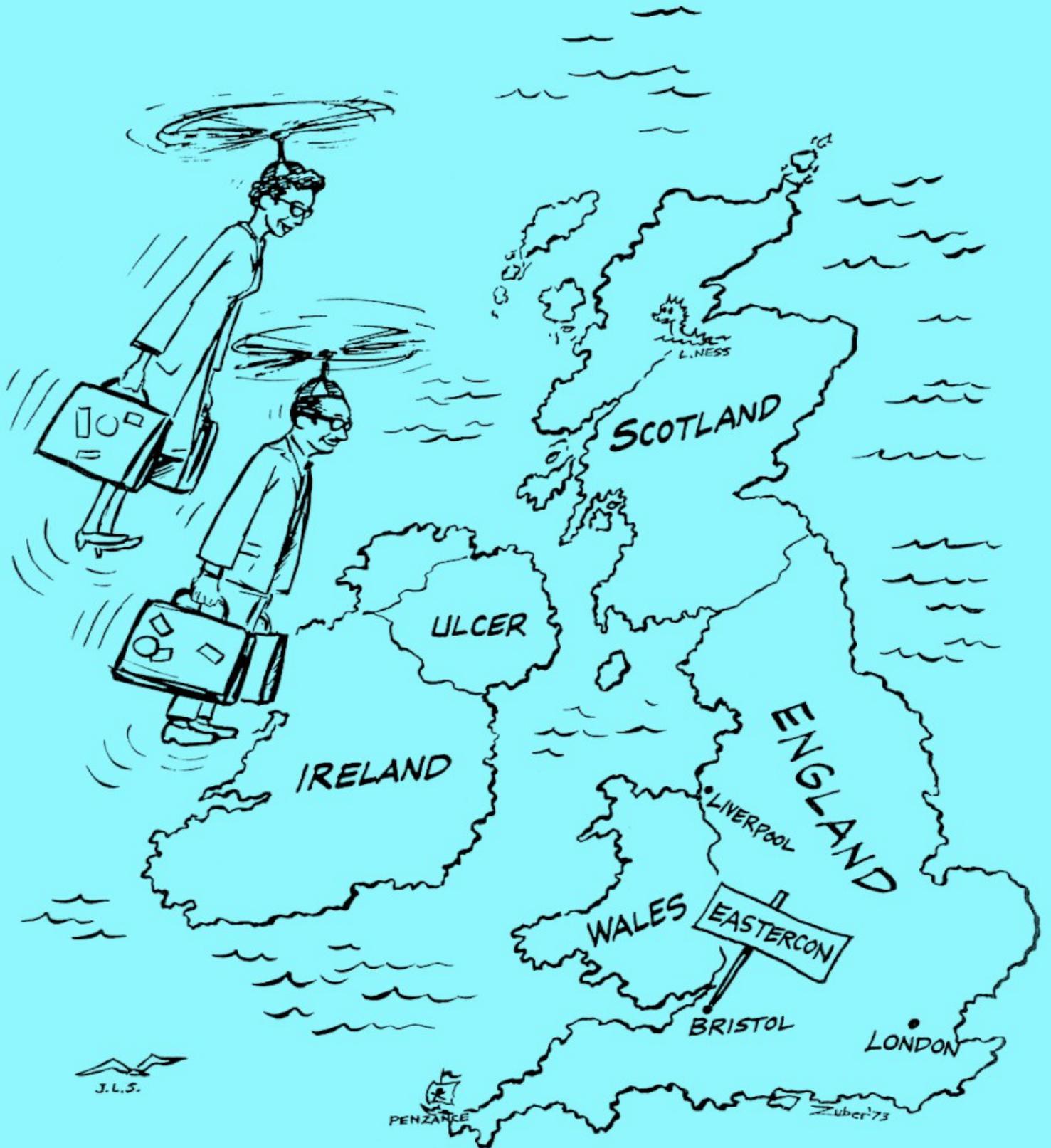


The Moffatt House Abroad



Len and June Moffatt

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The 1973 Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund Trip Report

Len and June Moffatt

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Ebook Note

As winners of the westbound TransAtlantic Fan Fund race held in 1972, Len and June Moffatt travelled from California to attend OMPAcon, the 1973 UK Eastercon run by members of OMPA, the Offtrails Magazine Publishers Association. Their joint trip report was promptly published in 1974, and needs very little extra annotation. I've footnoted the first mention of JDM (thriller author John D. MacDonald – the Moffatts published the *JDM Bibliophile*) and of the BSI (the Baker Street Irregulars, that famous Sherlockian club). The more or less joky fannish god Foo or FooFoo – on a par with Ghu and Roscoe – is occasionally invoked. Younger fans may not remember Feghoots, short-shorts by Grendel Briarton (Reginald Bretnor) published in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* as “Through Time and Space with Ferdinand Feghoot”, always building to a fearful pun or shaggy-dog letdown.

This ebook version of *The Moffatt House Abroad* was prepared in 2023 for the free ebook library at the TransAtlantic Fan Fund website. Thanks are due to Fanac.org for making a good-quality PDF available online; to Pat Charnock for her careful proofreading; and to Rob Jackson for voice-transcribing June Moffatt's segments of the text. The latter were distinguished from Len Moffatt's by use of the IBM Selectric “Script” typeball, whose faux-cursive appearance is resistant to OCR software. For these passages the ebook text uses italics, with roman for emphasis.

Photographs have as usual been omitted (recovering good-quality images from mimeo reproduction is difficult), as have most of the Terry Jeeves quotecard cartoons. The front cover photograph is here replaced by Bernie Zuber's APA-L #415 artwork (mentioned in the text and included at the back of the 1974 edition), with title and authors shown in a black-letter font resembling that of the original cover and title page.

The past TAFF reports marked with asterisks in the [Appendix](#) as “Not collected into a single volume” have since been collected, and all are now available as TAFF site ebooks except for the soon forthcoming *Colonial Excursion*.

David Langford
January 2023

Links

- [The Moffatt House Abroad at Fanac.org](#)
- [June Moffatt in Fancyclopedia 3](#)
- [Len Moffatt in Fancyclopedia 3](#)



The Moffatts at OMPAcon: photo by Mike Meara

Thank You!

To thank properly each and every person who contributed to the success of our TAFF trip and who made the publication of this report possible would extend it by several pages, as it would be necessary to list all contributors to the 1973 campaign, everyone whom we met on the trip, and everyone who assisted in the publication of *TMHA*. We thank you – one and all – on behalf of TAFF, and our personal thanks are included in this attempt to express our gratitude.

We will endeavor to list the names of those persons and organizations who did more than their share in providing us with hospitality and help during the trip, as well as those who provided physical, mental and monetary help in the publication of this Trip Report. They are:

- Mervyn Barrett
- Beryl Bentcliffe
- Eric Bentcliffe
- Lindsey Bentcliffe
- Mario Bosnyak
- Anne Cox
- Ed Cox
- Barry Gold
- Mary Jane Hertz
- Dave Hulan
- Marcia Hulan
- Eddie Jones
- Marsha Jones
- Gail Kimberly
- Bob Konigsberg
- Jay Konigsberg
- Dr. Karl Krejci-Graf
- Ethel Lindsay
- The OMPAcon '73 Committee
- The Outlander Society
- Ella Parker

- Fred Parker
- Fred Patten
- Bruce Pelz
- The Petard Society
- Ina Shorrock
- Norman Shorrock
- Rick Sneary
- Simone Walsh
- Tony Walsh
- Norman Weedall
- Stan Woolston
- The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, Inc. (LASFS)

It should be noted that the above list is necessarily incomplete, as this is being written before the final collating and stapling sessions. All we can say is Thanks Again to all of you, and our apologies to those who should be but didn't get listed by name.

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Prologue

JUNE:

It all started on a quiet Sunday afternoon in April, 1972. We were sitting around being peaceful when the phone rang. It was Marsha Elkin, calling from Boston. She said that she had just recently returned from England, and had taken a poll to see who they would like to see over there as a TAFF delegate.

“How would you like to run as a team?” was the operative question.

“Uh – er –” we responded brilliantly.

We decided that we needed time to think about this, we would let her know later – when we went up to Merrybrook Lodge in the Santa Cruz redwoods for a week’s vacation. Len had always intended standing for TAFF someday. To have it abruptly presented as a here-and-now possibility was just a touch disconcerting.

So it was that while sojourning in the shade of the mighty redwoods we came to our decision. We chose a postcard depicting some of the tranquil scenery about us, inscribed Intent To Stand on the back of it and sent it off to Marsha.

Thus were the wheels set in motion.

Thursday, November 16, 1972 was the final voting day for the ’73 TAFF race. We wondered who had won, but heard nothing either Friday or Saturday. Saturday night we had a few fannish friends over for an evening of Rolf Harris records, and there was some speculation on the winner/winners.

Sunday morning, my son Jerry (aka Jay) borrowed my car, Miss Pym, to go pick up his girlfriend and take her to church. Within a few minutes he was back, a pale yellow envelope in his hand.

“I went by the old house on Paramount and found this stuck in the door,” he explained. I looked at it with a jaundiced eye, since I’ve become familiar with telegrams used as advertising matter.

We opened it. Inside was the terse message “Heartiest congratulations – Mario”. Len waved it triumphantly. “It’s from Mario Bosnyak, baby! We’ve won TAFF!”

JOY AND VICTORY! We promptly got on the phone and started calling our friends to share the news – awakening some of them. As a matter of fact,

one of them was sufficiently asleep when informed that we'd won TAFF to wonder where we were going to put it.

The general hullabaloo connected with phoning everyone we could think of also woke our leftover guest from the night before, Frank Gasperik. He helped us decide that this was a Proper Occasion for opening the bottle of pink champagne we had sitting in the refrigerator. Since Frank had the strongest pair of hands of any of us, it fell to his lot to open it.

The cork finally give way with a one-gun salute, and the wine foamed out onto the floor. We quickly got it over the sink and into glasses, and declared the wine left on the floor to be a libation to the ghods of fandom.

Having won, there was the business of getting ready to go. Of course, there was Plenty Of Time, back there in November, and we didn't really get well started until about March.

There was the matter of shots for overseas travel. We thought of smallpox vaccinations immediately, but our doctor said that they were hardly necessary where we were going, and said we'd do better with protection against cholera and typhoid, which we might be exposed to in crowded international air terminals.

It was a remarkably wet winter, and it seemed as if we took turns having colds, so we never did get to the doctor for the necessary shots. Meanwhile, we went to a professional photographer to get the photos for our passports, and got the passports themselves applied for. A couple of trips to the auto club in downtown LA got our travel plans straightened out. The second trip was necessary at almost the last minute when we finally decided that yes, we were going to Germany. Aside from the fact that Mario Bosnyak was urging us to do so, there was the little matter of visiting my son, Bob Konigsberg, who was stationed at an Army base near Mannheim.

The Friday before we were to leave, I was driving home and listening to the radio, when I heard a bit of news that startled me considerably. There had been an outbreak of smallpox in London. Only three known cases so far, but the authorities were watching carefully. (It seems that a lab technician had been working with smallpox virus without having been immunized. When she got sick, she was hospitalized in a regular ward while her doctor worked to find out what she had. Two people visiting someone in the next bed to hers had caught it from her. They subsequently died. She recovered.)

The next day we were at our doctor's office, sans appointment. When we explained the problem, he promptly immunized us and had a few remarks to

make on people who disapprove of smallpox vaccinations. (The remarks were not particularly complimentary in case you were wondering.) He gave us our yellow health certificates and advised us to have them stamped by a local health department, which I did in Pasadena on Monday.

By Wednesday night, we were pretty well packed, and weighed our cases on the bathroom scale. According to our ticket folders, they would weigh everything we took on the plane, including carry-on luggage, and if they weighed that too, we would have to pay excess baggage charge (which is reckoned by the kilo – at least by BOAC). Regretfully, we left a few things behind.

Thursday, April 12

LEN:

Normally on Thursday nights we attend the meetings of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, Inc. (assuming you call that normal), but we decided to skip the meeting this particular Thursday night and give ourselves plenty of time for last-minute packing and plane catching.

We had dinner at one of our favorite local restaurants, The Regency, where our favorite waitress, Norma, served us in her usual elegant-but-practical style. With us were my mother, my stepson Jay, and Alex Bratmon.

We returned home before taking off for the airport, and received a phone call from Ed Cox, who wished us Bon Voyage and all that jazz. We then phoned Sir Richard Sneary, who also bid us fond farewell and asked us to carry his best wishes to his fannish friends in Old Blighty.

Finally, we were reasonably sure that we were actually ready to Go, though it was still hours before our plane was scheduled to lift off. So we drove to LAX, and got our baggage checked in at 9 p.m.

JUNE:

Contrary to what the ticket folders had told us, they did not weigh our hand luggage. Had we but known! Somewhat to our surprise, the man at the ticket counter inspected and stamped our passports. It's certainly the logical way of doing it, but we had rather expected a Special Passport-Inspecting Officer, probably with large gold epaulets on his uniform and scrambled eggs all over his cap.

The International Carriers terminal is a rather scruffy looking place. It looks as if it could use the services of a batch of cleanup men, followed by a paint crew. We glanced into the bar, to find it a stand-up affair. There were tables adjacent, but they belonged to a restaurant in the same area. We wandered around a bit and found a locker to hold our hand luggage, then went to the money exchange and tried to get some British change. They told us they didn't have any British coin, but that the exchange upstairs could help us. We rode up the escalator, only to find that the one upstairs had closed a few minutes before.

We also looked with some interest at our first sight of a duty-free shop. They were selling cigarettes, perfumes and other exotica at greatly reduced

prices – for export. I told Len it was a pity that we'd already bought our stock of cigarettes for the trip. But, even so, we would have had to find a way to pack them. **Sigh**

We walked over to the TWA terminal to see if they had a more hospitably arranged bar. Unfortunately, TWA has its security check set up in its front lobby, and no one goes past it without being searched and run through the metal detector. I balked at having my purse opened and inspected when I wasn't even going on one of their airplanes, so we walked back to the International Carriers terminal sans drinks.

Eventually it came time to line up for the security inspection before boarding our BOAC Super VC-10. They used a hand-held metal detector which they moved up and down over us. My security man stopped by my left-hand coat pocket and inquired as to what I had in it. I looked blank, because that's the way I felt, and stuck my hand into the pocket in question.

"Flashcubes," I told him. He accepted the answer without asking to see them, and passed me. The odd thing was that he apparently missed the change I was carrying in my right-hand coat pocket.

Len's security man inspected his cane, but opened it just enough to be sure that it wasn't a sword cane. The vials were empty, but we could have been carrying anything at all in it. (Incidentally that was the only security check that paid any attention to the cane at all.) Then we were allowed to board the plane, turning a couple of times to wave to Jerry, who was standing by the big window (with the car keys in his pocket).

The "Super VC-10" is a condensed 707, I understand. I don't like it! It's small, cramped and uncomfortable. However, it did take off on time. Precisely at 11:55 p.m. the plane taxied away from the landing area and out to the take-off strip.

Once we were airborne, the liquor cart was pushed down the aisle. I declined a drink, which was probably a mistake. The reason it was a mistake was because later I found out that I've never learned to sleep sitting up – and it's an acquired taste! Hoo boy, is it ever an acquired taste! Soon the cabin lights were turned off, leaving us mostly in darkness except for a few reading lights here and there. Presently even these winked out, and we were left with the stars outside for light.

Dawn from 37,000 Feet

The night passed in a series of fitful dozes. Every time I'd get to sleep I'd develop a crick in my neck that woke me up again. At one of these times, I observed a dull red streak on the horizon. It was too dark to read my watch (and I was too sleepy to think of turning on my reading light) but it did seem much too early for dawn – unless the altitude at which we were flying had something to do with it.

Gradually the red streak brightened, until I could finally make out that it was about 3 a.m. Dawn at 3 a.m.? Altitude or no, that did seem awfully early. But it was unquestionably dawn. The stars faded out as Aurora did her thing with red and pink and gold on her palette, and the sky lightened to daytime blue.

It was about this time that I woke up enough to realize that we had been, after all, flying east for several hours, and that my watch was probably about two hours behind local time.

Presently the cabin lights went on, and BOAC served us a light breakfast. They told us that we would get tickets which would entitle us to as much breakfast as we wanted in the Piccadilly Terrace Coffee Shop in the JFK terminal in New York. As it turned out, the tickets entitled us to more breakfast than we wanted. They are most generous with their portions!

Friday, April 13

LEN:

The security check at JFK Airport in NY was a bit more detailed than the one in Los Angeles. As June said, they didn't bother to inspect my brandy cane, but their metal detector was the "doorframe" type, and they made me walk through it twice. I wasn't carrying the cane, having handed it to the chap who was inspecting the carry-on luggage, but after my first walk-through, the lady inspector asked me to remove any metal I might be carrying in my pockets. This consisted mostly of keys and change. I put them down on the table and walked through again. She still looked dubious and consulted with the man in charge. He hesitated a moment, then waved me on through.

June and I decided that perhaps the metal buttons on my jacket might have been the cause for the negative reaction, or – said June – "Maybe you've got too much iron in your blood". (We have since found out from Dean Grennell that the foil wrapping on a package of Life Savers can turn a metal detector into a raving paranoid.)

The flight from New York to London was scheduled to lift off at 10 a.m., New York time, but it was half an hour late, waiting for a runway to be cleared. Again we tried to sleep, and although I am better at sleeping sitting up than June is, neither of us got much rest. There was quite a bit of turbulence for one thing, and it was a crowded 747 with a good deal of bustling about by passengers and cabin crew. We didn't bother to rent earphones, but I watched the movie, which was some sort of time-travel fantasy. British picture, of course.

