyone, and we all repaired through the streets of Cleveland to the Chinese restaurant.

* A very active British fan before World War II.

As in any city where you go out to eat with a bunch, so it was in Cleveland. Where was the restaurant? *Which* restaurant? This way – no, that one was not it – well then, *this* way.... We eventually arrived at a Chinese restaurant and entered.

At that time Pamela liked Chinese food and I didn't. I'd been foisted off with terrible stuff in various Chinese restaurants by Ted Tubb from time to time and had conceived an aversion to it. So I watched with some trepidation as waiter after waiter brought in bowl after bowl....

It has only been in the last couple of years that my palate and susceptibilities have accustomed themselves to Chinese food, through the gourmet example of Dan Morgan and John Kippax. They share my views on what is eatable and what not. Altho' I cannot follow them all the way I can, at least, understand how to order.

There were a number of notable diners around that Chinese table in Cleveland. Ellis Mills, Ben Keifer, "the one with the stomach muscle", Don Ford and Lou Tabakow. We started in and I did find some quite nice things to eat. The atmosphere was fine, and, I recall, it was that sort of conversation where anyone speaks to anyone and it all fits in but there is nothing you can pin-point for posterity. At one point Pamela and I were warned most carefully

about a certain foodstuff, on a small dish, and told that this was hot, really hot, hotter than anything you've ever tasted.

This was Chinese mustard. From all I gathered, it was uncommon in the States for English mustard to be used – they have the powder, but make it in some complicated way that comes out something like Continental mustard, which of course is just like fish paste. Anyway, one of the chap's wives was tasting this and making the appropriate cooing noises of heat, so we tried it and it turned out to be like English mustard, so that was all right. It may have been made a little bit stronger, but the difference was minute. I recently heard from Ellis that someone stuffed a wedge in their mouth and nearly exploded. I've an idea we disappointed them when we didn't exclaim at how *hot* it was.

In a bar somewhere I pulled a juvenile action pun. Dale Tarr and Dale Smith, two chaps who although not small are not as tall as Don Ford (is anyone?) happened to be standing talking, so I ups and begins to marshal them around. I put Tarr *there* and Smith *there*, and stuck Ford between, *there*. Surveying my handiwork, and their puzzled expressions, I hadn't the heart to make the pun and, anyway, it had slipped in the making and wasn't the full blooded one I'd originally thought of. So, I said: "Behold, a mountain between two Dales." Of course the "ford" aspect of it should have been worked in but I'm not a punman *à la* WAW. (For which small mercy, Ghu be thanked.) They were quite polite.

* Walter A. Willis, of course – a major Wheel of IF (Irish Fandom) and inveterate punster.

When I'd eaten all I could, and most of the others had called it a day, Ben, Ellis and Don, with Lou still in there, cleared the table. Don began to chuckle, but he knew that these lads could shift the food without ill effects. The Americans eat a lot more than we do, it seems, and the theory is that this gives them their energy. Could be. Doc had figures which showed that the size of us'ns over here had not increased through the war years, as most of the US folk are increasing in size – over the generations and by averages, of course – apparently because we had rationing which, although giving us a perfectly good and livable diet, didn't give us that little extra which allowed growth increase. I thought of the dinosaurs and their flopping, also of the early-type mammals which ran to size until us little 'uns kicked 'em out. Still, even though the Black Prince was quite a shorty to us, there were big fellows in his days, and I suppose that even though the height of the average population-unit (how's that for another new and ugly way of saying

something?) is steadily increasing, there will be enough shorties to hold the balance level and to prevent the big 'uns from ruining the race. (Come in, WAW, James White, Ted Tubb, Don Ford *et al*, and shoot me down. Hah!!)

Here endeth this chapter. In picking out a few snapshot memories of the con we're hoping to build up a multi-dimensional picture that, although more difficult than a mere straightforward narrative, has already picked up some favourable comment. If I haven't made it clear from the beginning, both Pamela and I were greatly appreciative of the goodwill and hospitality shown us; but I think that is abundantly clear from what has already been written – even if not in any style showing a Gift of Immortal Prose....

Talking Topics

Before going on with the decrepit saga of the Bulmer family's erratic wanderings over some of the Eastern, Midwestern and Southern States of the U.S. of A. I want to clear up an interesting knotty problem brought up by a BNF. No names, as they say, and no pack drill. Have you ever seen a pack-drill? I have – thank Ghu, I never experienced it. It looks awful, and I'm not talking about the faked-up bully-yelling that most recruits get to hear behind a wall; that's Army psychology that probably goes back to longbows and beyond.

Well, now, you remember that when Doc Barrett was taking Pamela and myself down to Savannah, we stopped off at a wayside store where "Cider" had been advertised. I mentioned that this cider turned out not to be pressed apple juice. Now, to me, this was a simple contrast remark, like when you buy suspenders here you *get* suspenders and when you buy them in the States you get braces. And there is the tie-up with cider, too, which you all know about.* Also there were many remarks about the old Kentucky rifleman with his jar of applejack hitched up on his shoulder – all these things sort of blended.

* Bulmer's is a long-established British brand of (alcoholic) cider.

Now if this well-respected BNF gets out of these remarks that I was knocking the U.S. of A. – well, he's abysmally wrong, of course; but the mere fact that he was receiving this impression is disturbing. Here we were, in a tremendous country, meeting many people for the first time, being feted, put-up, fed, amused, looked after and generally being given the impression that we were important people. And so we turn right round and write unpleasant things? No, however much psychology of the gift-horse and the reverse-reaction you care to read into all this, the facts still remain that Pamela and I like and admire Americans and their country far too much to indulge in cheap wisecracks. Certainly we found much we didn't like. We also find a lot we don't like here, and in other countries of the world. But as a guest you have to trim your criticism to suit the requirements of the moment – for instance, we refrained from pointing out that the Americans drive on the wrong side of the road, and that at the beginning almost every car drive was a

nightmare experience.

One other little interesting note on this contrast thing: in NY the girls called their handbags “purses”. For some reason this always threw me. One sweet young neofanne at a party asked me to give her purse and I went pawing over the table littered with empty bottles, ashtrays overflowing, etc. There was this black and gilt handbag but no purse, and my heart failed me at opening the thing to take the purse out. I was told, firmly and forcibly, that *that* was a purse. Oh! Sorry.

At this same party, the little camera-screen in my mind lights up in three-D, colour and sound, Randy Garrett and Harlan Ellison came in singing G & S about an Englishman. Now I have read *Habakkuk Chap. 1., Verse 3.** My mind, as they say, boggled. The impression I have is that Randy was singing with one arm draped round Harlan’s shoulders, and Harlan was doing his damndest in the Ellison way to get *his* arm up over Randy’s shoulder so they could sing in equality. Now, the correction comes. Suppose it was Randy, manfully trying to get his arm up over *Bill Donaho’s* shoulder?

* *Habakkuk* – Bill Donaho’s 1960s fanzine, whose “Chapter One” comprised four issues (February 1960 to July 1961) and “Chapter Two” three more (May 1966 to February 1967). It was much later revived with “Chapter Three”, September 1992 to Fall 1994. See also the [Notes](#).