I had a beer, and June followed Marsha Jones's recommendation and had some of BOAC's excellent champagne – Mumm's Cordon Rouge. We were too wound up mentally to really relax, though. As we said before, we arrived at LA Airport earlier than was necessary, which gives you some idea of how anxious we were to get started – to get to England! Accuse me of being a masochist if you will, but for many fannish years I have always envied those who reported on the exquisite pleasures of being a prisoner in Parker's Pen....

All Clear and on Green, QX, QX!

JUNE:

It was close to midnight London time when we arrived at Heathrow Airport. It was a long trip from the plane to the Immigration area, most of it by Speedramp, or whatever they call the moving walkways over there. Going through immigration was simplicity itself – a nice man behind a desk stamped our passports, asked how long we'd be staying, welcomed us to England and told us we'd find our baggage "down those stairs over there".

Once down by the baggage carousel, we decided that it was going to be a long wait, so we found a baggage cart and a place to sit. They had explanatory red and green signs posted around the area, saying that if you had something to declare to exit under the red sign, or if one had nothing to declare, exit under the green sign. There was a list of permissibles on the green sign, done up in liters and similar metric terminology. We were far too tired to try to translate from U.S. measure to metric, and since we had planned our imports in accordance with the information given us by the Auto Club, we assumed that we had Nothing To Declare. So, after finally collecting our bags, we walked out under the green sign. There was a uniformed man standing watching the people go by, but that's as much of Customs as we saw.

Saturday, April 14

JUNE:

And it was exactly that. As we walked through the Green Gate, a large digital clock on the wall informed us that it was 12:02 in the ayem on April 14. Reflecting that we had done the past 24 hours in record time, it made it the shortest Friday the 13th on record – only 15 hours long. Churchy LaFemme would approve.

We had been told to get on the Victoria bus from the airport, so we went outside and found it. Only, it had no door. I stood and looked at it in bewildered frustration for a second, until Len led the way around to the other side. By the time we got there, it was almost full, the only two seats we could find being on the upper deck, separate from each other. Something in the back of my mind whispered “Hey! A double-decker bus!” but it was too tired out to generate much enthusiasm. Being driven on the left side of the road was mildly interesting, but it didn’t really involve me, way up there in the second story. (Or should that be the “first story”, being that it was Britain?)

Eventually, the bus wobbled its way into Victoria, and we debarked, to claim our luggage once again. I knew that Ella and Fred Parker were supposed to meet us, and I was looking around for a likely couple. Something about a kind-faced man holding a sign standing with a pert wee lass in a leopardskin coat attracted my attention, and I touched Len’s arm and said, “What about those people over there?” Len looked and exclaimed, “There they are!” After we got over to them, I found that Fred’s sign read “Len & June – This way to Parker’s Pen”. We collected our suitcases and were all the way out to the car before I found out that it was Ethel Lindsay, not Ella Parker.

LEN:

We got the intros straightened out whilst I was busy hugging and kissing Ethel and shaking hands with Fred. Ella hadn’t come to meet us, as she was having trouble with her back, and had to stay home for her osteopath who had come to give her a treatment. The idea of a doctor – any doctor – making house calls crogged me. But then I remembered that it was, after all, Ella Parker, and even before we met Paul, her osteopath, I was reasonably sure that he had become yet another slave of that lovely boss lady.

Ethel was driving a small car leased from the Royal Auto Club, all parts of which (the car, not the RAC) tended to stick a lot. She had to use both hands and some rather strange Scot words (I assume they were Scot) to get it into reverse. Somehow we managed to get all four of us and our luggage into the car, and we were off thru the streets of London to William Dunbar House. June was sitting up front with Ethel, on what would have been the driver's side had it been an American car. Even though she knew that here, one is *supposed* to drive on the left, her driver's instincts were outraged a dozen times during the ride.

It was pushing 2 in the ayem when we arrived at the Pen, which is located on the seventh floor of William Dunbar House. Fortunately, there is an elevator, and altho Ella had bad things to say about it, it did work while we were there.

Parenthetical Insert

JUNE:

The Monday before we left the States, we received a letter from Ella. Among other things, she asked us to bring her a carton of Senior Service cigarettes. This croggled us mildly, since we know this to be a British brand. However, we tried, and it took us two days to find a tobacconist who'd even heard of them. The one we did find was most helpful, and offered to special-order them for us until he understood that we were leaving the next day.

As it turned out, what Ella assumed was that we would buy them on the plane. Since we had never gone overseas before, we didn't know this was possible until the BOAC stewardess came wheeling the little cart of tobacco goodies down the aisle. As soon as he saw it, Len enquired "Do you have Senior Service?" "Certainly, Sir," was the reply, and a carton of Senior Service acquired top spot in the straw basket I was carrying.

When we arrived at Ella's, I was briefly introduced to her; she in turn introduced us to her bedroom which she was turning over to us for the length of our stay (it has a lovely big comfortable double bed). Presently we went out to her living room and sat down to chat a bit. I handed her the carton of cigarettes, outlining the effort we had gone to in Los Angeles to get them.

"But I meant for you to get them on the airplane!"

"Yes, but we didn't know that."

"You must have thought I was awfully stupid, asking you to buy them in

the States!”

“No. not stupid. Just peculiar.”

And that is how I met Ella Parker.

LEN:

We had our first experience with a Continental Quilt at the Pen. It is what the old-fashioned among us would call a “featherbed” or an “eiderdown”, being a quilt filled with down. It looks bulky, but it is quite lightweight, and very warm and comfortable. We later learned that they are in use all over England and the Continent, judging by the hotels we stayed at (*and the bedding put out the windows of various houses to air that we passed by*). Needless to say, we were Ready To Catch Up On Our Sleep.

When we saw Don and Elsie Wollheim a few days later, Don told me that we were wise to start our journey at night and thus arrive in England in the nighttime, ready to go to bed, as this made for an easier adjustment to the nine-hour time differential. Actually, it wasn’t wisdom on our part, just the way we had planned our schedule, based on when we could get off work and the fact that we wanted to catch a plane on a weekday or night rather than on the weekend when fares would be higher. However, we do recommend this method to people traveling from America to Europe. The discomfort of trying to sleep sitting up on the flight is compensated for by arriving in time to go to bed and get up some time the next day at least partially adjusted to the jet-lag difference.

I was awakened at noontime by hoofbeats on the pavement, seven stories below. I leaped out of bed, with my sense of wonder doing more than enough to get my heart started. Hoofbeats on the streets of London! Wow! Perhaps it was Holmes and Watson, and the game was afoot. I knew that it would be more in keeping with the canon if the hour were later, but so it wasn’t midnight and there wasn’t any fog – one can’t have everything. I rushed to the window and drew back the curtain a little, “what are you doing?” inquired June sleepily.

“Hoofbeats on the streets of London!” I cried. “Wow!” Below me I saw a rather ordinary-looking horse pulling a small wagon. The driver was dressed in some sort of work clothes, and the bed of the wagon was empty. No signs or notices on the wagon, either, at least none that I could see from that distance without my glasses.

June said “Grmf” and turned over, but I was too wide awake to sleep any more. So it was only a rather nondescript horse and wagon – we were

actually and literally in London, a city we had dreamed of visiting all our lives. From Ella's window, one gets a wonderful view of old and new London. In the foreground one sees the old, wedge-roofed lookalike houses with chimneys and chimneypots – rooftops that go back in time and bring visions of stories from history and from fiction.

Beyond them stand the high-rises – skyscrapers and council flats – which Ella and Fred complain about because it spoils the old skyline. But to us it was a beautiful study in contrast. That, of course, is one of the main points of interest in visiting the old world – the old contrasting with the new. It reminded us of Boston, and I'm sure that there are many other places in the States that have the same contrasts, but still there was no question that this was London, not Boston, and not – for God's sake – Los Angeles.

Soon we were both up and about, breakfasted and ready to face the day with Ella, Fred and Ethel. Ella thought we might want to do a wee bit of touring with Ethel while she and Fred went to do the marketing. She was having a party for us that night, and suggested that we not do any strenuous touring on our first day in London. We agreed. We told her that we were there to see not only the fans and the historical sights, but to see the people in general, how they lived, where they shopped, and so on. So we would go marketing with her, as that in itself would be a tour for us.

When we learned that we had won TAFF and were working on our trip schedule, which had to be limited to three weeks as that was the most either of us could take off from work at one time, I was complaining to Rick Sneary that we certainly wouldn't have enough time to see and do all the things we would like. Neither of us had been to Europe before. My overseas duty during WW2 was spent in the Pacific, and June had never been out of the Western Hemisphere before. Rick pointed out that whatever we saw would be new or different for us, and that we should appreciate what we did have time for, rather than regret what we would necessarily miss out on. He was absolutely right, of course. And his point was well proven on that first day, as we went out to the shops – with our three lovely tour guides.

Well, perhaps I should not refer to Fred Parker as “lovely” but he is a beautiful man in the sense that beauty is as beauty does. He seems to be the exact opposite of his sister in temperament, speech and approach to doing things. Both Parkers are kind and considerate persons. I can say this safely, as Ella isn't here to cuss me out and Fred isn't here to be quietly embarrassed. And of course Ethel Lindsay fits into the same category. All three of them

treated us like visiting royalty. Not that Ella didn't order us about – I wouldn't want to be the one to alter her Famous Fannish Image as the bossy, sarcastic leader – but her orders were really for our own good. Usually they came in the form of Suggestions, but they sounded like Orders, and we usually Obeyed – because we too could see that she was thinking of our welfare. When she Ordered a “lie-down”, we took one.

Fred and Ethel, more quietly but just as persistently, helped us in more ways than perhaps they realized. Like Ella, they made us feel very much At Home in the Pen. Nobody stood on ceremony. If all “pens” were like this one, I'd take up a life of crime and do my best to get caught PDQ.

I wish I could remember the context, but at least once during our stay, Fred used an expression I hadn't heard since my childhood – though I had read it in old books. He was talking about how to do something, or get somewhere, and showing how simple it was, really. He finished with “And Bob's your uncle, you're there!” Now this may be difficult to understand, but again my sense of wonder was revived.

Visiting Windsor Castle and going to the Tower of London and seeing the Crown Jewels... all these things more than overpower one's sense of wonder, and I don't mean to put them down, because all of these famous things are Musts on any tourist's itinerary (and especially if one was in love with England before ever seeing it) but it was the so-called “little things” that I saw or heard that made me realize that I was actually There. Hoofbeats... “Bob's your uncle!” ... the flower vendors... the kindnesses of the people... the old not yet given way to the new (though I suppose it will come and London will become too much like the New World, God help us all) (*I doubt that. I doubt it very much.*) ...Fred Parker, a gentleman of the old school – and not for a minute the stuffy old school, but the grand old school that survived WW2 and was around to help June on and off the buses and trains, while Ethel, bless the wee lass, insisted on helping me in the same manner... Ella, leading the troops, looking after our every comfort, fighting a bad back but making sure we were enjoying ourselves... giving up her cats for the week because she knew that June, who loves cats, is allergic to their fur.

I realize that the foregoing doesn't tell you much about the shopping trip, but I wanted to get these impressions down somewhere in this report. The shops – especially the markets – were similar to those here in the States, but the layouts were different. Or so they seemed to me. And, of course, the shops that were also post offices were new to us.

People? The younger people looked very much like the young people here. Boys with long hair, girls in miniskirts or granny dresses, many wearing the platform-soled clog-heeled shoes. Older people, for the most part, looked “typically British” in the sense that they seemed to dress more formally than people of the same generation over here.

Miniskirts and Prams

One combination caught my eye that seemed strange to me at first, until I sorted it out. Miniskirts and prams. Almost every time I saw a pram in England, it was being pushed by a young lady in a miniskirt. And, I might add, most of them had the figure and the legs that go well with minis. Now, all of my life I’ve read books and seen movies wherein prams, perambulators, baby buggies in jolly old England were pushed about by Nannies or Governesses, who usually wore long, nurse-like uniforms. So at first, I thought I was seeing a mod form of the British Nanny. But soon I realized that these were young wives with their babies in prams, members of the middle or upper middle classes, who couldn’t or wouldn’t hire a Nanny to look after their offspring. And most of the babies in those prams were chubby little rascals, looking well-fed and happy, as well they should be, as their mothers (as well as having nice legs) were all well-equipped in the Bristol department.

After the shopping tour, it was suggested that we take a lie-down to catch up on our rest so that we would be in some kind of shape for the party that night. Which we did. But we were up again by 7 p.m. when people started arriving. Ella had invited London fans to come and meet the visiting colonists. (*I object! California is not now and has never been a colony of Great Britain! However, I’m willing to consider it....*) Ethel was on holiday from her hospital duties, and was also staying at the Pen.

The first to arrive was Pat Kearney, a young fan who (once upon a time) when he was an even younger fan, visited the Pen and was advised that anyone who spilled anything on Ella’s new carpet was likely to be slain or at the very least partially dismembered. In consequence thereof he himself was very careful indeed, and when somebody else accidentally knocked over their teacup, young Pat threw himself to the floor so that the tea spilled on him rather than on the sacrosanct carpet.

Soon others began arriving, including Arthur (ATom) Thomson and

Mervyn Barrett, whom I had met before. Eventually the room was filled with fans talking up several storms, all the while tasting the various wines and other drinkables available, and devouring the assortment of food laid on by the keepers of the Pen. Beside the aforementioned fen, there were also Don and Jan Geldart, Daphne Sewell, Jean Muggoch, Gerry Webb, Anne Keylock, and a non-fan friend of Ella's, named Gina, who had brought her boyfriend (whose name I don't remember because he spent most of the evening in another room watching football or something on TV). Gina, however, was a pretty and sociable lass, and I trust she has recovered from the experience of having Arthur Thomson explain Fandom to her....

Arthur was in fine form that night. He told of his troubles with one of the many bridges of London – the Albert Bridge. He had to drive across it in order to get from the Pen to his home. On one particular night, after a party or club meeting at Ella's, he was driving home. He came to the Albert Bridge and crossed it. Then he decided for some reason (perhaps having to do with the effect of Scotch on a Scot) that it was the wrong way to go. So he turned about, re-crossed it, drove off in another direction, found his route again, again crossed the Albert Bridge, again decided it was wrong, and again turned around and re-crossed it.

Now this may sound like a very dull story the way I am writing it here, but the way Arthur told it, going over the same ground again and again, it became funnier and funnier. (Unless, of course, it was the effect of the Scotch on the Scot-Irish-English-Pennsylvania Dutch-and-God-knows American fan listening.)

He also felt compelled to tell the tale of how I conked out at a Welcome ATom party in LA with a brag game in progress on the bed next to the one I had taken. And how I would occasionally interrupt the game to say "I pass" much to the amusement of the fans who were actually playing the game. I don't remember doing this, though I do remember lying there and listening to the progress of the game, as I wasn't quite as conked out as I appeared to be. I just didn't feel like standing up (or even sitting up) any more. Arthur tells a similar version of this story in *Atom Abroad*, his TAFF Trip Report, and I now take this opportunity (as I did at the party) to tell *why* I had managed to reach that state of physical inactivity.

It is true that I was drinking Chivas Regal and that I was sharing it with ATom. It is not true that I was deliberately filling my glass and giving only a drap or so to him. The fact is that he would not permit me to fill his glass as

full as I did mine. Had he done so, I might have stayed on my feet longer, as I would have had fewer full glasses to imbibe. Now, that's logical, isn't it? (I might add that I was celebrating several things that evening, such as being a free man, my divorce having been finalized, and the fact that ATom had won TAFF, and the upcoming convention, and so on. Normally, I am quite a moderate drinker, as almost everyone knows.)

One thing I learned at the party at the Pen was that fan parties are the same the world over, or so I would be willing to bet. And that ain't bad. There was even some discussion of science-fiction. I remember Gerry Webb and Merv Barrett arguing over the merits of Kubrick as an s-f movie-maker. There were also discussions of crime, police, politics, sex, wine, etc. etc.

Up the Apples T' Lemon Me Ramsgates

JUNE:

At one point in the evening, ATom decided to teach me about Cockney rhyming slang. It rapidly developed that I already knew some of it, responding correctly to "titfertat" (hat), "apples and pears" (stairs), "Ramsgate sands" (hands) and "lemon squash" (wash). Then Arthur threw his broadside.

"Do you know 'Bristol City'?"

I had to admit that I didn't.

"Well, 'Bristol City' means Big..." and he pantomimed the rest, cupping his hands appropriately. Len nearly fell off his chair paying attention.

"Ah!" I replied in comprehension, as general laughter filled the room. Considering the number of cities they could have picked for that one, I rather suspect that it has some relationship to Bristol Milk and Bristol Cream.

LEN:

The spread at the party consisted of all kinds of goodies, meats and cheeses and sweets, including a cheesecake that Ella had made. Now June makes a most excellent cheesecake, and it is always interesting to see how she will react to someone else's version of same. June takes great pride in her cheesecake, as well she should. I don't think Ella knew of this, but she asked June to taste her cheesecake, and was obviously awaiting (perhaps a little anxiously) June's reaction.

JUNE:

I was sitting on the floor when Ethel fed me a bite of the cheesecake. I ate it slowly, savoring it as it deserved, and then suddenly popped over onto my back with all fours in the air – struck dead for sure.

There was a second's pause, and then Ella roared "ALL RIGHT, JUNE MOFFATT!" As I regained a sitting position, she inquired "Was it all right?"

"A bit of all right," I replied.

Ella turned to ATom. "She's a bloomin' Cockney!"

Yes, it was a wonderful party and a great introduction to British Fandom.

Sunday, April 15

LEN:

It was indeed quite late in the morning when we arose to start our “serious” touring. Our schedule that day was to see a bit more of London and take a boat trip on the Thames. Ethel and Fred were our tour guides, as Ella was expecting another visit from her osteopath.

Warmly dressed and armed with our cameras, we took off with Ethel and Fred to catch a double-decker bus to Trafalgar Square. This was our second bus ride in London, and it was the worst. The streets were bumpy for, as in cities all over the world, they were being dug up and repaired. The bus driver had a fine, carefree attitude toward all of this, and drove wildly and swiftly the entire trip, so that whenever we hit a bump our very lives were in danger. It was a good thing that Ella with her bad back wasn't with us, as she would never have survived the trip. (*On the other hand, if Ella had been with us, it might have been the driver who wouldn't have survived...*) June was almost thrown to the floor at one point, and did bang a knee rather smartly because of the driver's lack of control.

I don't know if all London bus drivers are like that, but I strongly recommend using the underground, even if you have to change trains more than once to get where you want to go.

Breathing great sighs of relief that we had actually survived the trip, we got off the bus and made a walking tour in and around Trafalgar Square. Fred proudly pointed out Big Ben and told of how the sound of that old clock kept up their morale during the war. Yes, I had heard it too, on Armed Forces Radio, and it is a kind of double symbol to me, representing as it does the courage of the British people in WW2 and the romance and mystery of Britain in history and in fiction. We saw the Houses of Parliament, Scotland Yard, Downing Street, and somewhere in that area came to Westminster Bridge.

We decided to take the boat that was going to Kew Gardens (mostly because that was what was available). While sitting on the top deck, waiting for the boat to get under weigh, I looked up at Big Ben and set my watch by it. Up until then, I had kept my watch on California time, but now seemed the proper and fitting moment to fully accept that I was really in England. It

wasn't quite lilac time, but we were going down to Kew.

It got quite warm while we were sitting on the top deck waiting to go, but soon cooled off when we got out onto the river and the fresh breeze had a chance to show its chilling power. About halfway through the trip, we went down to the cabin below. It had nice large windows on each side, so that we didn't miss seeing anything. There was a refreshment bar, but they had stopped serving tea because they had run out of sugar. (Good job Ella wasn't there, hooked on tea as she is.) The trip on the Thames fulfilled one of my two river-trip ambitions – the other being to go down the Mississippi in a steamboat.

Once I saw the river police zoom by, and visions of Fu Manchu (as well as Sherlock Holmes) filled my head. Rowing crews went by, alternately rowing and resting. We passed the same scull several times. Or, they passed us several times. On either bank could be seen various industrial buildings, docks or wharves, and occasionally residential areas, parks, office buildings and houses or mansions that were Lord knows how many years old.

Battersea Power Station thrust its huge smokestacks into the skyline, with a wisp of white smoke floating from one of them. Ethel told us how all three of the smokestacks used to belch out great clouds of black smoke – before the Clean Air Act of a few years ago. And that reminds me – we never did see any smog in England or in Germany. (Although I understand that they do have some at least in Mannheim.) The nice clean air was one of the more pleasant parts of the trip.

JUNE:

When we debarked at the landing for Kew Gardens, we were soon very glad we'd come the way we had, and not by car or bus. There were easily half a hundred of the small English cars lined up waiting to get into the parking lot of Kew Gardens, to say nothing of finding a place to park once they got in there. We walked past the automotive queue, feeling vaguely Clever and Superior (well, after all, we were moving and they weren't).

As would come to be usual, Fred led the way to the entrance, and paid the fare for us to enter. I think it was a penny each. We were a little early to see the Gardens in all their glory, but Ethel pointed out some Scotch Heather in bloom, some of the tulips were open, and the Sweet Williams and primroses were doing their best to make up for the lack of other flowers. There were even some lilac-colored primroses! We also saw several beautiful magnolia trees just covered with blossoms. These, unlike their California

cousins, are pink-and-white, and bloom while the tree is still leafless.

A large greenhouse caught our eyes as an interesting-looking destination, and we walked over to it. There were statues of the Queen's beasts lined up before it, and I photographed the Royal British Lion, the Unicorn of Scotland and the Griffin of King Edward III. (I wish now I'd taken pictures of all the different statues, but that's the way the cookie bounces. We'll just have to go back and do it over, that's all....)

LEN:

The greenhouse itself turned out to be the Palm House, full of palms and tropical plants. We toured through it, recognizing many of the exhibits, until we had made almost a full circuit of the place.

"Oh, look," said Ethel, "banana trees!"

"We came six thousand miles to look at banana trees?" laughed June. (Of course, the banana trees in California bear inedible fruit, and are more for decor.)

As we left Kew Gardens, we saw a sign with an arrow pointing the way to the Underground Station. We walked and walked, and presently came to a corner. There was no indication of which way to turn, so Ethel asked someone. We were instructed to turn right here, left at the next corner, which we did. It was quite a goodly walk from the Gardens, though still in Kew. I would guesstimate about a mile. But we made it.

Traveling by Underground is my idea of good public transport. I mean the Underground over there. I've heard horror stories of the subway in New York, and have no desire to try it, but the London Underground is what we really need in LA. And you can't get lost on them. There's a map on the wall of every car in the train, showing the entire line, and where it connects with other lines. If you happen to get on the wrong train, it's a matter of minutes to wait and change trains at the next stop.

JUNE:

As we sat down to wait for the train, I caught a glimpse of a familiar face out of the corner of my eye. I turned and looked at it fully. Sure enough, there was Dick Tracy looking out of a billboard, advertising some newspaper's classified ads.

Technically speaking, the term "Underground" is a misnomer for the train at Kew. It is at grade level, and, as we traveled back toward London, it was even elevated at times. However, it got back underground where it

belonged as we got to the city.

LEN:

When we got back to Parker's Pen, we found that Ella's doctor had not yet arrived, so we could look forward to meeting him. He rang the bell a few minutes later and we finally met Paul, osteopath and acupuncturist extraordinary, perhaps the only man in history to give Ella Parker the needle – without getting it back. It was interesting to hear him bossing Ella. Oh, she bossed back, but it was obvious who was in charge, and since he was helping her she did not actually disobey him.

Ella had told us previously of Paul's first visit to the Pen. He had not seen the living room where there is a wall full of science-fiction paperbacks, and didn't know that she is a Fan. While he was treating her, he mentioned science-fiction as his favorite form of reading, and Ella, putting him on as only Ella can, began to kid and tease him for being interested in such fantastic trash. During the course of their discussion, he mentioned that James White was his favorite author. While all this was going on, the doorbell rang. Ella called out to Fred, "That'll be Jimmy. Sit him in the living room until we're through."

Presently, the treatment was over, and Ella led Paul into the living room, where she introduced him to James White, the Science-Fiction Author. Paul, naturally, was croggled. After recovering from the shock, and no doubt noticing the wall of s-f books, he was probably more in the mood to kill Ella than to treat her.

Speaking of that wall of s-f paperbacks reminds me of another tale of the Pen. A lady conducting some sort of survey of the council houses (or flats) called on Ella one day. During the interview, she kept glancing at the bookcases. Finally, she asked, "Are those *really* books?"

"Of course they're books," snapped Ella.

"But," explained the lady, "you can buy wallpaper that *looks* like books, and is *much* less expensive..."

"I can't read wallpaper!" said Ella, or words to that effect.

"In *council flats*?" marveled the lady. Apparently she couldn't believe that people who lived in government housing were capable of reading. It is also possible that she herself was none too literate and considered buying and reading books a waste of money and time.

JUNE:

For dinner that night, Ella had a menu from a food-to-go place called DIAL-A-MEAL. It was divided into courses, and was fully as complex as menus in many good restaurants. From among the Starters (British for “appetizers”) I chose “Mushrooms à la Grecque”. Ella and I both chose the moussaka which was a mistake as it may be the only flop on their menu, being tasteless. Other people were delighted with their selections, Ethel declaring that the broiled chicken leg she ordered was perfectly delicious. I ordered their chocolate mousse for dessert, and found it absolutely scrumptious. It came with a strange little container of cream.

Ella phoned our order in, and they said that it would be an hour before it arrived. It was an hour, almost on the dot. The delivery man had two insulated baskets, one for hot dishes and one for cold, so that everything arrived at its proper temperature. There was a delivery charge of one pound. We figured that it was worth it, since it was still less expensive than dining out.

Monday, April 16

Follow Apollo

JUNE:

As we were getting ready to go to Windsor Castle, Ella asked if we would mind if she wore her jacket with all the Apollo patches on it. “Why not?” we replied, so she did. We started off towards the Queen’s Park underground station, which is quite near the Pen. Crossing the street to it was still hazardous, as we still hadn’t gotten our reactions rearranged as to which way to look for oncoming traffic. There was a traffic island in the middle of the street where we could stand in safety while waiting for an opportunity to cross the other half.

Our first night there, Ella had given us GO-AS-YOU-PLEASE passes for use on the London Underground and bus system. We made good use of them, except for one day when I had tried to lighten my purse and I managed to leave the pass behind with the stuff I’d taken out of it. I wasn’t allowed to forget it, either!

The underground took us into downtown London, and we followed Apollo to the bus terminal for the buses to Windsor. As we were walking up the street, Fred pointed back the way we had come and said, “Look, there’s a mounted policeman stopping traffic”.

Like a proper tourist, I snapped my camera case open and trotted down to take a picture. Once I got down there, it became apparent WHY he was stopping traffic. Music sounded from off to the left, and here came the Buckingham Palace guards, marching back to their barracks and playing a lively march as they did so. We didn’t get to see the Changing of the Guard, but we surely got to see the result of it!

LEN:

This was the day we went to see the Queen. She was in residence at Windsor Castle (or so the flag over the castle testified) but for some reason we were not invited in for tea. Actually, I wouldn’t have been surprised if Ella had announced that she had arranged an audience with Her Royal Majesty, but I guess there are limits to everything – even to the powers of the

Boss Lady of Parker's Pen. Then again, it may have been professional jealousy, though I don't like to think that it was....

Ella wore her blue jacket with all the Apollo patches on it, and Fred donned a beautiful overcoat which I was jealously admiring. He and Ella decided at that point to check everything in the flat before the Moffatts took off for Bristol. Fred did loan me one of his scarves, as the jacket I was wearing gave my neck little protection.

I don't remember whether it was then or at some later point that Ethel came up with our motto: "Follow Apollo". Ethel also pointed out the reactions of the various passers-by to Ella's jacket. The "typically" conservative Britisher glanced at it and then looked away as though he or she hadn't really seen it. Others (usually the younger folk) frankly gawked at it, and I'm sure that I saw envy in the eyes of some of them.

JUNE:

The bus ride to Windsor was minorly interesting. We saw a great deal of London traffic, and had our first glimpse of the M4 which we would later take to Bristol. It is a pleasant three-lane freeway, with everybody (naturally) driving on the left. I managed to make some sort of pun shortly before we passed Heathrow, which led Ella to threaten to deport us then and there. My main complaint about the bus was the narrow space allotted for legroom, which had my knees up near my chin – most uncomfortable.

Once in Windsor, we decided to have a glass of sherry in a local pub and then some lunch before starting our tour of the castle. I must say that Ella kept us well-fed throughout our stay with her. She even carried candies in her bag in case any of us got faint for lack of food at any time. Thus was I introduced to Buttered Ginger and Buttered Chocolate – two confections made by a Scottish firm which I must try to find here in the States.

The first place in Windsor Castle that we went was Saint George's Chapel, which was Ella's favorite. No photography was allowed, but it didn't matter, because they had slides for sale that were far better than we could have taken ourselves anyway. The high vaulted ceiling was decorated with what appeared to be colorful heraldic devices and golden grid-shaped things. It would have been easy to get a crick in one's neck, walking around staring up, but the people in charge had provided a tea-cart sort of table with a mirror set in its top so that you could wheel it up and down the aisle, looking down into the mirror.

Next we went over into the Choir with the Queen's Stall at the western

end. The seating ran lengthwise of the room, with plaques on the walls in memoriam of those of the nobility who had seats there when alive. The present occupants of the seats were indicated by colorful banners hanging from the ceiling. There was some discussion as to what they were going to do when all the wall space for the plaques was used up – which time may not be too far in the future. Knowing the British, I’m sure they’ll think of something.

There was a pair of scarlet doors decorated with stylized vines and leaves in gold, which Ella thought was highly inappropriate to the tone of the rest of the place. So she stomped off to find a guard and complain about it, and was told that these were special doors that were used only by the Queen. We later found out that they were Henry III’s doors.

Since the Queen was in residence at Windsor, we did not get to tour the State Apartments. What disappointed me more was that we also didn’t get to see Queen Mary’s Doll House, which I’ve read a good deal about. We didn’t get to see a Properly Dignified Guard, standing watch by one of those little sentry boxes. Later we saw an Improperly Undignified Guard, who was laughing and talking with the tourists. Ella took a picture of me with him, and as I walked away, he called “Send me a copy!” I expressed surprise at the lack of decorum, but as Len said, “His sergeant wasn’t anywhere in sight!”

LEN:

While at the castle, I remarked that the busbies worn by the guards might be more fannish than we thought, especially if they were used for communication. I pointed out that they were ideal places to store radios, and if the radios were FM, then of course they were FM Busbies....

I managed to escape with my life.

JUNE:

We visited the gift shop on the Castle grounds, and bought a plan of Windsor Castle drawn in 17-ought-something-or-other for Rick, a couple of packets of postcards showing Castle interiors that we hadn’t been able to see in person, and a souvenir spoon for a friend in the States.

At one point in the afternoon, Ella and Ethel decided to pay a visit to the ladies’ room. Ella came back looking MOST annoyed. Seems that she had gone down, paid her penny and used the facilities. As she was on her way out, the attendant said to her,

“I’m sorry, but gentlemen are not allowed in here.”

Ella turned around and froze the woman with a look. (Ella has a very

short haircut and the attendant saw only the back of her head at first.)

We walked out and looked down the Long Walk, which is indeed a lo-o-o-ng one. We didn't feel like walking down it, but contented ourselves with taking its picture. Then we wandered around Windsor a bit, looking through a bookstore and some souvenir shops. Naturally, we also had tea. Finally we caught a bus back to London. The ride back was not as cramped as the ride out, since we were able to claim the entire back seat for our own.

Tortillas Suzette

Once in London, Ella decided that the next item on the program should be dinner. We agreed, and wandered down the street looking for restaurants. Presently we came to one that bore the name "EL SOMBRERO" and a picture of a man in a large sombrero leaning against a cactus.

"Do you want to eat here?" asked Ella.

Len and I looked at each other. "Eat at a Mexican restaurant – in London?" we said, more or less in unison. "Well, why not?" So in we went.

The menu was the first oddity. The dishes listed were about one-third French, one-third Italian and the remainder Spanish (or Mexican). We discussed the dishes back and forth. Finally Fred decided on steak with Spanish sauce (which proved too hot for his taste), Len ordered enchiladas and Ethel and I ordered tacos. Ella said she wouldn't order anything until she saw what we got, and asked if I would cut off a piece of my taco for her to taste.

With the knowledge of a lifetime of living in Southern California, I explained to her that a taco consists of meat, lettuce, cheese and sauce in a very crisp, brittle fried tortilla, and that it would be far simpler for her to take a bite than to try cutting it. I had just about got the point across when the waiter brought my plate and placed it in front of me.

Lying on the plate in a pool of reddish liquid were what looked like two large, white, oily blintzes. Len's enchiladas looked much the same, but without the thin red gravy and with melted cheese on top. I sat and stared at these creations for what seemed like a long time. At last I gathered myself together and cut off a piece of one for Ella. Len also gave her a sample of his enchilada. She decided that she liked the enchiladas and ordered a set for herself.

Once into the "tacos", they proved to be alien but tasty. Some sort of

meat, cut into chunks, lots of nice sliced mushrooms, in a sauce. Len's "enchiladas" were equally strange but good in their own way. We were no longer surprised that Len had been unable to order tortillas – the people at this restaurant had undoubtedly never heard of them.

We have considered the possibility that it was a Spanish, rather than Mexican, restaurant, but are almost sure that it claimed to be Mexican. Since returning to the States, we have also learned that in some places tacos are served in soft tortillas – but that's still a long chalk from those London-Mexican style "tacos" in their crepe-pancake wrappings.

Later, back at the Pen, we were sitting and talking and looking at Ella's photo album of pictures taken when she was in the States on her trip, back a few years ago. A funny noise sounded, something like a musical cricket. It turned out to be the telephone. Marsha and Eddie Jones were calling us from Higher Bebington, to welcome us to England and inquire about our plans for coming to the convention. We talked for quite a while – Marsha retains her disregard for phone bills – and finally rang off.

Presently the cricket sang again. This time it was Elsie Wollheim, telling Ella that they were in town. Ella arranged to meet them at their hotel about 11 in the morning, so that we could all go to the Tower of London together.

Tuesday, April 17

LEN:

We met Don and Elsie Wollheim at their hotel and proceeded to the Tower of London, stopping for elevenses on the way. When we entered the Tower gates, we found a tour group being guided by a large Beefeater in a red-and-black uniform, so we attached ourselves to his group. He told us in grisly detail of the various executions, obviously relishing his job.

JUNE:

He apologized several times for not being able to speak more loudly, explaining that he had a cold. I felt sorry for him, and offered him a Genuine American cough drop at the end of his stint, which he accepted with thanks. I hope it helped him.