My memory is a tricky joker. I can recall faithfully many points that appear to be unimportant; and totally forget what shopping to buy and whether I’ve sent in my Income Tax return and if I’ve answered good-old so-and-so’s welcome letter. As a f’rinstance, Pamela pointed out to me that I’d claimed Doc Barrett kept his 21st. Century laundry arrangements in the basement. It now appears that the chalet at Indian Lake doesn’t have a basement. Umm. Equally, if Bill Donaho says it was he and Randy who sang their version of “For he’s an Englishman” then I accept that implicitly.

You just don’t argue with Bill Donaho.

Bill claims that I said that I’d never heard the song before. I did say that. It was a pure defence mechanism. Now that Bill has explained that it was he and Randy, I can understand my cringing away; these two men are *big*; and there they were, yelling full into my sensitive fannish face. I’ve never heard it sung that way, is all. As for disliking G & S – I don’t. Some is just tinkle-tinkle, but W.S. was a first class wordsmith, and Sir Arthur turned out material that hasn’t been touched. Thing here is, mucho apologies to Bill.

Harking back to those days spent in NY, I believe everyone knows of

the reputation that Central Park has. You just don't go near there after dark. If you do – the chances are that you'll be mugged, beaten up, robbed, and, if a girl, invited to lie back and enjoy it. However, my saying this may again bring down the wrath of the BNF who accused me of denigrating the American scene. So, to balance the score, I'll say I wouldn't allow Pamela to walk alone along many a London street. Okay?

There were six of us. We were going downtown to our apartment and skirting the Park. We'd been warned many times that if we contemplated an evening stroll then to steer clear of the Park; but the devil got into the four guys with us, and they suggested we might like to see the notorious Park by night. There were Danny Curran, Art Saha, Bill Donaho and Dick Ellington, plus Pamela and me. We said nervously "Yes."

As soon as we entered the gates and began to stroll along the path, with bushes black on either hand, my fears left me. Hell – this quartet could do a great of damage before they might be swamped by any gang of hoodlums. In the fracas, Pamela and I could skedaddle out of there. So, feeling very daring and very brave, we wandered along, singing.

Maybe it was a silly thing to do and maybe the dangers of the Park had been exaggerated just so Pamela and I wouldn't do anything silly. But, still, with these four tough hombres – and believe me, they were tough – it seemed OK. Although I have no proof of this, one of them, I believe, habitually carried a nasty weapon of offence – knife, cosh, etc. – with him at all times. Reason was that he'd been mixed up with other characters who were just as unfriendly at times. This wasn't on the Ellison juvenile delinquent level, either – politics had reared its ugly head.

We'd been up to have a look at the building into which this quartet was moving, the famous place that became known as "Riverside Dive". Walking back in the night – and where we stayed in NY, to find a dark spot wasn't easy – gave a sort of shivery feeling quite unrelated to the dangers, real or imaginary, of the surroundings. The glow in the sky was phenomenal. Light forms such a part of the NY nightscape that we noticed the lack of it as soon as we returned to England.

And out on the roads, well, the Americans really believe in lighting up all they can. This is, of course, in many ways a good thing. I wonder how many of you remember the story "Moth" by G.R. Malloch, pubbed in the June-July 1931 ish of *Weird Tales*, subsequently reprinted as "Winged Terror" in *Fantasy* in 1939? Malloch postulated that the great "Electric Age"

had driven moths almost out of existence, and followed that by a suggestion that giant moths might fly in from some other place. Lights in the US along the main inhabited stretches are fierce. To stand as we did and look out over a city, or the outskirts of a city, where roads and highways and freeways and turnpikes looped and joined and flowed with living light, was an experience worth all the bother of actually travelling on these roads.

One amusing instance of this light abundance – and yet a fine example of planning – was in the lighting of road repairs. We were travelling fast with Larry Shaw when ahead we saw an orange light going off and on, off and on, with a regular rhythm. Larry eased the car down. We came up to the lights and I saw they were two big amber spots, each one going on when the other was off. They were set up in front of a hole in the road about two feet by three. The current supply was high – above the hum of the motor you could hear a distinct click as each light went on. Back in England there'd be a red lamp with a dirty glass.

Anyway, this discursion into lighting isn't half completed – the sight of a US motorway at night is one of the wonders of the world.

Coming back to NY and that night-time walk thru Central Park with a tough escort, these lads certainly did us proud when we were in NY. I'd always wanted to go see a Planetarium. In the first issue of *Star Parade*, in 1941, I'd done an article on Planetaria, with the usual bemoaning groans that there was none in Great Britain. Now there is one in Baker Street I still haven't been. I'm no longer attracted – and that is my fault.

I made a special point of going to the Hayden Planetarium up by W.61 St., along the edge of Central Park. Pamela and I went in and for me, at least, this was going to be a highspot. The show was a children's one – and still I wasn't warned. We sat down and were given an elementary run-thru on the solar system, etc., and then went through into the dome. The whole thing was a mock-up of a journey to the Moon. Remember, this was just after Eisenhower had announced that satellites were to be put up and before the Sputniks, and we were still living in the pre-Space Age. The show as such, and to me, was a flop. I felt, however, that the fault lay with me.

I'd been imagining seeing the wheeling stars, seeing them as they were a million years ago, and as they would look when we set off to explore them and their planets. I'd built up far too much anticipation, and that usually lets you down. I came out really fed-up with the idiocy of the whole show.

Then we went and had a look at a rocket exhibition and that was very

nice – actually seeing components and working models of the models of the rockets with which I was familiar. We found a horseshoe-shaped passage with a chunk of rock on a pedestal at each end. This, the label said, was a meteorite. I looked at it. Then we went on, into the corridor. It curved, and suddenly, we were in a different world. Just the painted corridor, no one else, quietness, a gentle and far-off hum of machinery – and this gigantic chunk of rock that had fallen from space.

I began to warm up. I stood before the rock. It was big – pitted with holes and rotted away where it had lain in the earth. This was a piece of another planet. This had once exploded with immeasurable violence, flung into space, circled in the solar system, and at last fallen with fire and thunder upon the Earth. And here it was, and here was Bulmer, staring at it.

I suppose if this were one of the conventional fan reports I'd have to make some funny remarks about there being no provision to prevent anyone walking out with it. It weighed about half a ton. But the silence got me. Silence, a distant thrum which emphasized the quietness, loneliness – the corridor remained empty all the time. The meteorite sitting on its pedestal. A perceptible coldness flowed out from it. I looked at the black holes in it. What was in there? I began to get the breeze up; anything could come out of that hole. A long-quiescent monster, a BEM, an alien, awakened from his aeons-long sleep, creeping out into the brilliance and heat of a NY summer day.

I looked for Pamela and she wasn't there. I began to be frightened that someone would come round the corridor – some thoughtless laughing kids sucking ice-cream – and make a noise. I kept as quiet as I could. Any noise, I thought, would awaken the being in the rock and bring him – or it – out. I breathed shallowly. I was sweating – and although it was a hot day the coldness of that rock made refrigeration unnecessary.

How old was it? Strangely enough it was probably of the same age as the rock under Manhattan, or the rocks I dug out of the garden at Tresco. But these rocks were of the Earth, Earthy. This was alien. It had not been made on Earth. And I began to get the shivers worse than before.