LEN:

We stood in line for at least 45 minutes to see the Crown Jewels, but it was well worth it. The ground floor is devoted to State regalia, such as an enormous golden bowl decorated intricately with all sorts of carvings, the silver heraldic trumpets, ceremonial swords, etc., etc. Then comes the Moment of Truth. We rented tape-recorded tours before we descended the stairs to view the actual Jewels. It turned out to be an excellent idea for two reasons. In the first place, the voice on the tape tells you what you're looking at, and secondly, there are two lines for going past the display of jewels.

The lower line is requested to keep moving steadily. Those of us with the tape recorders were ushered onto a walkway a step above the other one, and permitted to stand at and gaze as long as we liked.

The First and Second Stars of Africa have to be seen to be believed. We've seen photographs and replicas, but until we saw the real diamonds, we couldn't appreciate how magnificent they are.

Ethel Lindsay and Elsie Wollheim are both wee lasses, and pretty much of a height. So we were exceedingly amused when Ethel remarked that she was afraid we would lose Elsie in the crowd "because she is so wee". Ethel herself was fairly easy to spot because of the bright scarlet tam she was wearing.

After the tour, we were tired and hungry, and began looking for a place

to eat. June and I didn't want a large lunch, as it was late in the day and we were scheduled to go out for dinner that evening with Mervyn Barrett. We tried the Tower Restaurant again, but after a 20-minute wait with no service, the seven of us marched out (with Ella paying some compliment to the cashier as we went by), and walked on and on, looking for a likely spot. As we were walking along, Ella dropped back to advise me that:

“The City of London is just one square mile, y’know.”

“No, I didn't know. But I'm learning.”

Ella finally led us to another ride on the Underground, and eventually to the Tennessee Pancake House, which was decorated with murals, etc. depicting the American Civil War and some other scenes which we couldn't quite identify. June ordered their cinnamon-and-sugar pancake, and I had an omelet.

We were seated at the end of a long table, next to the aisle, so that for once I was able to confiscate the check without being observed by Ella or Fred. I don't usually brag about picking up a tab, but over there it is something of an Accomplishment. Even had the same problem with Eddie Jones when he was over here. Grabbing the tab (rather than stalling in the hope that someone else will take it) is a game they play, and unless one is exceedingly quick, clever and sneaky, it is damned difficult to do.

However, this one time we were in a good strategic position, and it was one of those places where they leave the tab at the beginning rather than the end of the meal. So I quietly slipped it under my napkin, and no one was the wiser (except June, and she wasn't telling) until Ella started looking for it when we'd finished.

About that time, I was already paying it at the cashier's window. Ella cursed me roundly, and that made the victory all the better.

That evening, June and I met Mervyn Barrett, and he took us to the Mille Pini, an Italian restaurant where the food was good, the zabaglione the best we've ever tasted, and the house wine excellent. Then he escorted us to the Sherlock Holmes pub, where we tried their Barley Wine. It is a sort of sweetish beer. I didn't like it at first, but by the time I finished my glass I could see how a taste for it might be acquired.

The pub itself has been decorated by someone who knows and loves the Holmes canon. A display case occupied most of one wall, divided into a couple of dozen compartments. We could see a plaster cast of the footprint of the Hound, for instance, with a cast of the print of an ordinary hound beside it

for comparison; a model of a “strange worm, unknown to science”; a “red leech”; Sherlock’s monograph on tobacco ashes, etc. Each display was accompanied by the proper quote from the canon. Unfortunately, there were tables and benches in front of these display cases which were occupied, and we didn’t get to see them all as closely as we would have liked, since we drew the line at climbing into these people’s laps in order to see better.

Upstairs, there was a closed-off room representing 221B Baker Street. One looked at it through glass windows. It too was well done, and when June asked where the “patriotic VR done in bullet pocks” was, Mervyn said it was prob’ly on the wall we couldn’t see. There was a black mask lying on the table, which I suppose was the “black vizard mask” worn by the King of Bohemia. Either that, or one of the masks worn by Holmes and Watson in “The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton”.

From there we walked across the Thames on a railroad bridge that obligingly provided a walkway beside the tracks. We paused to admire the view downriver, with the city lights reflecting jewel-like in the calm surface of the water. Our destination was Mervyn’s club, the National Film Theater. We sat in the bar-lounge until closing, drinking lager (June had a gin-and-lime, which was as close as the bartender could come to a gin gimlet) (*and I always thought a gin gimlet was an English drink!*) and talking of life in England and the States. Mervyn was interested in all phases of American life, and I got the impression he might want to move over here if he could get the right job.

On our walk across the bridge we were met by what I suppose were buskers or street musician-beggars. The one leading them was playing a harmonica and holding out his hat for alms. The others were singing something in a high-pitched key, and it all sounded sad and miserable. I almost reached in my pocket to put some change in the cap, but for some reason I couldn’t do it. This bothered me, as I had always wanted to see some buskers and even had visions of Pike Pickens joining them in a street dance. But this was late at night, in the middle of a long bridge, and the beggars themselves looked just as miserable and dirty as bums and tramps in the States or anywhere in the world.

I think it was their lack of dignity that kept me from giving them money. They seemed too conniving and sniveling, almost subhuman. It seemed to me that they could have done without all the bowing and scraping. I don’t like to be bowed and scraped at. Not an unusual reaction for me, as I’m the same

way in restaurants. I like good service and admire waiters and waitresses who take pride in their work. True, they are serving me, but I don't expect them to be servile. So the ones who overdo it, who appear as if by magic to light my cigarette when I've already got my lighter working, and who hover over me as though they were going to spoon-feed me, bug me.

I believe that human dignity is one of the few things the human race has going for it. I don't believe in slavery – either when one makes slaves of others or when the others make slaves of themselves for the sake of a few coppers or for a lot of dollars, for that matter. Perhaps I overreacted to the beggars on the bridge, but again I've been around long enough to know that in countries such as the USA or England (especially over there with their socialized medicine, etc.) that many of the beggars and bums are self-made and are con men of the lowest order. Or are sick with alcoholism (or drugs) and are begging not for bread but for money to buy their booze or their fix.

I have seen good street musicians who had dignity, as well as style and grace. That's what I expected buskers to be like, but perhaps the ones we saw on the bridge that night weren't real buskers. Just bums.

After Mervyn's club closed for the night, he guided us around the maze of walkways in the area to the Waterloo Underground station. We were moderately familiar with the Underground lines by that time, and besides, the Bakerloo line stopped there, which we had to use to get back to Ella's. Mervyn rode with us as far as Baker Street where he transferred to the other section of the Bakerloo line. We saluted Baker Street fondly, wishing we had time to go up and explore it.

A Parenthetical Interlude of No Particular Date

JUNE:

English milk comes only in pints – unhomogenized, with the cream sitting richly at the top. Ella was particular about getting her milk into the apartment soon after it was delivered, explaining that, even on the seventh floor of the apartment building, it stood the chance of being “adopted” if left out very long.

One morning as we left for a day of touring, I noticed a strange-looking bottle of milk sitting outside the apartment next door. It was the size and shape of a 32 oz. soft-drink bottle, even to the crimped metal cap. Obviously the lady next door wasn't nearly as particular as Ella about getting her milk

in right away.

The bottle was still there when we came back that night, and when we left again the next morning. Now I know it was chilly in that hallway, but there is a limit to how long the milk will keep under those circumstances. I mentioned it to Ella.

“Oh that’s sterile milk,” she explained, “it will keep without refrigeration for about five days.”

Wednesday, April 18

LEN:

While Ethel went off to swap her car for another one to drive to Bristol, Ella, Fred, June and I visited Piccadilly Circus and the Haymarket. We cashed some traveler's checks into pounds, and found a Chicken Inn where we had a spot of lunch. There were a couple of shocks that came with the lunch (no extra charge).

The first one was when they gave June a *wedge* of lemon with her tea (instead of the usual paper-thin slices) and she squeezed it into her cup. Ella leaned over the table, her eyes popping.

“*WHAT are you doing!*” she demanded.

“Putting lemon in my tea,” June replied, happily adding sugar. Ella made some sort of noise that sounded like “wellwhatcanyouexpectfromabloodyyankee”.

The second shock came when I got the “double burger” I'd ordered. Two greasy patties of meat adorned the plate, each about two inches across. They had chips to go with it, but not a bun in sight. Someone should tell the English what is meant when they advertise a “burger”. (*Someone should also teach them to drain the grease off the meat!*)

JUNE:

While in Piccadilly Circus Underground Station that day, I went into the ladies' room. I came out considerably more amused than I went in. In addition to providing the public with the usual slick-almost-waxed toilet paper, someone had neatly stamped “City of Westminster” on each section in purple ink.

LEN:

After lunch, we made our way by foot, bus and finally taxi to the British Museum in Great Russell Street. We saw the Rosetta Stone, which we found impressive – much more so in person (so to speak) than in photographs. We also saw the Elgin Marbles, which we found rather pitiful. There's just enough beauty left in them to make us feel rather sick at the neglect and vandalism they've suffered over the centuries.

JUNE:

Ella and I studied with some interest a headless, armless, legless trunk of marble which bore the label "Poseidon". Our conclusion was: how did they know, and what difference did it make anyway? There were also bits of statuary with labels saying that the head of this particular piece was in Athens, or that the big toe was on loan to the Museum of Cairo. I wonder if they got all the bits gathered together if it would make a complete statue?

I see I forgot to mention the security check going into the Museum. Yes, there too. They'd had bomb threats, and were taking them seriously enough to post two guards outside to check handbags and similar bomb-carrying possibilities. I marched up, plonked my purse down on the table, grinned and said "There's a hand grenade inside!" The guard grinned back, handed my purse back without opening it and waved me past.

LEN:

Our major disappointment was that we didn't have time to see the original manuscript of *Gulliver's Travels*. We could have spent weeks there, and still not have seen it all, but we had only about an hour, due to the fact that we had an appointment to visit John Hale of Robert Hale, Ltd., the publishers who reprint JDM* novels in England.

* John D. MacDonald. [Ed.]

Ella left us to go home for another appointment with Paul, the osteopathic stfan, but Fred remained with us to guide us through the maze of London streets. We took the Underground again, this time getting off at a station that had large elevators instead of the usual escalators to bring us up to ground level. Once back on solid ground, we studied the landscape before us, and followed Fred over to the proper street. Finding the address we wanted was another matter – we overshot it before we realized that we would have to go down a narrow alley. We finally located the address we wanted, skirting a lorry being unloaded to gain the entrance. Fred saw us safely in, and said that he would wait outside.

I was surprised to learn that Mr. Hale knew little of the s-f conventions in his country, but then Robert Hale, Ltd. does have a limited s-f line, I suggested he consider buying huckster space at the conventions as well as ad space in their program booklets. And that he really should print more s-f.

Having done our duty for fandom and the s-f field in general, we returned to the Pen for dinner, watching British TV (which is a delight compared to American TV), writing cards and so on. On our way back to the

Pen we stopped to take pictures of Sloane Square and South Kensington station signs – our way of saying “thanks” to good ol’ G&S.

JUNE:

Once back at the Pen, Ella passed around the DIAL-A-MEAL menu again. Neither of us wanted to give the moussaka another chance. This time I ordered their Chicken Bordelaise, which was delicious. Len joined me in ordering chocolate mousse for dessert, having tasted mine from the other night.

Thursday, April 19

LEN:

Ethel had acquired another car from the Royal Auto Club that apparently did not have “sticky” or sticking parts. However, what it did have was a defective boot (i.e. trunk) lid. The lid would not stay down because the lock did not catch. So, before we took off for Bristol, Fred Parker helped us stow our luggage (after inspecting it carefully to see that we weren’t carrying away either his overcoat or his rocking chair) in the boot and wired the lid down.

JUNE:

The English may drive on the left, but they have the unnerving habit of parking on either side of the street. We had noticed this previously; it was particularly apparent as we were on our way to the M4. A truck which was parked facing us on our side of the street suddenly pulled out directly in our path. I flinched, and I think Ethel may have used one of those Scottish incantations again. Anyway we didn’t collide, though I don’t remember why not.

Another point about riding in an English car is that I occupied the left front seat, which is the driver’s seat in an American car. The lack of a steering wheel didn’t bother me so much as the lack of a side mirror. I kept glancing to where the side mirror should be, and found nothing.

LEN:

In what seemed like no time at all, we were driving on the British version of freeways or turnpikes and taking in the scenery. Much greenery and farmland, with cows, horses, etc. Reminded me a little of Western Pennsylvania. During the trip I discovered what had happened to the descendants of one of my favorite heroes of literature, Lemuel Gulliver. They are in the moving business, or so testified a huge van that passed us. The sign on the side of the lorry read “Gulliver’s Van” and I regret not being able to snap a picture of it.

JUNE:

The M4 was well signposted, with signs informing the driver not only of the next few exits, but how far it is to the next Rest Area. Ethel wanted to stop there for a snack and to see if the Royal Auto Club had a repair man there

who might be able to repair the latch on the boot. Once there, Ethel found the RAC rep, and went into conference with him, while Len and I looked around the area. There was one small tacky-looking snack stand, and a great deal of construction going on. There was also a stiff breeze that threatened to freeze our ears in the few minutes we were out in it. So we got back in the car while the RAC man and Ethel continued working on the boot lock. Soon he gave it up as a bad job and said that he didn't have the proper tools. He also advised Ethel to take the car back and return it for another one, which advice didn't seem particularly good under the circumstances.

There was another Rest Area about 50 miles ahead, and we decided to try that one for both lunch and possible repairs. We couldn't find an RAC rep when we got there, so ate lunch in shifts. Ethel went in first and got something, and Len and I followed later, so as not to leave the unlockable boot unguarded. It also rather ruined our hopes of seeing Stonehenge.

LEN:

We arrived in Bristol late in the afternoon. Using the map provided by the convention committee, June acted as navigator, guiding Ethel through the streets of Bristol. I might have helped, but June has a better sense of direction than I have and is a much better "native guide" in any case. Perhaps because she's part Cherokee. Anyway, I was busy observing the effects of the brisk wind on the mini-skirted lasses. One must keep up one's image.

We finally found the Grand Hotel, unloaded our luggage, and Ethel made arrangements for parking the car. I'm not sure where, but apparently there was hotel parking other than on the narrow street in front of the building.

The Grand Hotel of Bristol is an old hotel, but somewhat modernized. Our room, for instance, had its own bathroom. Complete with commode, washbasin, bathtub and real hot and cold running water. There was also an electric heater on the bathroom wall – right next to the commode, so one had to sort of watch out for leg burns. There was also an extension phone in the bathroom, but either it was out of order or not connected up with the one in the bedroom.

JUNE:

After we got sort of settled, we went out to explore the hotel. We had been told that the convention was to have the mezzanine all to itself, so we went looking around. The problem with finding anything was that we were

there before the convention got set up. However, we did see a fellow with A Sensitive Fannish Face who looked vaguely familiar, somehow.

LEN:

That was Sam Long, the first fan we met. I assumed that he was an American, as he certainly had an American accent. I later learned that he is British, but has worked a lot with Americans on the space programs. He is also a vile punster, a Feghoot storyteller, and a lot of fun to have around.

At some point, we were down in the lobby, and discovered Marsha and Eddie Jones checking in. June and Marsha spotted each other and met in the middle of the lobby with whoops of joy and a large, mutual hug. Eddie's and Marsha's room was a couple of doors down from ours. We met with them there, and after Eddie had properly introduced me to Balvenie (*a very smooth Scotch that even I like*), he announced that he had to go out and buy some wine. I volunteered to go with him, as it gave me an excuse to leave the hotel without June. "You girls can visit while Eddie and I go look for wine," I said.

A Day of Wine and Roses

Now the Real Reason for this eagerness to abandon my roommate and goodwife so early in the convention was that the next day, April 20, was her birthday – and I had yet to get her a present. I had tried to do something about it while in London and in Windsor, but could never get away long enough to shop for a gift without her being in the area. So this was my last chance, as I understood that most shops would be closed for the next four days – the long Easter weekend.

When we got to the lobby, I told Eddie what I intended to do, and he went off to find wine while I went looking for roses. I usually send roses to June's office every wedding anniversary, and sometimes on birthdays. I had observed a notice in the lobby to the effect that they had a resident florist, though I could see no sign of a flower shop. So I asked a bellman – an aged gentleman who looked as though he had worked there a long time and should Know Everything. At first, we had a communication problem. It might have been my American accent, or perhaps he was hard of hearing, or a combination of both. But finally he understood me, and said there was no florist or flower shop in the hotel. I assumed that he meant the florist wasn't there at that time. He directed me down the street, where I would find a

cluster of shops, including flower sellers.

I passed a gift shop on the way and stopped in to buy a birthday card and ask the lady there about flowers. Yes, there was a kind of alley or arcade a couple of doors down where there were flower sellers. Stalls, that is, not enclosed in shops.

There were two or three flower stalls, and it was obvious that most of their wares were sold and they were battening down the hatches for the long weekend. One lady, named Gertrude, advised me that they had no roses. I explained that what I wanted was to have them delivered to our room in the hotel the next morning. I would pay in advance, of course.

But, she informed me, there was no way that she – or the others – could get roses either that night or the next day. She then told me that there was a florist in the hotel, and what I should do is tell the hotel florist that Gertrude had sent me, and perhaps she could arrange the floral surprise.

Thanking her, I hurried back to the gift shop, bought a pendant and a goofy-looking stuffed lion, and persuaded the nice lady to wrap them for me. They didn't have a gift-wrapping service but they had gift paper, so I bought some paper and she wrapped the gifts for the crazy, romantic American. When she learned I was from California she had more questions than I could answer, and I almost gave her a kiss and a hug for the help she was rendering.