At last, nonchalantly, reluctantly too, I turned and sauntered out. I wanted not to turn my back. I wanted to run. But instead I found Pamela, and she said : “Where have you been?” I said: “Looking at the meteorite, the big one.” She gave me an old-fashioned look and said: “Yes. I need an ice-cream.”

She knew.

And then we were out under the trees with yelling kids and littered candy wrappings and brilliant sunshine and the smell of NY – strong, familiar, reassuringly Earthly sights and sounds and scents. We caught a bus back and I handled the thirteen cents (I think it was) with aplomb. But that had been another experience worth crossing the Atlantic for. There were lots of them. Like camera flashes, they light up in the Bulmer bonce – but they don't necessarily come out in the chronological order. I don't feel that's important, though.

There'll be more.

Pogo, I Presume?

“And if a snake drops into the boat please remain seated,” said our genial guide. We cast apprehensive looks, which we attempted to make casual and unafraid, at the low-lying mat of creepers, Spanish moss, evil fronds and grasping branches which passed slowly above our heads.

We were in Okefenokee Swamp. Lee Hoffman, Charles Wells, Pamela and myself. It was hot. The sun was somewhere up there, a thermonuclear explosion remotely off in space; but we were down in a green tunnel bending to clear cruel tree stems, riding upon a water that Homer would have recognised immediately. We were, in a way that maybe was never so true elsewhere, riding on a “wine-dark sea”. Only, Pamela said the water was like strong brewed tea. Lee said it looked like root beer. As our boat, aluminium with fussy and unromantic outboard motor, cleaved the water the colour was deep, dark red; maroon, but clearer, like water that has been steeped in a brew of mahogany chips and dying coloured leaves of autumn, ginger, something like strong brewed tea or root beer. Like coca-cola. And, coca-cola originated in Georgia. Maybe – but that is idle speculation.

Welcoming us to the swamp was a branch growing from the water with, cheerfully perched upon it, a white and bleached skull. A genuine skull, found in the swamp. The guide told us that beyond that point you were all on your own. That was strictly for the tourists, we thought. Sure, you get that cheap and phony adventure all over. But we looked beyond the skull – and we weren’t so sure. Later, we found that that was right – past there and you’d never get out unless you were born there. An army man was lost for two weeks – but he got out – he was lucky. Others aren’t. A sign told us that, in the direction of the arrow, was South all the way to Florida, If you knew the way, it said. If you could make it. We didn’t try.

The boat glided on, silently, the motor shut off. An animal skull leered at us from a tree. The trees grew all around, cleared a trifle to allow the passage of small boats. Their silvery trunks were covered with moss, with trailing vines, with all the leg-breaking appliances of the jungle. Occasional rays of sunshine slanted down, blinding us, bringing a green halo to the rest of the world. Our world. The only world we had ever known, it seemed, for years. The world of the swamp.

Alligators we had seen, lying torpidly on a bank, sliding with a spine-chilling sliver over mud, to take the water with a deadly intentness. Snakes – rattlers, cottonmouth moccasins, corals, hideous, beautiful, completely unhumanlike in their sinuous rippling. Turtles, broad, ribbed, funny, bowling along like battleships of the deeps. With beaks that could take off your hand. Black bears, friendly, human, curled up asleep characters. Some fool put his hand into the cage and was ripped up whilst we were there. We saw Pogo. We saw where he lived. We thought of the strip cartoons, and chuckled, and inside ourselves we shivered and prayed. This is no place for a white man. This belongs to Pogo and his kind – it is not for us. And Albert will take just a little more swallowing now, afterwards.

Yes, we went into Okefenokee Swamp. And we had ourselves a whole mess of fun. We wouldn't have missed it. But when we read *Pogo* again – it won't be the same as it used to be. Not the same at all.

Scrabbling Around

Most of the journey up from Savannah to Washington is a blur in the minds of Pamela and myself. We'd had some Greyhound training on the trip from New York to Cincinnati so now knew enough not to sit in the front seat behind the driver. There you had no leg room; there was a beastly partition against which tired and irritated legs thrust all night seeking a comfortable position. Up front, too, you were continually being startled into a half-awareness by the abrupt oncoming dazzle of lights blasting straight into your eyes through the enormous expanse of glasswork. So we sat further back, where there was leg room and protection from the lights. Even so, I remember little of the trip. We were both exhausted. I do remember with a vivid pleasure the tremendous help and understanding from Bob Pavlat. He met us at the depot in his red fire-wagon and whisked us through the torturous toils of Washington traffic to the home of the Derrys.

From what we gathered, when Washington was planned, they laid it out on the grid system. Then – for some reason – another grid system was laid down at a forty-five degree angle over the older one. Thus you have an enormous number of pointy buildings and roads intersecting at forty-five degree angles all over. In addition, we were told that some avenues had to go straight through and to hell with the planners. The result was a lusty sort of traffic confusion that although both normal – in terms of density and flow – and yet abnormal – in terms of congestion – for America, resulted in most people being lost at least once a day.

I suppose Washington was in one sense a sort of legal, juridical and political mausoleum. Some of the fine avenues and seemingly unending facades of tall grey stone buildings gave an impression of withdrawn cerebral cogitation. But in America nothing – that we saw – could be considered static. They were busy tearing up a busy intersection and driving a tunnel through under the level so as to give a crossing free from interruption. Whilst the work was in progress life was hectic, and Bob said he knew a man who had driven round the area for half an hour trying to get out.

When we arrived at the Derry's place we were welcomed in a wonderful style by Chick and Juanita. They had a charming house set in one of the housing estates, and I remember with awe the way they discussed one item

on the agenda, that of choosing the right sort of tree. Chuck was indignant that when the builders came to put up the place they simply tore out all the trees and bushes so as to let their bulldozers have a clear run and allow easy ingress for trucks. Now the greenery was conspicuous by its lowness to the ground. You can consult a catalogue, choose your tree, order it, and have it delivered and – erected? – planted, that’s it. After that it’s up to you if the tree thrives or withers.

I believe it was at Don Ford’s place that we saw a tree that was in full bloom one side and in bud the other. Answer was that in the budding stage a freak snow storm had killed off one side of the tree, which had regrown into bud as the other side went into bloom. Odd looking, rather attractive, and a little pathetic; it conjured up memories of the passing seasons and of old man beardy and his scythe ready for us all.

The only problem on this tree-buying lark is that the things are expensive. Like almost anything else, the tree before the front door was growing into another status symbol. The fact that the trees are necessary to provide shade – and Americans call any sort of tree with wide flat leaves “shade trees” – tends to get lost in the confusion. Although not as hot as Savannah, Washington was still plenty hot. We felt thoroughly at home with Chick and Juanita, and we dubbed them as being the typical American family as they had two wonderful children and a half. According to the statistics, families in America were father, mother and two-and-a-half children. So there.

Chick Derry is a fan full of bubbling enthusiasm. He goes at things with full steam up. As a rep for a ditto company he was in the enviable position of being able to secure bargains in the ditto line, and Washington as well as Baltimore fandom duly profited. He had ingress to the Pentagon, but somehow or other was reluctant to let me crouch on the floor of his car as he drove through the armed guards so I could have first hand information on the arsenal where US military might is planned. He confirmed that there are so many people in the place you could walk around for hours without meeting a soul you knew, and if you had the right credentials you could penetrate right into the place. He’s had one or two salutary experiences, and took the whole business very seriously. When you stop to consider for a moment, it is.

He had a room at the house crammed with duping gear and production facilities for zines, and much of the Washington stuff had been done here. Trouble was, in his job, he had to go off for long periods into the hills, as it

were, and time was at a premium. I'd say that Chick was a first class example of the fan who really believes in fandom as something positive, a force of pleasure in life, and yet does most of his work in the background and couldn't care less about egoboo and bnfmanship. The same can be said of Bob Pavlat. To me, those two fen represent most of what is good in fandom. They lived at that time fairly near each other, even by our more restricted standards, so that they were able to form a sort of continuing nucleus of interest in sf fandom around their area.

They took us to a bar where we could lower a stein or two and I was expecting one of the typical brash, neon-lit, chrome-plated, high-powered, and supremely efficient American bars. Instead, although the place was American in the sense that it throbbed with activity and possessed most of the usual appurtenances, it was a quiet sort of activity, with a closer, darker look and a strong atmosphere of friendliness to the customer, which although it may exist in any other bar is not always particularly noticeable. A smooth and machine-like precision doesn't necessarily mean that the customer is made to feel at home. I feel that part of the reason why Americans say they like an English pub is just this immediate air of friendship and welcome which the place itself, quite apart from the people involved, extends. This added up again, like the time we went to the White Horse in Greenwich Village – but of that, more anon.

Juanita cooked us a superb meal, which might easily have been photographed and used on the front cover of a glossy. We sat around until late into the night, talking and relaxing and generally being made to feel at home. Juanita, whilst being staunchly non-fan, is interested in people to the extent that she might as well be a fan, as Chick and we proved. The evening was like that, very pleasant, and then we went off to bed.

Next morning they said: "We know you slept well last night." "Huh? How?" "Oh, the walls here are so thin and the bed creaks!"

It was at the Derrys' – I believe – that I first saw "Scrabble" played. I didn't try it – we were in the middle of preparing to go somewhere else and time was short – but I watched a few hands being dealt, etc. I couldn't make head or tail of the game, but a few odd facts filed themselves away in my brain. We also tried a detection game with cards and who was the murderer, etc., which was quite good fun except that Chick and Bob were too hot for Herlock Sholmes himself to handle. Anyway, now that in 1960 I am spending a month at the seaside with Walter and Madeleine Willis and families, and

when the Scrabble board appears I play with all the aplomb of Ken Nagle sinking a six-inch putt.

That I put down words which *ought* to be in the English language but for some inexplicable reason aren't, I cannot blame on the TAFF trip – American dictionaries don't carry them either. But it is odd how minor events of the trip carry over to the present time, and the big things seem to fade. Most odd.

This, I suppose, is concrete evidence of the fact that Bulmer has a bird brain. Maybe. But the whole TAFF trip was so big an experience, so gigantic an impact, that you just can't be serious about it all the time, neither can you keep up an air of wide-eyed wonder all the time in the report. I'm afraid that if I tried to recapture all of it in that style it would rapidly become insincere, shallow, a mere groping after a pretty phrase or a dubious pun. I'm not too bothered about writing style and I've already explained that any attempt to maintain strict chronological order is a waste of time and patience, besides being boring.

If I can get over that the TAFF trip – my TAFF trip and all the others – is something that is so worthwhile that all detractors ought to feel ashamed, and that some of my deep feelings about it are conveyed to the reader, then at least a part of what I want has been done.

I'm no longer starry-eyed and full of jumping beans about the trip – I haven't just completed it. I've had time to think about it and digest, to realize what it has done, not only to me personally but to everyone else even remotely concerned. In the long run, and on balance, TAFF is a good thing. I know only too well some of the bad facets, and some that most of you in general fandom don't know; but on balance, TAFF is worthwhile. Salut.

My apologies for the brevity of this instalment but it is being written while on holiday in Ireland and if these circumstances aren't sufficiently extenuating in themselves... well!

Loveland Idyll

Strange how some things lodge themselves in the memory and others – perhaps far more important – lose every trace in the mists of the past. When Pamela and I left New York by Greyhound to stay for the week or so preceding the con with Don Ford and his family in Ohio, we could not help the feeling that we were once again leaving civilization and friends and penetrating into the wilds of western savagery. Understandably that feeling had been strong as the good ship *M.V. Inishowen Head* neared Baltimore – but we met friends and felt at home. So now, as the Greyhound monster rushed glaring through the night we tried to understand that – quite apart from Don Ford himself – there would be other friends to meet us.

We were right. The Greyhound let us pause to take breakfast in Pittsburgh but did not allow me time to look up a chap I'd known in the 15th Air Force. Pittsburgh appeared to be a maze of broad streets piled on top of one another, and cars scurrying everywhere – naturally enough. We saw nothing of the industry there, tho'. The Greyhound restaurant place reminded me irresistibly of a film set, with quick, hard-eyed waitresses flippant about the breakfast you wanted. Each price tag increase added something to the meal. We stopped low on the list.

Then off again through the day, stopping to change from the Greyhound proper into a feeder bus that took us into Cincinnati. The driver switched off the air conditioning because people persisted in opening the windows... so we all sweltered.

Now one reason, among others, I've refrained from writing about Don Ford before this is because no one would have believed me in Britain. Now you've seen him and know.

We crawled from the bus, exhausted, flattened, gasping. I noticed a man standing in the doorway of the depot. So tall, bulky and colossal a figure was he that I shrank back. He balanced a Hollywood film camera and equipment on his chest. He was wearing a brilliantly blinding tee shirt. I hunted around for a fan....

Pamela and I did not find a typical fan to meet us, so we began to wonder if this whole story of there being a person called Don Ford was a gigantic hoax cooked up by WAW and Chuck to dispose of the Bulmer in

wildest North America. It smacked of that, somehow, and we were about to crawl to the nearest British Consul or what have you when – everyone else having departed and the depot being strangely quite – I noticed that King Kong was still standing there looking speculatively at us. I took the plunge. Man Mountain turns out to be a fan – and this, mark you, after seeing Donaho.

Don couldn't have been kinder, whisking us away in his car – a Ford – along teeming roads filled with geezers turning out of work, under bypasses, over bridges, farther and farther into the country. At last we disgorged before a charming white frame house and clambered up the stairs to flop – dead beat – on a low chesterfield. Margaret Ford came in to say hello and the two – at that time – children regarded us as no doubt Livingstone must have looked at Stanley. You know; it was nice of you to come, but why? Margaret had turned out a really enormous and sumptuous meal of ham cooked with rare delicacies and looking like the front cover of a glossy cooking mag. We set to – it was as scrumptious as it looked. Don at that time was living in the upper part of the house and we admired the way the place was laid out. You all, I believe, know that Don is a camera bug? Euff sed, then. Of our stay with Don and Margaret flashes of moments of intense pleasure strike the memory chords now. Like finding that the shopping was done in a small shop – store – that would very nearly have fitted into our own local shopping centre – small and friendly. Of course Pamela, used to the bed in Dave Kyle's apartment, which had a smaller mattress placed on top of a larger one enabling her to wedge herself in the gap against the wall, had to imagine the same applied here and fell out of bed with a salutary thump in the middle of the night. I hauled her back in. Next morning she swore blind I'd imagined it all. Then she found the bruise.