So, back to the hotel, where fortunately I ran into Ethel who was just getting back from somewhere and was on her way to her room. She took the package and card to keep for me overnight, and I went to the desk again to ask about the resident florist. I explained to the girl clerk what I wanted, and she seemed doubtful that the florist would or could do the chore. It seems that the florist arranged flowers for decorating the hotel and for functions such as weddings, banquets, etc., and was not there to render personal service to the guests. But she would try and find the florist and let me speak with her. Fine, I said, remembering that perhaps all I had to do was say the magic name "Gertrude".

The clerk went offstage right somewhere, and I waited for ten minutes or so, all the while observing the various fans and pros who were arriving in larger groups now. And nervously hoping that June wouldn't come down looking for me and discover me in the middle of ordering her birthday roses. Finally the clerk returned and said that apparently the "resident" florist had gone home for the evening, and wouldn't be back until Tuesday. So I never got to use the magic name "Gertrude" and June didn't get her roses.

However, we did visit the flower mart the following week and I bought her a bunch of violets, just like in the movies.

The PIGS* were having a dinner that night to celebrate Ina Shorrocks's birthday. We were to meet in the lobby and go off to the Restaurant du Gourmet in cars provided by those who had driven to the con. So, various cars were loaded and departed. June and I were to go in Norman Shorrocks's car, along with our Fearless Leader, Tony Walsh, who apparently had arranged the dinner.

** Thus in the original: either a typo for LIGS (members of the LiG or Liverpool Group) or an attempted pun in the dinner context. [Ed.]*

We noticed that Norman and Tony were having some kind of a hassle with the bell captain and other hotel employees. It seemed that the hotel folk had mislaid the keys to Norman's car. They found them eventually, but not that evening. So, thanks to the Persuasiveness of Tony Walsh, we would travel by taxi, and the hotel would pay the taxi fare.

JUNE:

We were, naturally, the last to arrive at the restaurant. We walked in and found the rest of our group seated in the bar. Word went around that we were now ready to order, and menus were brought to us. I eyed the tiny round table in front of me and rather hoped that we weren't expected to eat here, too.

The menu had the usual fault (if fault it be) of strange menus – that of listing too many delicious-sounding things to eat, so that Decisions are in order. I discarded one possibility when a closer perusal revealed that it contained anisette, which I don't like. I finally settled for the Beef Bourguignon which I have just recently learned to make, and wanted a comparison on. (Mine's better.)

We did very well indeed on our choice of wine, thanks to the poet, Robert Graves. He mentions Volnay wine in one of his poems – “sunsets swimming in Volnay” is the line, I believe – and there was Volnay on the wine list, looking up at us. So we ordered it, and found it rich, fruity and full bodied – just the sort of wine that a sunset would want to go swimming in, had it a choice.

The meal drew to a close, and many of us thought on after-dinner drinks and relaxing. Alas, it was not to be. Behind Ina's back, the maitre d' brought in a magnificent birthday cake, suitably decorated with candles. We sang

“Happy Birthday” in a minimum of two or three keys, and then settled down to the task of demolishing the cake. We were only partially successful, and Ina was given the rest to take with her. I never did find out what happened to it – probably the Shorrocks children got it.

Going back to the hotel, we rode in Ethel’s car with Ina driving. She did not take the same route back that the taxi had taken getting there, so it was catch-as-catch-can most of the way. Bristol is well supplied (some might say oversupplied) with traffic circles, and to a first-time visitor they all look alike.

Presently we came to a familiar-looking corner. “I think we turn right here,” I said. A little further the road curved abruptly to the left, and we were in what looked like an industrial area. Ina decided that perhaps I had been right, so she turned the car around and headed back.

A couple of dozen feet or so from the intersection we wanted, the street we were on suddenly became one way in the wrong direction. Ina considered the matter for a few seconds, then charged ahead, made her left turn, and sure enough we were in familiar territory.

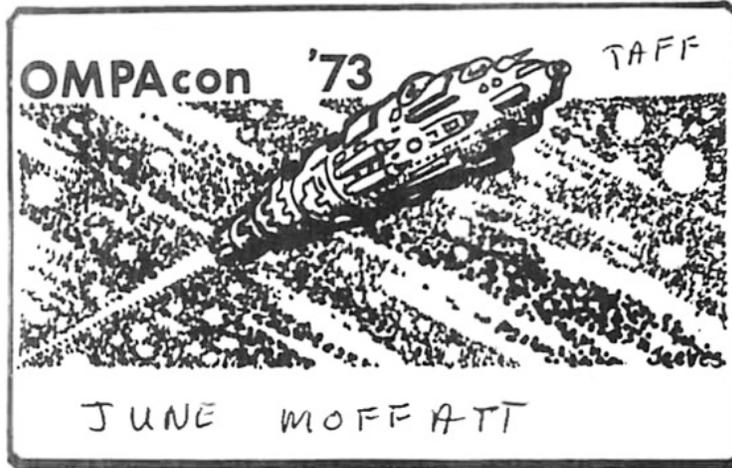
LEN:

Among the fans and pros that showed up that evening was Bob Shaw, and I hurried over to greet him. The last time I had seen Bob was the last day of the Noreascon in 1971. He was getting ready to leave, and I offered to buy him a drink. He indicated that he had had sufficient alcohol for one convention, but was amenable to something softer. So we stepped into the coffee shop and so help me Foo he had a milkshake – what the Bostonians call a “frappe”. I was drinking coffee at the time, but somehow I felt that treating one of the famous Wheels of IF with a farewell milkshake was rather strange. But it must have been The Fannish Thing To Do, because Bob looked in pretty good shape at the OMPAcon.

After saying our hellos, Bob indulged in a bit of prophecy. He pointed out that he and I had first met at the Solacon in Los Angeles in 1958. We met for the second time at the Noreascon in Boston in 1971, and for the third time here in Bristol in 1973. “Len,” said Bob, “I reckon the next time we meet it will be in Moscow in 1984...” (I wish I could reproduce that marvelous Irish lilt in print!)

After we got back to the hotel, there was a small party in the Joneses’ room, where I made good use of my whiskey cane. Present were Eddie and Marsha, June, the Shorrocks, the Walshes, Mary and Bill Burns, and I’ve

prob'ly forgotten someone. Anyway, it was a nice quiet party, and got us good and ready for bed.



Convention badge by Terry Jeeves

Friday, April 20

LEN:

I discovered that morning that the one and only white dress shirt I had brought with me was badly soiled around the collar and cuffs, though I had worn it only once, the evening we went out with Mervyn Barrett in London. Apparently the shirt had picked up soot when we walked across the bridge. I do remember some sort of train whizzing by at the time, but didn't think coal-driven locomotives were still in use. In any case, it was noticeably soiled, and I wanted to wear it at the banquet. The banquet wasn't until Sunday night, and I wouldn't be wearing a shirt and tie before then, but I do like to "dress up" a bit for the banquet, especially when I'm going to be at the head table.

So I called the Hall Porter to ask about their advertised laundry and cleaning service. (It said so right there on one of their brochures.) He advised me that the said service was not and would not be functioning over the long holiday weekend.

Frustrated, exasperated, and not having had my morning coffee, I had a momentary loss of temper and hollered "Bloody Hell!" into the phone.

"Ooh!" said June, "you swore at him in British!"

This broke me up and calmed me down enough to think of some other way to get the shirt done. I was sure that if there were any laundromats in the area, or cleaning establishments, they too would be closed for the weekend.

Just before we left the room, two maids came by. We told them they could go ahead and do our room, as we were going down to breakfast. Then Inspiration struck me. I looked at them with my baby-blue eyes and told them my tale of woe. I had just the one white shirt and had to have it for the convention banquet, and did they know of *anywhere* I could get the said shirt washed and pressed? I could have asked them outright if they would do it, but I felt it would be better if one or both volunteered. I didn't mention money, but I made it clear that I was desperate, and obviously would be willing to do almost anything to have the shirt done.

Sure enough, one of the ladies said that well, they weren't supposed to do that sort of thing, but after all, these were special circumstances, and perhaps she could smuggle the shirt out of the hotel if I wanted to trust her to take it home with her, and she could have it back to me the next morning.

Exactly what I was hoping for! I blessed her profusely and helped her roll up the shirt and tuck it under her sweater. She was a plump little lady, and the extra bulge didn't look too obvious.

To finish the story here, she did return with the shirt in immaculate condition the following morning. I handed her a pound note, and she seemed satisfied, so I must assume that I didn't underpay her for her help.

June and I had breakfast in the hotel dining room, which one got to by taking either the stairs or the elevator to the mezzanine, and walking through a lounge area. This lounge was a kind of lobby, but separate from and a floor up from the regular lobby. It was used by the conventioners as a sort of non-drinker's bar, in that one could sit comfortably and visit with others, and if one wanted a spot of tea or coffee and some biscuits, all one had to do was ring the service bell on the wall. The cost was minimal and the service was good. I suppose the tea was good (*it was*). June couldn't get lemon wedges to squeeze into her tea, though. When they brought lemon at all, it was in thin slices. (*Once when I asked particularly for a wedge of lemon, they managed slices a quarter of an inch thick.*) The coffee was adequate, if not the world's greatest.

The restaurant/dining room itself was decked out in full formal array, including full settings of silverware – quite a difference from the ordinary or informal English table setting where all you get to start with is a knife and fork. The waitress presented us with menus, which had no prices, since the hotel rates included bed and breakfast.

I had wished June many happy returns some time earlier, in between pleading with the hall porter and arranging for my shirt to be laundered by the nice cleaning lady. I was thinking I would have to knock up Ethel and get the gifts and card. But dear, sweet Ethel arrived at our table before we finished breakfast, and slipped me the package, so I presented June with the gifts then and there. And then Eddie Jones circled our table while singing "Happy Birthday" at June, and fans at nearby tables called over their best wishes. What we lacked in roses was made up for by the goodness of our fellow fans – and then some.

After breakfast we decided it was time to see what was happening with the convention. This was the 24th British Science-Fiction Convention, and this year it was sponsored by the Offtrails Magazine Publishers Association, so naturally it was dubbed OMPAcon '73. The committee (in alphabetical order) consisted of Gerald Bishop, Ken Cheslin, Fred Hemmings, Terry

Jeeves, Mike & Pat Meara and Brian Robinson. With the exception of Ken and Terry (both of whom are in My Generation), the committee was a comparatively young bunch of hyperactive fans. I was happy to see that, because fandom cannot survive without the young ones coming in and taking over the chores that the older ones are tired of doing.

In talking later to Fred, and to Pat and Mike (Pat being the purty girl member of the team), I learned that this was their first time on a con committee – running a con, seeing that programs were lined up and started on time, etc. I did notice that they seemed to do a lot of running around and worrying, but that happens with a lot of committees, old fans or new. The fact is that most, if not all, of their program items did go on as planned, and I think in a couple of instances even started a few minutes earlier than listed in the program booklet. I chided them about this, telling them they were Breaking Fannish Tradition by having things start on time.

We missed the earlier program items that Friday by having had a late breakfast. Various films were being shown, but we became involved in the bar next to the meeting room, meeting people and visiting with friends old and new. We also visited the huckster room next door (all of the con facilities were conveniently located close to one another) where we saw George Locke. We had met him before when he was over on a glider-flying mission in the States some years ago.

Tomato Syrup

JUNE:

Having had a late breakfast, we also had a late lunch. The hotel dining room was open only during certain hours for each meal, and there were very few people left in there by the time we came in. We sat down at the table for two to which we were escorted by the maitre d', with its white linen cloth, small flower centerpiece and full formal place settings. Our waitress handed us our menus, and we noticed that they were offering fresh pineapple juice as one of the "starters". That sounded good, so we both ordered it, along with the rest of lunch.

The pineapple juice arrived in long stemmed crystal goblets. I thought it looked a trifle dark, but trustingly took a large sip. Gaah! It was pineapple syrup – drained from a can of pineapple. Sweet and sticky, it was a far chalk from the appetizer-type drink that I'd had in mind. Len bravely drank his, but

I left mine standing. The waitress hovered nearby for a while, and then approached to ask if I was through with my “starter”. I assured her that I was, and she asked if there was anything wrong with it. I muttered something about having ordered pineapple juice, by Ghod, not pineapple syrup, and she took it away. The rest of the lunch followed, and was undistinguished. We returned to the convention area with a sense of relief.

LEN:

While we were relaxing in the bar, either Fred or Mike rushed up to ask me if I could hold a quickie auction in a few minutes, because for some reason it looked like the John Brunner panel might not go on as scheduled at 2:30 p.m. They had previously shown me the auction material – books and magazines – and I said Sure, no sweat. When you need me, just give a holler. A few minutes later I was advised that the Brunner panel would go on as scheduled, so I wouldn't be needed until that evening, after all. Fine, I said, and went back to my lager and conversation. (Don't ask me who we were sitting with at that time, as we met and talked with so many folks in that bar that I'm not sure which day we were with which bunch of fans or pros.)

We did catch part of Brunner's panel, and saw the OMPAcon's Guest of Honor for the first time, Samuel R. “Chip” Delany. Bob Shaw and Mark Adlard were also on the panel. They were discussing the influence of non-stf writers on stf, or on stf writers, and covered quite a gamut of literary greats.

The next panel was called Fandom at Random. It was moderated by Dave Kyle, and I had to pay attention to this one, as June was on it, along with Ethel Lindsay, Terry Jeeves, Tom Schlück and Keith Freeman. They were supposed to imagine what their lives would have been like had they never discovered fandom.

JUNE:

I started out by saying that I had no idea what my life would have been like without fandom. I've been in fandom more or less for twenty-five years, and trying to analyse a time-track that branched that long ago was a hopeless task, as far as I was concerned. I hope I made it plain that I like fandom, and quoted Tony Boucher's opinion that “All knowledge is contained in fandom”, which drew a surprised-sounding laugh from the audience. I think maybe most of them hadn't heard that before.

Some of the other people on the panel were closer to their pre-fannish days, and Tom Schlück was over into his Dirty Old Pro days. Dave Kyle

finished up the discussion by agreeing with me, that it was impossible to tell what his life would have been like without fandom. A whole lot less interesting, almost for sure.

Back in the bar, I got briefly embroiled in an argument with Ted Tubb, wherein he claimed that all fans are neurotic social misfits who gather together because nobody else can stand to have them around. With my status as a TAFF delegate (and because I don't think very fast under attack) I refrained from asking him if he intended his definition to apply to himself as well. With true esprit d'escalier, I later thought of several other telling points to bring up.

LEN:

Meanwhile, I was approached once again by Fred or Mike about putting on an extra auction, as now it seemed that Ken Bulmer hadn't showed, and it was only half an hour or so before his panel was scheduled. Once again I assured them that the old firehorse was ready to step into harness when needed. And once again – ten or fifteen minutes later – I was advised that good old Bulmer had showed and so the extra auction to fill the gap wasn't needed after all.

Although I was amused at the situation, I couldn't help feeling sympathy for the committee, as I knew very well the feelings they were experiencing. There is always the fear that the scheduled speakers or panelists will not be on time, or will be difficult to locate if they are in the hotel. This being primarily a new committee, they were perhaps overly concerned about such things, but I'd rather have it that way than have a committee who could care less and wasn't the least bit conscientious. I raise my glass to the OMPAcon committee for a job well done.

There was a tea break around 4:30 p.m., though I'm not sure how many of the conventioners drank tea at that time. Ken Bulmer's panel went on pretty much as scheduled. Ken was the moderator, and the panelists were several new writers who were supposed to talk about what they were going to bring to the s-f field. They did, too, although they did get into the now-old discussion about New Wave vs. Old Wave, and which is what. Again, I didn't take notes, and assumed that the panelists' names would be in the program book – but they weren't. Possibly because the committee didn't know who-all would be on the panel at the time the book was printed.

Speaking of the program book, it had a nice three-color (red, yellow and black) cover by Terry Jeeves, showing an old-fashioned rocket ship. Terry

also had the same design on the name badges, but whoever wrote the names on the badges printed much too small. One had to put one's eyeballs very close to the chest of the person one was trying to identify. I didn't mind this when the person in question was a nice buxom female (so appropriate in Bristol City), but otherwise it was a bit of a bother. Fortunately June and I were wearing our George Barr and Eddie Jones name badges, so that only the near-blind would have trouble spotting our names.

Perhaps I should clarify that statement. June's name badge was done in black and white by George Barr, and mine was done in Glorious Color by E. Jones. I didn't mean to imply that we were attending the con disguised as G. Barr and E. Jones....

The Hotel with Delusions of Grand-Eur (Tomato Syrup continued)

JUNE:

Having nothing better to do for dinner, we went back to the hotel dining room, determined not to order pineapple juice if they had it. They didn't. Among the starters was listed tomato juice, so we ordered that. It came, in the usual long stemmed crystal goblets, and we tasted. Much more palatable than the pineapple syrup, it had still unquestionably been drained off a can of tomatoes by an over-thrifty kitchen management. Len and I looked at each other and decided not to have any more than absolutely necessary to do with the hotel dining room. Thrift is a great virtue, I'm sure, but when you're peddling elegance in the name of your hotel, the GRAND, f'evvinsakes, and in the decor, etc., there is a point of Going Too Far. That evening's "starter" combined with the luncheon "starter" was It, as far as we were concerned.