The weather remained brilliant – one of our minor grouses was that for the first time in umpty-ump years Britain had been favoured with a fine summer and we'd gone away. Still, minor that was, except for the times when one or other of us nearly passed out. Pamela went swimming with Margaret and the children and achieved a neat case of sunburn. On that day Don and I went into Cincinnati. The swimming pool where we left the girls had been dug out of a farmer's field; he'd filled it with water and charged admission. Such is private enterprise. In Cincinnati my strongest memory is of Don deciding I needed to sample a Rum Collins and of the drink appearing in a tall frosted glass. We visited the centre of town where Don shot photos like

crazy – and proved it by showing them in London last year. Natch, Pamela and I missed them as we were tending Debbie at the time.

The centre of the city was a refreshing change from other cities, as far as I could tell, as it carried a restful air about it one never found in, say, li'l old New York. We had some fine views of the city from the country around, too, with one whacking great tower spearing up. Don was evidently proud of Cincinnati, and I think he had every right to be. Strange, too, when you recall that a small village of near-savages fighting grimly against all their neighbours should have created legends to help them and their descendants along, something over 2,500 years ago on a peninsula jutting into the Mediterranean, and one such legend – because I suppose it was apposite to the minutemen – travelled all that way in time and space and gave Cincinnati's name – who left his plough – to a modern progressive city in a continent that Plato hadn't even dreamed up then. Oh, well.

The Ohio river is a marvel at night. I understand that as a river it stinks – literally. Sewage gets chucked into it that could kill a horse at fifty yards sniff type thing, and quite recently various cities up and down the waterway have been getting together to stop the pollution. Don was full of knowledge of the area, pointing out where various incidents had occurred. We went to a fireworks show. Now I'm not sure of the fireworks position in the States, but I believe you can't just wander into a shop and buy them as you can here. All firework shows have to be staged and run officially; and this is probably a good thing in many ways. If lacking the glamour typified by the annual Bonfire Night blazes in Ted Tubb's garden. Anyway, Don took us to the show where there were many side-shows and, we were surprised to see, the Rotor type thing that had been at Battersea Festival Gardens, with pictures of it there and of British servicemen going round on it... that brought us up with a jolt. Here we were, slapped down in the middle of the US and gradually absorbing their way of life, when we were jerked back to the Festival of Britain and all that. Still, the swings and roundabouts were sampled and they provided a deal of amusement – and also a bit of a mystery. Don claims to have a photo of Pamela on file showing her screaming her head off as she came down some shoot on a tray to skim across the water below. Pamela and I have little memory of this; we suspect Don is having another of his lazy but devilish legpulls.

We wandered about eating popcorn and soaking up the atmosphere and being told that after Labor Day weekend all this sort of public entertainment

ceased in the US as though chopped with a cleaver. Then the big item began. We found good positions in the crowd and watched as rockets soared (I think) and the set pieces blazed into life, forming figures and scenes. They were really first class. There was obviously a high order of skill being employed. The dark sky above, the trees ringing the field, the old Ohio river sliding along over the bluff, the kids' oohs and aahs and the sheer beauty created by lines and whorls and cascades of coloured fire – yep, a real night to remember. When the last picture came on, and as piece by piece it lit up and showed itself to be Old Glory – the Stars and Stripes – for all my British redcoat pride I still felt dam-fool sentimental and ready to cheer my head off for Uncle Sam and the very real traditions that have already been established. I think everyone just about had that feeling too. And, to digress, it is important that they should.

That's one of the ways the U.S. knocked a scruffy load of immigrants of all nationalities into a first class proud nation. I found wherever we went in the U.S. the readiness of people to talk about the American Revolution in terms of every day and up to the minute interests. They had a different slant on it from the one they had on their Civil War. I could talk more about this and may, when Dick Wilson's noble attempt to show me a Revolutionary battlefield didn't pan out – that darned Labor Day cleaver again. In one of the few remarks to Lee Hoffman about the Revolutionary War, as opposed to the War Between the States, I indicated that my sympathies were with the redcoats having to slog through the awful heat. She went on to talk about Jesse James. Many people went out of their way to tell me that we here lost that war because our soldiers wouldn't fight their own folks, and many deserted from the army to become good Americans. This is probably true. I don't envy anyone having to fight in a red coat and leather stock under the conditions we met. Enuff of that.

This was only one of many successful expeditions made under the kind but firm eye of Don and Margaret. Here also I was spoken to by the police as narrated in Chapter 1 [see [Thorn on the Rose](#)]. What should be apparent here is that Pamela and I spent not a fannish time in the States but a family time of meeting friends and sf, and fandom featured small in most of our conversations.

But people are important anyway, are they not?

The Horse's Mouth

Another view of the Cincinnati visit....

On our all-too-brief trip to the United States, Pamela and I had the very great pleasure of living with Don and Margaret Ford for a while. This was an experience we would not have willingly missed.

The Cincinnati Fantasy Group, I think it is fair to say, was the closest parallel to the type of loose organization we had left in the London Circle; as of Autumn (Fall) 1955, that is; our system has altered radically since then.

We had been lavishly welcomed and entertained, with only a very minor sour note, on the East coast and now, as we Greyhounded through the night, we were to meet the fen of the near-Midwest. What would they be like? Certainly Republican, certainly Isolationist; most probably, saving in our presence, anti-British.

We'd had a lousy trip, and crawled out of the depot not feeling very bright. (That's one of my predominant memories of US – the feeling that I was acting like a moron all the time and quite unable to do anything about it.) Pamela and I were looking for a tall man called Don Ford. We had a drink at the water fountain and then went back to the yard and this tremendous hunk of man still stood there. Eventually our orbits intersected. We knew Don was tall; but there are limits to upward growth – Don doesn't know that.

He whisked us to his and Margaret's home. As they have since moved, all I'll say is that again we knew that the Hollywood pictures weren't all lies; Margaret is, if Don will pardon the expression, a honey and the children, although reasonably shy (as who wouldn't be of this odd character, with an incipient beard, they couldn't understand?). We really felt at home. What Margaret thought, of course, is another matter; but that week brought us into fighting trim for the con after the drain of NY and we bless the Cincy crowd for giving us this respite. (Respite from enjoyment as well, mind. NY were real lavish.)

The members of the CFG we were happy to meet and all seemed to us to have the same general outlook on life as applied to fandom. This is for fun; let's forget any outside differences. (Even though most were Republicans, as we had surmised.) The CFG are mature. As a group, that is, and that is best shown by Mark Schulzinger, who, although young in years and full of the

jumping beans essential to youth, still had a more balanced outlook on life than other contemporaries.

Jim Holtel, who always raised a laugh whenever he talked about driving a car (why?), was quiet and perfectly relaxed and damn good company. As for the man who received the award for the best unpublished short story of the year (now that it has appeared, do you give it back, Lou?), he was so much larger than life and full of it that, although Lou Tabakow is a big guy, it makes you wonder where all the energy comes from. One sort of opened out when Lou was around; you couldn't sit in a corner.

I've detailed elsewhere the interesting business about the poem and Dale Tarr; how I'd known of it since 1941, and thought Dale a pseudonym; now, here he was, right out of the blue, a real person. We never did get down to talking about Labour, either; but outside problems seemed very remote in the CFG. Wrong? Perhaps. Makes for easier living and less ulcers that way, though.

It would be superfluous to explain how magnificent the houses were, the "Ranch Type" bungalows. Mark's father had a basement fitted up as a workshop, with two fabulous Duesenbergs on the side. Don had a basement lined with 'zines – literally. At the Youngs' we found, beside tremendous hospitality, the sort of home you see in the glossy pages of the magazines devoted to the millionaire houses. Suffice it that it was also a home, which is the acid test. And this business of hospitality was again found at Lou's; we understood that it had in the recent past had a sort of spiral effect, which we could well understand. (That's from goodness, though, I feel sure, and not – as it might well be in other places – from a spiral of outdoing others.) Unfortunately, Stan Skirvin didn't make it. I always think of the CFG in connection with Doc Barrett, as I think he and they do, But he is such a vast \$64,000 question, that I'm sure he's outside the scope of this résumé. Our regret was that we didn't see near enough of Boy and Dee Dee Lavender; but tapes have since been remedying that. As an integrated unit of interestingly individual people, you'd have a long way to go to match the CFG.

That, although very inadequately, covers the personnel of the CFG. But, what of the Group itself? What sort of impression did I take away? I suppose the over-riding one was that here was a group of people who were happy to be in one another's company, with ideas in common and with ideas opposed, able to relax, not out to prove themselves better than one another in the group and with friendship as the keystone – besides sf, even tho' sf was the original

attractive force and even now might be considered the dominant factor.

But there is more to it than that. The CFG, I am told, has in one form or another been running since 1935. That makes it incredibly old as fannish institutions go. There are other groups that began as a number of friends that long ago and have clung together since; there are mighty few with the same degree of interest and homogeneity as the CFG. Old age is no sign of quality in itself; you have to have something worth being old before age starts to count. The maturity, the relaxed atmosphere, the fun of being a sf group, are some of the things that make this one a quality group apart from a long-established one.

One of the best groups in the world is the Belfast Triangle. It's not strange that I should see parallels between Belfast and Cincinnati. There are differences, of course; there must be otherwise the world would stop spinning through lack of friction (!) but in neither is there this screaming heebie-jeebies that stigmatise the mushroom growths that bulge and proliferate and excrete and die. Tolerance? Yes, and understanding, too. No-one is perfect, thank ghu; but as a good working approximation, the CFG would serve as an admirable model.

To take a f'rinstance: two members joined OMPA – Don and Mark. The Cincy World Con Memory Book was a magnificent effort. There is *Scintillations*, yet I would like to see a greater interest in the fanzine publishing field here; the good side, that is. The CFG has a great contribution to make to the serious and progressive side of fantasy publication; with Doc's vast storehouse of memory to call on the possibilities are breathtaking. Perhaps the most important aspect of this would be the counteraction of the crud in fanzine publishing that is so much deplored by Doc himself, and by all of us; and yet young faneds must walk before they can run.

Taping is well represented in the CFG activities! maybe here lies their key activity for the future, along with photography, of which Don is a past master; maybe the cine camera will rear its whirring head and we will have CFG sf and fantasy films with sound? If Liverpool can do it, so can Cincinnati.

In Don Ford TAFF has a sound administrator, if one who decides what to do and does it with resolution that shocks; at least he gets things done. That perhaps is the secret of the CFG. If they do a thing, it's no Daugherty project: it gets done. The CFG have a great tolerance between and for its members (perhaps that could be extended a little to cover those engaged in

outside interests in the greater sphere of fandom?).

Two things are absolutely certain:

1. That Pamela and I would not have missed our meeting with the Cincy Group and that if all strangers are treated like that, then...

2. Other groups should model themselves upon the Cincy group pattern.
I don't think you can say anything greater than that.

Toodleoo, Goodbye!

They weren't obtrusive about it. Everything in the best of good taste. Just a big, black monster of a car, with a calm faced man at the wheel, and the sub-machine guns held out of view of any inquisitive passengers. They even let a few friends down to see us off – the F.B.I. is quite human these days.

We'd had a party the night before in Dave Kyle's apartment, where, in the open-handed generosity we had found to be a catching phenomenon in the U.S., we had been staying during our New York visit. K.G. Kindberg, editor of *Hapna*; Bob Sheckley; Phil Klass; Dick Ellington (with the baulked but still eager menage of Maison Dinglesnaff); Dave Kyle, himself; Dick (The Girls) Wilson and Larry (My hero) Shaw. We'd drunk, and laughed, and watched Art Saha drink the coffee machines dry at the Broadway café we patronized. We'd fallen into bed around umptitty o'clock, and there we were, getting up at some ungodly hour, packing, leaving messages, being escorted down to Pier 90 or was it 92? in time to dash madly through red tape and scramble aboard all of a flurry and then to stand for three-quarters of an hour on the deck saying goodbye to the gang on the dockside. The two Dicks, Dave and Larry made sure we left America. The F.B.I. needn't have bothered.

Eventually ropes and things fell into the water and we noticed that the U.S. of A. had started to slide into the Pacific. We watched the buildings go by, *our* gasworks, the television mast, the Empire State, and even a hint of Campbell's office crouching under the Chrysler – although that and the U.N. building were figments of my imagination, according to Pamela. The folks on the dockside dwindled and grew small and finally resolved themselves into a coloured blur. It was cold. The Hudson was a steely grey, and ferries and flat-cars made fussy soapsuds of it. A few eager-beaver gulls wheeled overhead. And then, I suppose, came the realization that we had visited America and I felt like shouting "Hey, come back – I didn't realize where I was." But, like the sound of a supersonic jet, the fact had gone before the realization hit us.

The good ship M.V. *Britannic* cleared its tubes, made turn-over and plonked itself into an ungainly orbit aimed at the southern tip of Ireland. We felt miserable. Our only consolation was the warming thought that we were going to see Walter A. Willis and the Triangle – expanded now, of course –

and be gently indoctrinated into the ways of Anglo-fandom.

The *Saxonia* out of Canada had run into some rough weather, so our gallant captain detoured his ship fifty miles to avoid the gales. It was a thoughtful gesture. We staggered manfully around the decks and found them too cold; the saloons were too stuffy. We heard afterwards that the ship had 57 first class passengers and 500 of us tourists. If this sort of information had leaked out during the voyage there might have been a mass invasion. As it was we made landfall in atrocious weather and various poor folk made preparations to land at Cobh. We hung outside off and on all evening, then went round in circles all night, unable to get in. The ship had a Möbius strip built into it after some of the contortions she went through. Talk about things that go bump in the night. We had a cabin directly above a screw – we felt every damn revolution, as though our bunks were turning in sympathy. I know my stomach was.

Eventually they gave up trying to reach Eire’s sunny shore and doddled along to Liverpool. We were hanging on to our bunks by this time – Pamela was reasonably active but I was so under the weather an H-bomb wouldn’t have budged me. Came Saturday morning, and after some eyelash-fluttering at the Customs we erupted on to English soil. One suitcase had been smashed in the process – it was the case that Lee Hoffman had bought in New Orleans to take her loot back to Savannah. We felt like wrung-out dishcloths. We didn’t go to see Walter – which disappointed us all and for which I owe apologies to Walter. But we didn’t have the guts to get across that ol’ Irish Sea again. Our ship was 37,000 tons and was doing a mamba in the seas. The ferries are 2,000 tons and were, we were kindly informed, “standing on their heads.”