LEN:

At 8 p.m. the evening session was opened, with Ted Tubb and Ken Bulmer introducing the various famous or well-known fans and pros present. The auction (scheduled for 9 o'clock) started at 8:45. Roger Peyton and I took turns auctioning a variety of books, hardcover and paperback. I was glad that the British had converted their money to the decimal system, so that all the bids were easy for me to understand. For instance, if someone bid 20 or 25 pence, (usually given as 20p or 25p) I had no trouble following that. Had their bids been in shillings, etc., I might have had a problem. On the rare

occasion when the bidding got up to a pound or more there was still no problem. It occurred to me later that they might have been bidding in this manner to make it easy for the American auctioneer, but I'm not sure but what it was simply the now-popular use of the decimal system – or at least the acceptance of it, whether they liked it or not.

JUNE:

The decimal system is well established, all right, but the old terminology is still used. We heard several references to a “bob”, which is now worth five new pence, even though there isn't officially a coin known as a shilling. Ten-pence and two-shilling coins circulate equally. However, I don't think anyone did use the old terminology in bidding at the auctions.

LEN:

While auctioning, I couldn't help using a part of what I have that passes for a brain to convert the bids into American money, and was often shocked at how little things were going for. At that time, the pound was going for about \$2.50 U.S., so when somebody bid 10p it was like bidding 25¢ American. The fact is that the average British fan isn't as well off as the average American fan, so that books and mags that sold for so little over there would have brought a bit more (in some cases quite a bit more) at a similar-sized auction in the States. At a later auction, I bought a stack of Fred Brown paperbacks. Don't remember what I paid for them, but I know I would have paid a good deal more, Stateside.

Another factor was that this was a small convention, compared to U.S. cons. I think the attendance was a little less than 300. That would be small for a regional con (such as a Westercon) over here.

I liked it. (*So did I.*) I'm among those oldandtired fans who could live without BIG conventions. I can have more fun at a small convention even if I were on the committee. Yet, small though it may have been, the OMPAcon was a truly international con, in that there were fans from the Continent as well as from the States there. For us, it was our World Convention for this year. We knew we wouldn't be able to make it to Torcon, or even to the Westercon in San Francisco, but we have no regrets. The OMPAcon plus the touring and visiting before and after the convention more than made up for missing out on cons we would normally attend. That's for sure.

Some time during the evening, June went up to our room for more film, and found an envelope shoved under our door. It was from Bernie Zuber in

Los Angeles, and contained a copy of an APA-L cover* by Bernie. A most heartwarming item to receive. (*Heartwarming? It was hysterically funny!*) Our friends were thinking of us.

** Used with new lettering as the cover of this ebook. [Ed.]*

I asked someone if Mike Rosenblum would be at the con. Mike and I corresponded back in the '40s, and he was one of the many British fans I wanted to meet. I was told that his son Howard was there, and that Mike would be along later. True enough. We met Howard, who would be described by American mundanes or squares (and no doubt by British likewise) as a “hippie”, in that he dressed most casually and had a whole lot of bushy hair. We introduced ourselves to Howard, who assured us that his dad would be there.

Later that night, or Foo knows it might have been the next day, we met Mike and had a good talk with him and George Locke in the huckster room. Mike is no longer the slim young man in the photo he'd sent me nearly thirty years ago – but then I am no longer the 129-pound youngster I used to be. (That's 9 stone 3, for our British friends.) That same night we also met (June for the first time, me for the second time) Jim O'Meara, a Chicago fan who now works in Dublin. I hadn't seen Jim since 1958. Later in the evening we had a good long talk on old times in fandom and what was happening now, etc.

After the auction, the meeting room was left open and the piano in the corner was put to good use by a lady named Vera Johnson, who was accompanied by a chap named Russ on guitar and Howard Rosenblum on jug. June and I went over to join the group, as they were playing and singing songs from the twenties and thirties. We even danced a little. I noticed that other, younger, fans were joining in the singing and seemed to know all the words to these old tunes. I remarked on this to Mike Rosenblum and Ken Cheslin, and was advised that the British youth considered these old tunes to be folk songs. So there we were in the midst of a folk-singing session – British style.

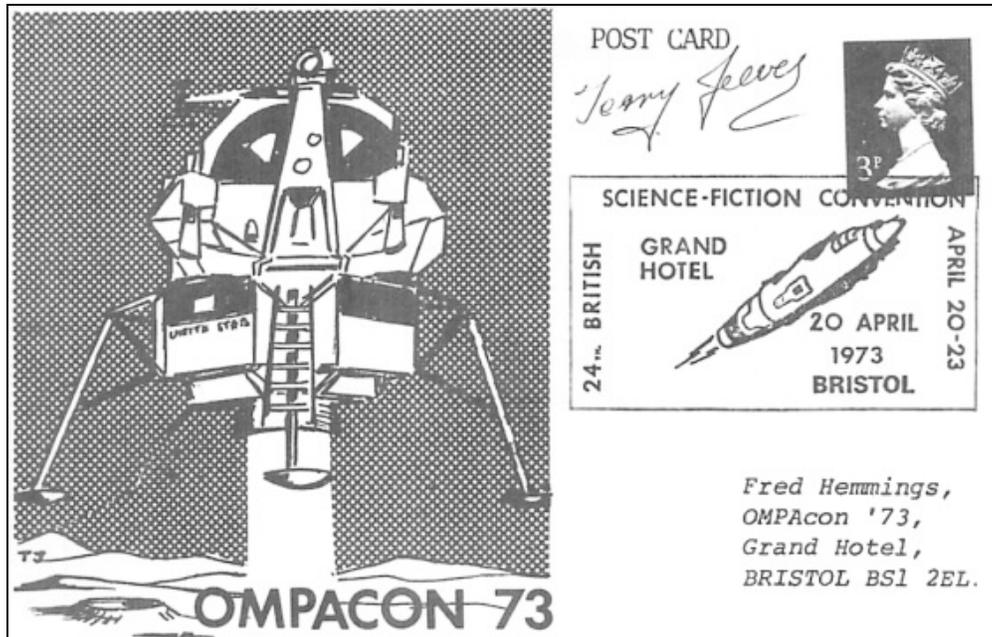
We looked in at one or two of the room parties, and June went to bed about 1 a.m. But ol' diehard Jim had to stay up until the wee small hours because this was one helluva fine convention. I returned to the meeting room and found that the folk singers had abandoned the piano and adjourned to a corner of the bar. Vera was now playing guitar along with Russ, and Howard

was still blowing jug like he had six sets of lungs. I joined James White and Les Flood who were standing at the bar and gave them a hand in holding it up. Once again I couldn't help observing (to myself, I didn't mention it to Jim as I'm sure he's heard it enough) how much Jim White resembles Van Vogt or vice versa.

The folk-singing continued. The night, or rather, the late morning continued blissfully. People left, more people came in, but finally we were down to the hardcore stay-up-lates. Now I was talking with Jim O'Meara, and watching the antics of the young singers. Looking at my watch, I saw that it was well after 3 a.m. It had to be past official closing time, but then this was a private bar (or a public bar turned into a private bar for the convention). Eventually, a young manager-type entered and asked that people leave, as they really did have to close up. He was quite polite about it, and seemed to regret having to perform this duty.

The kids began to protest. They didn't do anything violent, but someone did shout "Throw the bod in the river!" Other than that, they merely complained loudly and bitterly that the bar should be left open as long as there were x number of persons present. I gathered that a minimum number had been agreed on between the hotel and the committee. They sent someone out to bring in more bodies. They continued to sing. It was one of the most amiable protests I ever saw or heard of. I stood there with Jim, laughing, digging it, loving it.

But all good things must end, and I knew I should get some sleep before it was time to start another convention day. Jim and I talked a while longer out in the meeting hall. I was bringing him up to date on people we both know. It was after 4 a.m. when I finally hit the sack.



OMPACon postcard with special cancellation; signed by the artist, Terry Jeeves.

Saturday, April 21

LEN:

For some reason I seem to have missed out on most of Saturday's convention program. I'm not sure when I returned to life, but I do remember that June and I decided to go out for breakfast.

JUNE:

It was too late for breakfast in the hotel dining room, and we didn't feel like tackling another of the hotel's lunches. A couple of doors down from the hotel we found a HORT's restaurant.

LEN:

To show you that I wasn't exactly wide awake and alert, I didn't make the fannish connection with that name until later. However, I'm sure that Horrible Ol' Roy Tackett would never run a beanery that didn't serve coffee with its meals. We ordered brunch, and there was no problem in getting food which was reasonably good, but they DID NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES (and surely they could see that I was a dying man) serve coffee before, during or after a meal. They did have coffee, but not in the restaurant. One retired to the bar "after" and had one's coffee. I was starving as well as dying for coffee, so we ate. But I refused to patronize their bar, coffee or no. I expected they would serve a thimbleful in a demitasse and charge me half a quid. So we went back to the hotel's handy-dandy tea-and-coffee lounge and I worked my way to almost total recovery there. Somewhere along the line we wound up in the bar visiting with Danny Plachta and Banks Mebane.

Speaking of coffee, for the most part I had no problem getting coffee in England. It ranged from bad to very good, but none of it was worse than the machine-made coffee at work. On the other hand, there were times when June had trouble getting tea in a restaurant. Either they didn't serve it at all, or only at "tea time". June doesn't drink coffee, but likes her cuppa tea now and then. But she couldn't always get it when she wanted it except in the Grand Hotel's lounge.

We met that afternoon in Uncle Norm Weedall's room with the Joneses, where we watched *The Selfish Giant* special, and a chapter of *Doctor Who* on

TV. We also imbibed some of Uncle Norm's homemade fruit wines. He had brought a suitcase full to the convention. That is, it was full of plastic jugs which held the various flavors of wine. His apricot wine is superb. His coffee wine, though not as smooth as the others, was good too. He pointed out that he had not brought his best stuff to the con. We would sample that when we got to Liverpool....

Then we went out to dinner with Eddie, Marsha and Peter Mabey. The Beaujolais, a French-type restaurant. If you are ever in Bristol, go there. Not only good food, but good coffee, made one cup at a time with a filter gadget over the cup. However, they did not serve tea.

After dinner it was time to get back to the hotel and get ready for the Costume Parade. June was to be a judge, so I let her go down first. I was donning the motley, doing my Pike Pickens clown-tramp bit, and wanted to come down alone to see how many would or would not recognize me. As usual, most people didn't until they got close enough to study me carefully. I wasn't in the competition, of course, but merely there to entertain and have a jolly good time.

JUNE:

The Costume Parade was a little disappointing. There were about 15 costumes in all, not counting the Robot Demonstration at the end. Some of the costumes were well made, but were detracted from by the fact that the wearers thereof had no idea of a presentation. They simply walked across the floor in front of the judges, some of them not even looking our way. We had to request one costume-wearer to come back in order to see him – he had marched across the room about thirty feet away in what seemed like a great hurry.

We were allowed one prize for the children's division and it was a real pleasure to award it to the one and only entry. A tiny girl had been dressed up in a red and blue costume, including boots and cape. The adult carrying her was also carrying a sign reading "CONDensed SOUPergirl".

The two prize winners were "The Stainless Steel Rat" and "The Iron Chicken", which I later heard had been whipped up out of aluminum foil and inspiration not long before the Parade.

After the available costumes had gone by, we were about to start deliberating, when the hall was suddenly invaded by a group of Robots, demanding their rights. They brandished signs, with slogans such as "More Oil, Less Toil!" "Robot Liberation!", "Asimov Was Wrong!", "Gay

Lubrication”, etc. There must have been a dozen people – er – robots taking part, and they stomped and hollered and threw great quantities of old computer printouts and tape all over the floor. When the judges got over laughing, which was sometime after the Robots made their exit, it was decided that they should get a special prize – that of clearing up the mess. Which they did.

LEN:

While June was busy on the panel, I was shooting flash pictures. Or trying to. Trouble is, I wasn't wearing my glasses, and had red makeup all over my nose, and it was difficult to handle the camera properly. So the few shots I got of the costumes did not turn out well, and if there are any costume pics in this report, they will prob'ly be those donated by others.

Later, June did get a shot of me with Don and Elsie Wollheim. Reason: Don bought the first (and only) Pike Pickens story ever published, back in the days when he was editing *Out of This World Adventures*. As it turned out, Pike became more popular at fan parties and conventions than he ever did as a pulp mag character....

There was an auction after the Costume Parade, which is when I latched on to those Fred Brown paperbacks, including *The Case of the Dancing Sandwiches*, which is one of those rare Dell Book ten-centers (this being No. 33). It is undated, but the original copyright for the story is 1950, so the 64-page booklet had to be published sometime in the '50s.

There were room parties and many people in the bar, as well. I noticed Banks Mebane (and later, others) stripping to the waist so that local artists (or girls with artistic inclinations) could paint designs on their backs and chests. Unfortunately, none of the girls in the bar returned the favor.

JUNE:

Somewhere around here, we were invited to autograph 'Arfer's shirt. He offered us a choice of colored pens to do so, explaining that the autograph would be embroidered over with matching thread. There were a multitude of signatures on the shirt, both embroidered and fresh. It was obviously not long until he would have to start a new shirt. It reminded us of Bruce Pelz's embroidered shirt, except Bruce specializes in fan art drawn on the shirt, which is then embroidered over. Also, Bruce does not wear this shirt at the time it's being drawn on. (It's an odd sensation, writing one's signature over a shoulder blade!)*

LEN:

I exchanged some puns with Sam Long, who then told me a Feghoot story. I'd heard it before, but let him tell it right up to the punchline, which I spoke in unison with him.

I also spent some time explaining TAFF to various young fans present. There were many there who didn't know what TAFF was all about, though there was a brief explanation in the Program Booklet. (But who reads program booklets at cons?) I was happy to do this, and pleased that most of them seemed to think that TAFF was a Good Thing, once they found out wotinell it was.

I'm not sure when June went to bed, but I didn't make it until 4:30 a.m., or so it says here in my notes.

Sunday, April 22

LEN:

Although Pike Pickens had not hit the sack until around 4:30 that morning, Len Moffatt somehow managed to disentangle himself from the continental quilt by 11 the very same morning. Although only an amateur clown, I do try to take a professional approach to donning the motley, and had removed the makeup and washed thoroughly before falling into bed. So, all I had to do when I did get up was to shave (Very Carefully) and bathe (Very Bravely). Nevertheless, I still felt somewhat like the protagonist in a suspense novel – the kind that awakens by sheer effort of will and can't budge hardly an inch without a large coffee transfusion. So, we had breakfast in our room before going down to see if the con was still there.

JUNE:

It was, and as usual, much of it was in the bar. The bar area provided by the hotel was a large room, with a long bar whereon were placed two bowls of ice cubes at the beginning of the day. These bowls stayed out until the ice melted or it was all used up – usually a combination of the two. As an ice-loving Yank, I learned to grab a Pepsi early in the day, while ice was still available. (I'm not particularly fond of Pepsi, but it was the only cola drink they had.) The far end of the bar was where they had placed the beer and lager kegs – of only academic interest to me, but Very Important to many others there, including Len.

LEN:

Someone led June and me over to a table where James White was being interviewed by a reporter from the *Daily Mirror*. Jim, as you may know, is well over six feet tall, and the reporter was quite a tall man, too. They stood up to be introduced to June, who is just a shade under six feet. Jim turned to the reporter and said, "Isn't it nice to meet a girl of average height?" The reporter allowed as how it was. My roommate's day was made.

Presently Jim had to leave, and James Blish and John Brunner showed up to be interviewed. The reporter assumed that June and I were pros, too. I told him that though I had sold a few stories some years ago, I didn't consider myself a pro, and attempted to explain fandom and TAFF to him. Don't know

if I succeeded, as he was obviously in a hurry to ask a series of questions he had previously jotted in his notebook. He seemed to know the s-f field fairly well, and most of his questions were intelligent, rather than the usual “Why-do-you-write-this-crazy-Buck-Rogers-stuff?”.

However, one of the questions he asked, and apparently expected a definite – perhaps even definitive answer to was: “What would you do if a flying saucer landed in your back yard?” I think that we had already established that we had never seen a flying saucer or any type of UFO, and that most fans had been more excited by the moon landings, etc., which were real happenings, than by reports of UFOs which may or may not be real. We have the “from Missouri” attitude. Seeing is believing, and even then we would want to investigate closely and find out if it was a hoax or an optical illusion.

“But what if it were really a spaceship from another planet – no question about it. What if it really was real?”

We told him that we would be delighted. It was sort of like one’s disbelief in ghosts. It would still be fun to see one, and there are those who keep hoping to see one even though they “know” that there probably aren’t any. We would try to communicate with the aliens. We would certainly hope that they would be peaceful rather than warlike beings, etc. (Besides, it would be a Very Small spaceship that could land in our back yard!)

Our answers didn’t seem to satisfy him, and he conducted a sort of cross-examination. I’m not sure what he wanted us to say – perhaps that we really did believe in saucers and were expecting them to land and take over any minute now.

Giving up on us., he turned his attention to Blish and Brunner, who did a good job of keeping his note-taking hand busy. About this time we were hauled off to lunch with Eddie and Marsha Jones and Bill and Mary Burns. We went to an Italian-type restaurant called (so help me) Dino’s.

JUNE:

We followed the recommendation of someone else in ordering lunch. I disremember what the dish was, but it wasn’t up to its recommendation.

Later that afternoon, we saw some of the amateur films being shown in the Delta Film competition. Among these was Terry Jeeves’s stop-frame animation film, “The Burglar”, which featured a house guarded by a pet diplodocus. (“Beware of the Diplodocus!”) “The Burglar” won the Delta Film Award, and certainly deserved it. (There were also repeated showings

of Star Trek Blooper films, with poor prints and poorer sound.)

LEN:

The two main events that afternoon, other than the film competition, were a talk by Jim White and a panel-type quiz game called “H.G. Wells’s Mustache”.

Jim’s talk was entitled “That Lovable Alien”, and though I don’t really think of that fantastic Irishman as an alien (being at least half Irish meself.) the title did seem to fit. Jim (like his American almost-twin, van Vogt) speaks quietly and most amusingly. Unlike some fans who have become successful pros, he does not take himself too seriously. (When I introduced him to June as James White, he quickly corrected me and said “JIM White”. I know that Ella Parker calls him “Jimmy”, but I’m not sure how many get away with that. I get called “Lenny” a good deal, and know that I prefer to be called “Len” – or even “Leonard” ...).

The quiz game was sort of like 20 Questions, though it was more like 2,000 Questions. There were four groups of panelists, four or five fans per group, and two groups played at a time. The four panels represented London, Birmingham, Gannet and Liverpool fandoms. (Naturally, we were sort of prejudiced toward the Liverpool team....)

Fred Hemmings was the emcee, answering the questions and keeping track of the whole shebang. Each panelist had a buzzer to press when they thought they had a right question to ask. A blackboard was set up facing the audience (in front of and off to one side of the players, so they couldn’t see it.) The answer was written on the board, along with a column for scorekeeping. The point of the game was simple enough. They had to guess what was written on the blackboard – but were given no clues. Not even animal, vegetable or mineral, or whether it was a fannish reference, story title or wotever. They had to start from scratch, asking questions to hopefully lead them to clues.

To give you an idea, some of the answers were “Verguzz (a fannish drink)”, John D. MacDonald’s “The Girl, The Gold Watch and Everything”, (no, June and I had nothing to do with providing the answers) and “Dave Kyle’s Propellor Beanie”. I remember that Marsha Jones (on the Liverpool panel) guessed the latter, but it was Gannet fandom that finally won the game.

I think this game was one of the most entertaining program items at the con – though admittedly we did not manage to see all of the program – and

would like to see a shorter version of it performed at a con or club meeting over here. I'd limit the number of questions, and give the players some kind of a starting clue to shorten it up a bit. (Come to think of it, we used to play a fannish-sf form of 20 Questions at Outlander meetings years ago; I think we even put one of the games on wire. Which gives you some idea of how long ago that was – the pre-tape era.)

There was a fanzine auction, and then we had tea and coffee in the lounge. By then I was ready for a bit of a lie-down, and went up to our room while June went to visit the art show.

JUNE:

The Art Show was in a very small room called the Churchill Room. It was a very small art show, for that matter, so I attempted to photograph all of it. Eddie Jones's paintings were easy enough, but everything else had a layer of shiny plastic over it, which made for difficulties with flash reflection. Eddie's were also the only paintings that were for sale. The other artists apparently didn't know that fans like to buy fannish or science fictional paintings, and had sent them merely for display.

I met Terry and Val Jeeves in the art show room. It was the first time I'd really had the chance to talk to them, and found them to be exceedingly pleasant and friendly people. Terry and I were looking at some illustrations for Lovecraft stories, and discovered a common bond. We both dislike Lovecraft for the same reasons! It's a real pleasure to meet someone as clever and perceptive as that.

I was particularly admiring two of Eddie's paintings. One, which was the cover illo for Sphere Books' edition of Alexei Panshin's Rite of Passage was marked Not For Sale (for the very good reason that it was already sold). The other one, the cover illo for Larry Niven's World of Ptavvs, was marked £15, and had not been bid on. I was mentally going over our financial situation – which looked good – and as Eddie was beginning to pack up his paintings I mentioned to him that I would have to consult with Len, but I was interested in that painting.

"You like it? Take it!" he replied.

"Uh – I – er – but –" I stammered.

"Take it!" he ordered.

"Uhh – yessir. Thank you."

So I took it. It's the nicest birthday card I ever got. I bore it in triumph back to our room, going up the stairs on a small pink cloud that appeared

from somewhere.

LEN:

But all too soon it was time to get ready for the Banquet that evening. I say “all too soon” because even if you have lost track of time and days during a con, the Banquet is a signal (or warning) that the con will soon be over. And, no matter how you suffer from lack of sleep, you wish it would go on a few more days. Especially a good con like the OMPAcon.

The Banquet food was typical of so many convention banquets that I have attended. The entree was the hotel’s version of Chicken Maryland, and I couldn’t help thinking that perhaps the chicken had been prepared and cooked in Maryland, and then shipped by boat to Bristol.

JUNE:

Actually, the chicken might not have been bad – if they’d served it hot. My portion was thoroughly cooked, although Eddie said his was rubbery. Earlier in the Banquet, Marsha saved my life by commenting out loud that the salad was made with bananas. I promptly passed her my plate of salad, saying “Thank you!” It was a most peculiar looking salad anyway – it appeared to be a mixture of chopped bananas, walnuts and rice, sitting on a lettuce leaf. The thing that saved the meal was a bottle of Sekt (German champagne) that we ordered.

Neither Marsha nor I are what you could call enthusiastic coffee drinkers. She has been known to take some Irish coffee on occasion, and I have been known to partake of Kahlua. So, when coffee was being distributed after the meal, Marsha asked the waitress if we could have some tea. “We’re not serving tea tonight,” was the answer. The two of us must have looked so grief-stricken that the waitress’s heart was touched. “I’ll get you some tea!” she declared, and exited swiftly, stage right. She came back with two cups of tea – with milk. We thanked her kindly – it was still better than coffee.

LEN:

At last we won through to the program part of the Banquet. Several awards were presented, with Dave Kyle Toastmastering. Dave donned his propeller beanie long enough to be photographed.

As previously mentioned, the Delta Film Award went to Terry Jeeves. The August Derleth Memorial Award of the British Fantasy Society went to Michael Moorcock; the Ken McIntyre Fan Award went to Dave Fletcher; and we were especially happy to see Ethel Lindsay receive the Doc Weir Award

for services to fandom.

John Brunner sadly announced that there was no British Science Fiction Association Award for Best Novel, because insufficient votes were cast to make a clear majority. He spoke of the apathy in the BSFA and indicated that there would be some reorganization in the hopes that the Awards could be continued properly in the future.

During the banquet, a series of Terry Jeeves quotecards were passed around. The cards bore cartoons by Terry, but no captions. It turned out that this was a quotecard competition. The people at the Banquet were supposed to caption the cartoons, and eventually most if not all of them wound up with Dave Kyle for judging. Dave selected the winners and read them aloud.

JUNE:

I know perfectly well that not all of them wound up with Dave Kyle – I short-stopped one myself to take home to Bruce Pelz. After the Banquet, we tried to find a complete set by looking around the various tables, but were unsuccessful. This year, someone had duplicated a group of cartoons for the banqueteers. Last year, so I was told, Terry had sat drawing cartoons during the Banquet. I think that having them done in advance was by far the better way.

LEN:

The costume awards were handed out, too – bottles of wine and boxes of candy. June was presented with a box of candy, either for being a judge or for being a TAFF delegate. There were so many awards and prizes of this nature that it was hard to keep track. The Gannet crew announced their plans for the 1974 British Convention, which will be in Newcastle.

Finally, Dave Kyle introduced TAFF Administrator Eddie Jones. It seems that Eddie had donated one of his paintings as a prize in a raffle for TAFF voters. All those who had sent their ballots and donations to Eddie had their names in the drawing. Eddie asked June to draw a name out of the envelope, and after some difficulty (the slips were each tightly folded and jammed together in a small envelope) June managed to extract one and handed it to Eddie. He unfolded it and began to laugh. He stopped to explain that although the bulk of the ballots he had received came from British fans, there were two or three American fans who had sent their ballots and donations to him. And it was one of the American fans who had won the painting – none other than Bruce Pelz.

Then Eddie introduced June and me, and we stood up to give our talk. I did most of the talking – as I told them, I do the talking and she does the work.... The chicken entree gave me a chance to steal a Bob Bloch line (one he had used at Bouchercon I); all I had to do was convert it to the present situation.

I told – truthfully – how June and I were somewhat taken aback by one of the wonders we had seen when we first arrived in London. Billboards advertising Colonel Sanders Kentucky Fried Chicken. I said that we could not believe our eyes – could not accept the fact that The Colonel has really invaded Old Blighty. But, after the Banquet meal, we were forced to believe that it was all too true.

I thanked all of those who had voted in TAFF and everyone there for treating us so nicely. Then I announced the opening of nominations for the next TAFF race – to bring a European fan across the Atlantic to the World Science Fiction Convention in Washington, D.C. in 1974. After that, I passed along the greetings and good wishes of Sir Richard Sneary to all there, and turned the mike over to June.

JUNE:

Turned the mike over, my foot. What he did was sort of drop it in my lap. While Len was talking, I remembered that I had left the painting we were to present to the convention by my place, so I'd nipped back to get it, then sat down on the chair that Chip Delany courteously vacated for me.

A note of explanation seems to be in order here. A few weeks before we left for England, the LASFS had voted to send a greeting to the fans at the Bristol con. Jack Harness was delegated to do a painting, leaving space at the bottom for LASFS members to autograph it. Jack depicted (or caricatured) several well-known LASFS members, such as Larry Niven burdened down under several Hugos, Fuzzy Pink Niven, Yampo (one of the younger fans who is also a Marx Bros. freak) and a couple of Typical LASFS types – whatever THAT is.

So there I was, with the mike in one hand and the painting in the other. (And panic rising on the horizon....) I managed to stammer out some sort of history of the painting, pointing out that it had been done on Bristol board (which the audience seemed to appreciate) and called upon Ken Cheslin to accept it. He did so on behalf of the convention, and remarked that this was indeed an old time fannish custom – LASFS and Britfandom have exchanged such pictorial greetings in the past. It's fun to help carry on some Fannish

Traditions.

LEN:

The Guest of Honor, Chip Delany, gave a talk on critics of s-f. Naturally, he was criticizing the critics, and did it very well indeed. No screaming or breast-beating – just quietly pointing out where they sometimes went wrong. A most refreshing GoH talk.

After the Banquet, we went back to the meeting room to watch a couple more films. One was a kind of home-movie job (only with fans), showing Phil Rogers's wedding. Another was a fan-made satire about a conflict between Tubb fans and Aldiss fans, quite whacky and mad.

Presently we adjourned to a room party in the Burns's room. It was a small party, so I should remember most of the names. Bill and Mary Burns, of course... the Joneses... the Shorrocks... including son Roy (whom I now recognized as one of the folk singers in the bar on that famous night), Keith Freeman, Banks Mebane, Danny Plachta, Dave Kyle, Jenny Campbell, a girl named Wendy, and probably others. Our bedtime was approximately 4 a.m. (*Yup, me too. I'd finally gotten my second wind.*)



Terry Jeeves quotecard captioned by Dave Locke.

Monday, April 23

LEN:

I have no idea what time we came back to life, but we decided to have breakfast in our room again. We phoned in our order and waited. And waited. And waited.... At this point in time, I'm not sure whether they ever brought it or not, but logic points out that we must have had breakfast somehow, or we'd never have gotten thru the day.

The con was Officially Over, but there were a few diehards remaining. For the first time, we were able to chat with most of the committee. Gerald Bishop (or Gerbish, as he is knowed as), Pat and Mike Meara and Fred Hemmings. We thanked them for a great convention, and for picking up the hotel tab for the TAFF delegates. They had been worried (as are most concerns, especially first-timers) that they would go into the red, and were really freaked out when they discovered that they were actually in the black. We talked conventions for a while, and then let them proceed with the final gathering-up of equipment, etc.

JUNE:

At some point we were sitting in the lobby, chatting with Dave Rowe and others. He had been telling a story about being overcharged at some restaurant, and started to say "bloody". Actually, he got about as far as "bl – er – excuse my French!" I laughed, and assured him that it was harmless as far as I was concerned. We know that it is a Naughty Word in England, but it has no emotional content for us. (Besides, anyone who's stayed with Ella Parker can't be shocked by it!) Dave seemed to accept my explanation.

Later, when I told Marsha about it, she looked at me and said, "Well! Nobody ever excuses themselves when they say that to me!" I told her it was because I looked so Sweet and Innocent. It was later when she found out that I'm really just as Vulgar as she is....

LEN:

Later, in the lounge, we said goodbye to several, including Jim White, who was remarking on the bit of rain we were getting, and the fact that so many fans were coming down with the sniffles. Said Jim: "I do hope they won't bring their colds to Newcastle." Our goodbyes were more in the nature

of a groan. Someone else (it could be that I'm the guilty one, but at this late date can't be sure) was defining a situation where the Guest of Honor was backed into a corner as Blocking Off The Old Chip....

Which sort of illustrates how tired it was out.

Nevertheless, we gathered together our reserves of energy and went off that afternoon shopping with the Joneses... to the area known as the "49 Steps" or the "Christmas Steps", depending on whether you're at the bottom or the top. There are 49 steps to climb to get from one street to the next. The steps were lined with shops, and of course the street we were heading for had more shops. Most of the shops were shut, it being still a holiday – Easter Monday – but we found a weapons shop open, much to Eddie's delight. Eddie collects guns and blades, and in this shop he found a rather nice kris for a price he was willing to pay.

JUNE:

This shop also had a fair-sized cannon displayed in the window. Marsha and I remarked loudly what a nice door-stop it would make, and what a conversation piece! We were suitably ignored.

LEN:

Soon it was time for tea in the hotel lounge, and then we went up to our respective rooms to get most of our packing done. We were staying overnight, but wanted to be ready to leave fairly early the next morning.

That evening, we went to yet another Italian restaurant for dinner. This one was underground. It seems that we ate at more Italian restaurants in England and Germany than any other kind.

JUNE:

This one was called "Il Trattoria". We went in through a glass door and down a flight of whitewashed stairs. We could hear the music (background-type) from a record player. About the time we reached the foot of the stairs, one of the waiters came by, singing at the top of his lungs. What he was singing had nothing to do with the music. Somehow this appealed to us.

The meal was quite good, and the zabaglione that we chose to follow it was quite the sweetest I've ever tasted.

LEN:

During dinner, Marsha was complaining that somehow she had gone through the whole convention without making one pun, while those about her

were making puns right and left. I told her that obviously she didn't Marsha her Farces. Once again, somehow, I escaped with my life.

I think we got to bed reasonably early, though I did sit up a while marveling at BBC-TV.

Tuesday, April 24

JUNE:

We got up and went down to the hotel dining room to join the Joneses for breakfast. We opened the double door to the dining room and got a nasty shock. It wasn't there. The familiar room looked like a storage room. What had they done with the dining room? A moment's search revealed it, over to one side. Marsha and Eddie were already stuffing themselves, but we got a waitress and soon joined them. (I haven't had a boiled egg since I got back home!) The obligatory cold toast was sweetened by a glop of Something that occupied a jam jar resident on our table.

LEN:

After breakfast, we were off again with the Joneses on another shopping tour. The shops were open now, so there was more to see. It was a fairly brief tour, as we had a train to catch, but I did find time to get to a camera shop. My mickey-mouse Instamatic wasn't flashing when required to do so. I told the man in the shop that the batteries were fairly new, having installed them while at the Tower of London – but perhaps they were defective, and I was all set to buy new ones. He quietly inspected the camera, tested the batteries (they were good) and cleaned the contacts. Whereupon the flash worked beautifully. I offered to pay him, but there was no charge for his work. And very friendly and polite he was, too. No grumbling about wasting his time.

If we ever return to Bristol, that's one shop I'll patronize. It is becoming more and more difficult to find that kind of service any more, here in the States – and I suppose in places overseas, too. Perhaps we were just lucky, but in all our dealing with shop people and other mundane folk in England we had no complaints. Their hands weren't out for tips, and they treated us courteously and honestly. I've heard tales of tourists being taken advantage of, etc., but that didn't happen to us. Not in Germany, either, save for one rebuff in a train station – but that was probably as much my fault as anybody's (*more likely the fault of the language barrier*), as you'll see when we get to that part of the report.

We took a taxi to the Bristol railway station, and at Eddie's suggestion we all got first-class tickets for Liverpool. Reason: the trains would be crowded with folk returning from holiday, and a first-class ticket assured one

of having a seat.

We were to catch the 11:55 a.m. train, and the ticket agent advised us to go to Platform 7, despite the fact that the posted schedule indicated that the Liverpool train would arrive at Platform 9. He said there was a change, as a “special train for Leeds” was going to use Platform 9. We gathered up our 10,000 pieces of luggage, and the four of us struggled downstairs and then upstairs to Platform 7. We could see Platform 9, across the tracks from where we were standing, and presently a train pulled in there. We assumed that it was the Special Train For Leeds.

About this time, a calm, matter-of-fact British voice on the PA system advised us that passengers for Liverpool should proceed to Platform 9, as the train was there and waiting.... Once again we gathered up all our impedimenta and huffed and puffed our way downstairs and upstairs again to Platform 9. By the time we found a compartment with four vacant seats, we were somewhat exhausted.

The four of us shared the compartment with a nice lady and a quiet man (might have been nice too, but he looked quite stern) for part of the journey. Somewhere along the line they disembarked and we had the compartment to ourselves, giving us a chance to stretch out a bit.

Once again we got a good view of the beautiful countryside. I love trains. There were several stops en route which gave us glimpses of various train stations and industrial areas, but most of the scenery was green – with farms, animals, houses and clear blue sky.

JUNE:

One stop was rather croggling. We went into this station, sat there for the obligatory 10 or 15 minutes, and then started up again – backwards. Having had some experience with this sort of thing in San Diego where the train has to back up before it can go forward, I didn't say anything. We continued going backwards, and presently I observed that we were passing different scenery than we had on the way in. From this, I assume that the tricky British Railways had simply attached (or fired up) an engine at the opposite end of our train.