After an interesting interlude wherein Eric Frank Russell was dragged out of bed in order to discuss esoteric symbols, we crawled on the train. Eric is writing this up for *Hyphen*, provided the censors don’t catch him first, so I’ll leave that account to him. But don’t believe it all – only some of it.

We went back to Tresco, travelling with an Indian nuclear physicist who was interested in sf and who pulled Dave McIlwain’s “Timeslip” to pieces as juvenile – a point we were too far gone to argue. We’d been to the U.S. of A. We’d seen Pogo. We’d been to the top of the Empire State. We’d heard Bob Bloch and Bob Tucker speak, and had played with the Tucketlet. We’d finagled two fan romances. We’d heard Doc Barrett’s car. Yeah, we’d lived, all right.

Right then all we wanted was a cup of tea.

Appendices

Pam Bulmer Remembers

Zero hour for our TAFF visit had been advanced so many times that finally we had barely three days' notice and began to think we would soon meet ourselves setting out yesterday.

In true fannish tradition, we sailed from Ireland – Dublin to be exact. Walter and Madeleine together with Chuck came to see us off so we had to give up our plan to abscond for a dirty weekend with the money. Right from the start things seemed to be happening to us and, with all the accidents I've had to my clothes, it's a marvel we have any left. We sailed on the *Inishowen Head*, belonging to the Head Line and Lord Line, The Ulster Steamship Co. Of course, it had to be a Motor Vessel... but as consolation prize, she was fixed with steam* winches for hauling the cargo aboard. Not for nothing did Walter affectionately refer to her as a "Tramp Steamer". When we were a convenient distance from land, we were told that the ship had been built with the expectation that she would be sunk the first voyage. The fact that she had cheated fate 67 times did little to reassure us!

* By courtesy B.A.V.C. [Footnote in the original.] This was the Bulmer Aqueous Vapour Company, part of a running fannish joke about Ken Bulmer having first discovered steam – *Steam* also being the title of his 1950s fanzine.

The food was excellent, and we finally arrived in Baltimore more than a little nervous but otherwise all in one piece. It's a most peculiar feeling to be arriving in a foreign country without the faintest notion if anyone... and if so, whom... will meet you and where you will sleep that night.

However, we stopped worrying when the mail was brought in. We had eight letters. We were literally bowled over 'cos in eight different ways they all said, "You will come and visit us, won't you?"

We were met by John Hitchcock, John Magnus and Bob Pavlat with two TWO! Cars. I chose the racy li'l red model with Bob Pavlat as chaperon (?) – you'd start feeling crowded after eight people or so were in. As we moved off from the ship a message was called out that Dick Ellington was driving down from New York.

We went out to John Hitchcock's house, a Colonial type mansion, which was a delightful refuge from the sticky 100° heat outside. We had lunch and then sat around yakking over fanzines – John edits *Umbr*a. We then got in

touch with Don Ford – and began to feel we really had arrived. We had left a message at the Docks to be taken to the ship for Dick Ellington to contact us but, to be on the safe side, we decided to drive down and make sure the message had been delivered.

Baltimore is notoriously difficult to find your way around in, and the two Johns kept the air lively since one thought we should be going back the way we'd come and Magnus said no, his way was quicker. (Magnus had only been in Baltimore three weeks and John lives there!) We finally arrived and Ken went on the boat to see the Chief Steward.

As we were walking back along the dock, who should we meet but Larry Shaw, Dick Ellington, and Phyllis Scott. Introductions were rather complicated since a minor dust storm blew up (we were walking by a couple of grain elevators), but we finally found out who was who and proceeded to fortify ourselves at a place called Jimmy Wu's New Chinese Restaurant.

We now found ourselves in an awkward predicament – John Hitchcock had very kindly offered us hospitality and wanted us to stay with him awhile, but Dick, Larry, and Phyllis had driven 200 miles just to pick us up and take us back to New York. Since it had originally been arranged that we should make straight for New York, we thought we had better stick to the itinerary although we didn't like to leave John so hurriedly. We did the 200 miles in approximately four hours.

We drove on the Jersey Turnpike which is mile after mile of beautiful wide roads – a large size edition of our Dual Carriageways – about twice the width and with very gentle curves occurring very rarely and no cross-roads. They build bridges to take the minor roads over the Turnpike and turn-offs are slanted at about 30° so that you literally just drive off without danger. If you want to get on to the minor road crossing the Turnpike this is joined in a wide loop – from the air some of these would look like a clover leaf. The speed limit is 60 m.p.h. and speed is checked by radar at certain points.

We got to New York about 3 a.m. and Larry drove us around. I wondered why he was bothering but I soon found out. Nothing seems to shut down in New York and the streets were as crowded then as some of ours are in London in the early evening. Cafés and theatres and cinemas and heaven knows what were all open until 4:00 a.m. and then folks just drive to Brooklyn where everything opens at 5:00 a.m. so they can just keep going all night long.

The streets are teeming with cars – big ones of every imaginable colour.

We were told that New York has less cars per head than most places 'cos of the parking problem.

Dave Kyle has very kindly let us have the use of his apartment on 67th Street. Just about everyone who is anyone has stayed here at some time or other, so I guess that makes us someone.

Actually the place is a sort of baby Epicentre, only the ceilings stay up (I *hope*) and the floors stay down.

There are books, books, and more books, and for some weird reason, now that we are here, neither the wireless, television nor refrigerator works. To us, it's heaven and already we are in the habit of saying, "Time we were going home."

We've been pretty much occupied non-stop since we arrived in New York. Jean Carrol throw a party for us last Saturday – we went on to about 3:00 a.m., then went out for something to eat and then on to Harlan Ellison's place – we finally got to bed around 7,30 next morning and then had to be out by around 2:00 p.m.

Needless to say, we were somewhat late and bleary eyed on arrival at the New York Circle meeting. Space is running out right now, so if you want to read more of this pulsating, gripping, spine-chilling drama of British fans in America – Sub to *Fez* right now, if you haven't already done so. Just 1/- or 20¢ will secure the next issue right on your doorstep – the only Femmefanzine – don't delay, post today! Bye for now.

This was not Pam's only report on their trip. The following appeared in a one-shot produced with Lee Hoffman and local fans while the Bulmers were visiting her in Savannah, Georgia:

Do something, they say, do something – anything – write your impressions or something. They want me to write my impressions and all I can think about is people and cars and places – lots of people and lots of cars and lots of places. Nothing is real, nothing is stationary and we are just transient beings in suspended animation.

My fleeting thoughts fly on and there's no time to stop and catch them – catch them, wrap them up neatly in little parcels and file them away in their little cubby hole and stand back and say "This is what I think."

But the people are permanent, they exist and are real and I can stop and catch a little of each one and fold it into my memory because there is a basic similarity manifesting subtle hues in each new personality. It isn't just

fandom – it maybe has something to do with the gregarious nature of mankind, perhaps it has something to do with a mutual feeling that we are passing this way once with a purpose and shall pass this way again.

There is a feeling that every tiny thing is important, like the way the trees grow, the way the birds sing, the way the roads sweep and curve. The things that are the same and the things that are so different. We feel removed but at the same time caught up in something awe-inspiring, perhaps because situations and places to everyone else seem to be so mundane but to us they are exciting and strange but they are still the same places and situations.

No – it is impossible to give one's impressions of a country or a situation so vast in unreality to us. We cannot just yet stand off and appraise our feelings because we are feeling too much in too short a time. We are living a dream which is life and to bring it down to materialistic terms of words whilst it is in the present would seem to put it into the past and to us at the moment time seems timeless. So that is why I can say nothing at the moment but that life is good, people are good and we are happy and those around us seem to be happy and nothing else matters.

Notes

Note on “Thorn on the Rose”

For completists... this first chapter actually began with the following now-inscrutable passage, which with fannish allusiveness expects readers to know that Ella Parker had just taken over *Orion* from its former editor Paul Enever, and that some feuding was going on:

Now that the aged – fanwise, that is, and not physically or mentally or even GATWC-wise* – Paul has with fiendish and heartbroken sobs deposited the little pathetic bundle in the wicker basket, tucked up the tiny quilt, pinned on the brave, broken-pencilled note, and then, cautiously and with many a backward glance, left the baby firmly on Ella’s doorstep – it would seem that the ripples of emotion for an abandoned child have spread to engulf innocent bystanders. I freely agree that the charms of gardening have it all over the rather tatty charms of fanning in these unlovely fannish days, when a dark spirit of violence and anger and intolerance hangs over us all and when erstwhile friends turn their backs and spurn one’s overtures of renewed trust and comradeship – but then, the world is not a perfect place, friends, and, if ’twere, we’d all don the wings of angels and float skywards, strumming our skiffling harps.

Anyway, what all this guff boils down to is that Ella wants me to tell your waiting lugholes...

And so on, as before.

* GATWC explained: The late George (All The Way) Charters, Belfast fan, received this nickname during Bea Mahaffey’s 1953 visit to Belfast. See *Hyphen 4*, especially the top of page 21; James White’s account is reprinted as “The Beacon” in his *The White Papers* (1996). George All The Way was early 1950s US slang, meaning OK, good, more superlative than “real cute”. Being slightly older than other core members of 1950s Irish fandom, George was traditionally portrayed as aged, doddering, ear-trumpeted, etc.

Note on “New York Garrett”

Bill Donaho in *Habakkuk 1:3* (April 1960) remembered that first singing encounter with Randall Garrett rather differently....

One day last summer I was over at Larry Shaw's reading an issue of *Orion*. I was keenly enjoying Ken Bulmer's TAFF Tales when I came across a passage describing Randy Garrett and Harlan Ellison singing a song from Gilbert and Sullivan, "For He [I]s an Englishman." My jaw dropped. I paled.

"But Randy," I said. "That was you and *me*."

"There, there," Randy Garrett soothed. "It must be a failure of memory. No one could *possibly* confuse you with Harlan Ellison."

I was disturbed. Remembered as Harlan Ellison! How could such a thing happen? Randy and I, both being Gilbert and Sullivan buffs, ha[d] sung the song. However Harlan had sung dozens of songs and it was the only time I sang all evening and undoubtedly if Harlan had known the song I wouldn't have been able to sing at all.... Oh well.....

But Ken went on, describing how many New York fans had this unaccountable taste for Gilbert and Sullivan. Now I remember Ken saying when we sang the song that it was the first time he had ever heard it. What had given him this unaccountable distaste for Gilbert and Sullivan? Could it have been our singing?

Credits

TAFF Tales was originally published in instalments in Ella Parker’s fanzine *Orion*... issues #21, February 1959; #22, July 1959; #23, October 1959; #24, January 1960; #25, June 1960; #26, November 1960; and #27, April 1961. The closing chapter, unfortunately omitted from the first collected edition of *TAFF Tales* in 1998, appeared much earlier in Vinç Clarke’s *Science Fantasy News* Volume 2 #14, Xmas 1955. By 1997, when the material was being retyped, both Vinç Clarke and Ken Bulmer had forgotten all about it.

The first five *Orion* chapters were rekeyed in electronic form by Vinç Clarke; the sixth by Vinç Clarke and Brian Jordan; and the seventh by Brian Jordan alone – all from Vinç’s copies of the original fanzines. Bruce Pelz provided the Note on the “New York Garrett” chapter, and Mark Plummer unearthed the final “Toodleoo, Goodbye!” in 1999. The occasional small internal illustrations [*omitted in this ebook edition*] were drawn straight on to the stencils of *Orion* by Atom.

The footnotes were added by Vinç Clarke and Dave Langford. Overall print design and ebook wrangling: Dave Langford. Photocopier guru [*for the print edition*] and copyediting adviser: Chris Priest.

The introductory “[Air Letter](#)” was discovered by Rob Hansen in Vinç Clarke’s correspondence files, and added to the ebook edition in April 2022. “Around the Bend in Four Days” by Joy Goodwin, “The Horse’s Mouth”, “SF NYC”, “Pogo, I Presume?” and the two pieces making up “Pam Bulmer Remembers” were found by Rob Hansen in 2023 and duly inserted. All these late additions were converted to digital form by Rob Hansen and/or Dave Langford. Many thanks to Fanac.org for archiving so many relevant fanzines online.

Here is a summary of the original appearances of all these chapters and fragments. Everything is by Ken Bulmer unless otherwise credited.

- “Introduction” by Walt Willis – from “The Life of TAFF” in *Yandro* #50 (March 1957) edited by Buck and Juanita Coulson
- “Prologue – Around the Bend in Four Days” by Joy Goodwin – *Ploy* #4 (September 1955) edited by Ron Bennett.
- “Air Letter” dated 11 August 1955 – first published in this ebook, 2023.

- “Thorn on the Rose” – *Orion* #21 (February 1959) edited by Ella Parker.
- “New York Garrett” – *Orion* #22 (July 1959) edited by Ella Parker.
- “SF NYC” – *CHOOOG One-Shot* (November 1955), published in Savannah, Georgia, by H. Ken and Pamela Bulmer, Lee Hoffman, Jesse Floyd and Charles Wells.
- “Pow Wow at Indian Lake” – *Orion* #23 (October 1959) edited by Ella Parker.
- “Cleveland Cameo” – *Orion* #24 (January 1960) edited by Ella Parker.
- “Talking Topics” – *Orion* #25 (June 1960) edited by Ella Parker.
- “Pogo, I Presume?” – *CHOOOG One-Shot* as above.
- “Scrabbling Around” – *Orion* #26 (November 1960) edited by Ella Parker.
- “Loveland Idyll” – *Orion* #27 (April 1961) edited by Ella Parker.
- “The Horse’s Mouth” – Cincinnati Fantasy Group one-shot (July 1957) edited by Don Ford.
- “Toodleoo, Goodbye!” – *Science Fantasy News* Volume 2 #14 (Xmas 1955) edited by Vinç Clarke.
- “Pam Bulmer Remembers” – Editorial in *Femizine* #7 (July 1955) edited by “Joan Carr” and Pam Bulmer; and *CHOOOG One-Shot* as above.

This free ebook version of TAFF Tales 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.

The End

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