LEN:

About four hours after boarding the train at Bristol, we arrived in Liverpool, where we had to stand in line for a taxi to Higher Bebington. It was a long queue, and there was a shortage of taxis, so it was a weary time

before we finally claimed one as our own. We crossed the Mersey River by going under it, using a long tunnel which was well-lighted and featured a couple of bends. I think it was the longest tunnel I've ever traversed.

JUNE:

Once the taxi brought us to Bebington Hall Park, we unloaded the luggage and bent to pick it up for the trek to their apartment. One of their neighbours appeared out of nowhere, picked up one of the heavy suitcases that Len had been carrying, nodded "good-afternoon" to all, and sped off towards Eddie and Marsha's apartment. Len looked a little nonplussed for a moment, and then followed along, happily carrying one suitcase instead of two.

LEN:

The Joneses live on the third floor of an apartment house in Bebington Hall Park. The living room has a large picture window, and looking through it is like looking at a picture. On a clear day, one can see the Mersey, closer up are other homes and gardens, and immediately in front are trees and lawn. We collapsed for a well-earned rest, although it was not long before Marsha and June were off to the local laundromat.

JUNE:

This was my first look at an English laundromat. It did not seem too different from an American one, except that it was a good deal smaller, and had none of the tables for folding laundry that we are used to. The washers announced right on them that they were the greatest washers ever, and had a dial and pointer so that we could tell just where in the cycle our wash was at any given time. I noticed a vending machine on the wall, offering four kinds of something, but only one brand name – Persil – was familiar to me. I found out later that they were all washing powders, but they could have been anything – bleach, fabric softener, etc.

The washers had another unusual feature. At the end of the cycle, when everything looked like it was stopped, the doors were held locked by some mechanism that decided when to let go. This would have led to some confusion if Marsha hadn't warned me about it.

When we got back to the apartment, Eric Bentcliffe was there. He had come to bear us off to the wilds of Holmes Chapel, but obligingly waited until Marsha had fed us. I mentioned to Marsha that, when we returned from Holmes Chapel, I wanted to wash and set my hair.

“Oh, you don’t have to do that,” she replied. “Beryl wants to do it for you – she’s a professional hairdresser.” I elevated an eyebrow at this interesting bit of news.

LEN:

Eric is a past TAFF winner, and is almost the Typical Britisher in the way he talks. But under that British Reserve is that fan with his terrible puns and his whacky sense of humor. *(And he had the nerve to claim that I make more puns than he does!)*

During the drive to Holmes Chapel, he told us that the reason the road was so straight was that it was originally a Roman highway. It was dark and shadowy out by that time, and I could almost see the Roman soldiers lurking behind the trees or in the shrubbery along the roadside.

We were greeted at the Bentcliffe home by Beryl, Eric’s wife, and their 10-year-old daughter, Lindsey. Lindsey was disappointed because I wasn’t dressed like an American cowboy. It seems that she is a fan of Smith and Jones, and other imported TV westerns. I really should have worn boots and a ten-gallon hat, and walked bow-legged, but I don’t know how long I would have been able to keep up such a masquerade. Pike Pickens is easy for me to do, having done it so often, but I haven’t made like a cowboy since I was as young as Lindsey herself.

JUNE:

Young Lindsey was also a Mistress of the Unexpected Question. Out of the clear dark blue sky (well, it was night) she suddenly asked: “Do you have snakes in America?” Upon being assured that yes, we did, she declared “Then I’m never going there!” (Her parents told us later that she used to have asthma attacks during the night, which would trigger a dream about a boa constrictor crushing her.)

LEN:

We were up until midnight, fangabbing, and I passed my whiskey cane around as a nightcap.

Wednesday, April 25

LEN:

By the time we got up the next morning, Eric had already gone off to work. We had breakfast with Beryl and Lindsey, and walked to Downtown Holmes Chapel with them. Beryl had her shopping to do, but Lindsey stayed with us as our Tour Guide.

The downtown area is mostly one street of shops, plus an ancient church with a graveyard that projects into the main street, and an old, old pub called The Red Lion. We didn't go into the pub, but we were inspecting the outside of the church and wondering how old it was when the pastor came by and asked if we would like to see inside. We said we would, and he very kindly obliged by unlocking the heavy front doors and giving us a brief tour of the chapel.

JUNE:

The church inside was light and airy, and still decorated with spring flowers from Easter Sunday. There was an old brass chandelier suspended from the ceiling, with graceful, curving arms that held sconces for candles. Another item the pastor was very proud of was an old baptismal font that had been dug up by some archaeologists. They had figured out that it was one of several that had been ordered to be destroyed, hundreds of years ago, so the persons assigned to the destruction had broken them up a bit and buried them.

A little later we went into the Post Office for some stamps, and were just a touch startled to find that it was also a store. A moment's reflection reminded us that of course we had heard of this sort of thing before – in the Miss Seeton stories if nowhere else. But it was Different – actually walking into such an establishment oneself.

*While in the Post Office, we were looking around, and saw a set of cowboy guns, complete with red-and-white leather holsters. We looked at each other. Lindsey had a cowgirl outfit, we knew, but she didn't have any guns. We thought about it carefully for two or three seconds. They were obviously meant for Lindsey – why else would a Post Office have them on display just when we came in? We surrendered to Fate, and bought them. (They were the comparatively quiet kind that *click*. We wouldn't have*

given her cap guns, or anything that was noisy.)

LEN:

During our walk in and around Holmes Chapel I again noticed the phenomenon of miniskirts and prams. Very nice.

JUNE:

Naturally, no tour of Downtown Holmes Chapel would be complete without going through the hardware store where Eric works. I was rather impressed by it – it reminded me, in the variety of things available, of the better stocked hardware stores here in the Los Angeles area. We found a display of Pyrex ware that was interesting for the variety of decorative patterns thereon, all different than we could get, here in the States.

As usual, Lindsey was our guide, and took us all over the place, including upstairs, where I gather she is not usually permitted to go. She also discovered that the upstairs connected directly to the upstairs of the shop next door. I got the impression that Lindsey enjoyed that tour as much as we did.

LEN:

Eric had invited us to spend some time with them at Holmes Chapel after the con to give us a chance to rest and relax before continuing our journey. It was very thoughtful of him, and was just what we needed. Not that we lay about a lot, but we certainly weren't as active as we had been in London and Bristol. We visited briefly with Eric while touring the hardware store, and he told us that he would be getting off at noon and have this afternoon free, as well as the next day.

Back at the Bentcliffe house, Beryl helped us drag some chairs out on the front porch, where we sat and did some card- and letter-writing, but mostly just soaked up sun and relaxed. (The weather in Holmes Chapel was beautiful, in contrast to the drizzly rain we'd had in Bristol. Eric said that they'd been saving up the good weather just for us – it had been miserable over Easter.)

JUNE:

When Beryl called us in for lunch, she put what looked like a full meal on the table. Pork chops, potatoes, vegetables, etc. I was reminded of the farm-style eating habits of Len's Pennsylvania cousins. Beryl assured us that they had their main meal at noon, and we'd have just a light snack for dinner.

Somewhat reassured, we dug in.

LEN:

After lunch, we all got in Eric's car, and he drove us through the Cheshire countryside to Jodrell Bank. We saw the 250' radio-telescope close up (we had already seen it from Eric and Beryl's house, where it looks like a flying saucer hovering near the horizon). They have a building full of wonders there, including a computer that invites you to tea, one of the spacesuits worn by American astronauts on the moon, and a well-stocked souvenir stand. We picked up a few items for ourselves, relatives back home, and some things to auction off for TAFF at the LASFS.

Our cameras were busy, now and for the rest of the day. Unfortunately, some of the pictures we were hoping for didn't come out – like the one that Eric tried to take of me wearing one of the smaller bowl antennae as an upside-down beanie.

From Jodrell Bank we went to Alderley Edge, which is a cliff which rises abruptly from the otherwise fairly flat countryside. I don't know how high it is, but it must be one of the highest points on the island, as it is a national monument sort of thing and famous in song and story. The view was tremendous.

JUNE:

Marsha had informed us that somewhere around Alderley Edge there is a cave, with an inscription or plaque in it that figures in the beginning of Alan Garner's story The Weirdstone of Brisingamen. Eric told us that the story was partially based on the local legend of sundry Knights of Old being entombed in the rock of the ledge, ready to reappear and take up arms should England be threatened by an invader.

Unfortunately, no one present had read the story in quite a while, and without someone to point out the location of the cave, we had no idea how to find it. Eric did find the Secret Lever to open it, but we couldn't make it work. Perhaps someone was thinking of a blue giraffe, thereby nullifying the door-opening spell. He also informed us that The Edge is used monthly by a coven of witches. We decided not to stay for the next covention!

Then we went back to Holmes Chapel, where Beryl served us what she called "just a light snack". Aside from the sliced cold ham and salads and other parts of the main course, she had prepared not one but two sweets (desserts to Americans) – a delightful trifle topped with whipped double

cream AND a cheesecake. She said the cheesecake was a recipe from an American friend. It tasted a good deal like mine, though I didn't get a look at the recipe.

After the dishes had been cleaned up, Beryl asked me if I wanted my hair done now. I allowed as how it would be nice, and found myself bent over the sink while Beryl applied and scrubbed in a delicately scented shampoo. I asked what kind of shampoo it was, and she told me "Blue Mink". I got washed, set, and put under the dryer. About that time, Len mentioned that it would be a good idea if he were to wash his hair.

LEN:

Before I knew it, my head was in the sink with Beryl industriously scrubbing it. First time I'd had my hair washed by a pretty girl in a long time. Then she proceeded to style it. She complained that it really wasn't long enough, but did the best she could with her new blow-wave dryer.

JUNE:

The blow-wave dryer was similar to some I've seen in the States, but larger. It features a flared muzzle about a foot long, and more closely resembles one of Buck Rogers's rayguns than anything else. When Beryl went waving that thing about, she looked like she had just stepped out of the 25th Century.

LEN:

Unfortunately, though I have a full head of hair as compared to certain fan friends of mine who are younger; the individual hairs on my headbone are thin, so they don't take well to that sort of styling. It did last a while, though, and I'm most grateful to the lovely Beryl for making me look at least momentarily (in the course of history) purty.

JUNE:

After the hair-styling session, Eric played piano a little, and then set up his camera to take a group picture of us gathered around as if for a jam session. He has since informed us that the picture didn't come out.

LEN:

We played Scrabble until one in the ayem. There was some discussion about using British or American spelling of certain words, and I think we allowed both. At that time, Eric hadn't come up with FanScrabble, or perhaps just wasn't ready to spring it upon an unsuspecting world. I think Beryl won

the game.

Thursday, April 26

LEN:

This was the day we visited the city of Chester. The city with the Roman wall and some old Roman ruins, hard by the River Dee. (*And from his windows, he could see / The otion and the River Dee – Edward Lear.*) It was rather a strange feeling, standing on top of the Wall, looking away from the city and down to see the ruins, and then turning to look at the busy downtown section with modern shops, autos and double-decker buses.

JUNE:

The Bentcliffes' idea was to turn us loose in Chester for a few hours to get our Souvenir Shopping done. It wasn't all that good an idea. We did find some spoons, getting one for Len's mother, one for his sister and one for us. (The one for us has a bowl shaped like a scallop shell, and is now our Official Sugar Spoon. Any souvenir spoon that we get is going to work for its living, by gollies!)

We dropped into a camera shop to get some more film for Len's camera, and were amused to hear an exchange between a clerk and a gentleman with an Instamatic like Len's. Seemed that someone had given him the camera, but had not told him that it must be wound up if it is to advance the film after taking pictures. He went out enlightened, and we went out amused.

We saw a goodly portion of Chester's shopping district before we climbed up to the top of the Wall again and made our way back to where Eric had parked his car. We found all three Bentcliffes in the car, waiting for us, and started out to Higher Bebington through the rush hour traffic. (Except for being on the left, it's very similar to Stateside rush-hour traffic.)

LEN:

Marsha was serving a three-course fondue dinner. Besides us and the Bentcliffes, the other guests were Norman and Ina Shorrock, Uncle Norm Weedall and Tom Hogan. The first course was a hot cheese fondue, in which were dipped such delicacies as baby tomatoes, baby mushrooms, etc. The second course was a beef fondue. This doesn't mean that we dipped things into beef, but that there was a pot of hot oil into which we dipped thin strips of beef until they were cooked, whereupon we chose one of several sauces to

dunk them in. The third and last course was chocolate fondue, a pot of hot melted chocolate with Marsha's Secret Ingredients added, into which we dipped chunks of Marsha's special nut bread and various fruits. Burp!

We were kept quite busy dipping and eating, as well as imbibing the wines of Uncle Norman and the drinks of Eddie J. There was some discussion about TAFF. Eric and the others were trying to talk Norman and Ina into standing for TAFF. As it turned out, they couldn't stand for the upcoming race, but are certainly good candidates and hopefully will be among those who stand for TAFF in the future.

Eric said that he would have to get a fondue set for Beryl, so that they could also have fondue dinners. I advised him that he was obviously suffering from a Fond Due Lack.

This low blow of a pun hit him so hard that the best he could come up with was that he'd have to Groanell about that one. I told him that I found his reply disappointing. I thought he was supposed to be the Dean of British punsters. It improved from there (or got worse, depending on how YOU feel about puns).

Friday, April 27

JUNE:

We were now camping with the Joneses, on their nice black couch in the living room, which Eddie informed me had been selected for length with me in mind. After a breakfast wherein we were introduced to Cornish clotted cream (an incredibly thick, rich cream which has to be spread with a knife – and cut with a knife, for that matter), we left to catch a bus which would take us to the Underground which would deliver us to Liverpool, which would give us opportunity to do some more shopping.

We saw some unusual ties in a department store window, patterned after the Bayeux Tapestry. After some thought, we decided that one of these with Viking ships on it would make a good souvenir for Pres (Len's brother-in-law). Once inside the store and in the menswear department, we found some others, equally unusual and attractive. The one we wanted for Pres was easily available, and I picked out a blue one with ancient soldiers limned on it, and asked Len if he would like it. Yes, he allowed as how he would.

LEN:

We had lunch in a place called Mariner's. For the second (and last) time in England, I was able to grab the tab before mine host got his artistic paws on it. He was busy lighting a cigarette at the time the waiter brought the check, and my hand moved with the speed of light.

JUNE:

We decided to take the ferry back across the Mersey, and walked thereto. On the way, Eddie and Marsha guided us on a small detour to a most interesting fountain. It consisted of a large pool of water with several upright steel beams positioned therein. Mounted on each of these beams were teardrop-shaped "buckets" which turned on pivots. Water poured into each of these "buckets" from some source invisible (but not inaudible) to us, and as each one reached its out-of-balance point it would flop over and pour out its load of water. There was no discernible pattern as to which one would dump next, and we watched it in fascination for several minutes.

LEN:

We took the ferry across the Mersey ~~from the movie of the same name~~

and then a bus back to Higher Bebington. That evening, we went to the Shorrocks' (who also live in Higher Bebington) for some of Norman's Mysterious Punch and a showing of a Japanese film, *The Hidden Castle*, starring Toshiro Mifune. It came across as a sort of Japanese Laurel and Hardy film, though the serious content of the film was meant to be just that – serious. But the two good/bad guys carried on very much like Stan and Ollie.

Saturday, April 28

LEN:

This was our last full day in England. June and I borrowed Marsha's shopping cart and paid a final visit to the local laundromat. Once there, June the tourist showed one of the local ladies how to feed coins to the washers, how to set them, etc. I assume that the local lady had never been to a laundromat before, or was one of those types who just naturally have trouble with coin-operated machinery.

JUNE:

As we walked back, trundling our cart full of fresh laundry, we passed the Shorrocks' street. I glanced toward their house, intending to wave, but didn't see anyone. That evening Ina told me that she had seen us, though, walking hand in hand.

We detoured a bit to go by the local post office, to buy some stamps. When we got there, we found a pillar box (mailbox) out by the kerb (curb) with a neat little stamp-dispensing machine mounted on its side. You put in a coin, turn a small handle, and out pops a row of five stamps – one 2p, two 1p, and two ½p. We found this so charming that we put in another 5p to get a set to take home to Rich.

LEN:

That afternoon we had tea with Tony and Simone Walsh, who also live just a few blocks from the Joneses. It turned out that Tony knew as much about some of the natural wonders of the States as we do, expressing great interest in visiting the western part of the States. We hope they make it someday. We would dearly love to give them our Special Tour Up The California Coast, starting in LA and ending in the redwoods north of San Francisco, with Special Attention given to good places to eat and good scenery to see in between.

We were unable to properly do justice to Simone's excellent pastries, having been overstuffed at lunch by Marsha.

That night, there was a farewell party at the Joneses. Uncle Norm Weedall again provided some of his excellent wine, as did the Shorrocks. Other people brought other bottles, and of course Eddie and Marsha set out

various edible and drinkable goodies. As usual, there was much fangabbing, punning and even singing. I led the group in singing a couple of my drinking songs. Well, one of them (Chug-A-Lug, Chug-A-Lug, Oo-La-La) is a drinking song, but the other (Tooling Trade) serves well as a drinking song in that it has an easily-followed chorus.

Some of the girls present used the floor of the hallway to make an ouija board, by laying out squares of paper with letters or numbers on them in a circle, and using an upside-down wineglass as a planchette. I understand they came up with some rather strange messages. It was the first time I had seen old ouija being consulted in this manner, but June tells me that she has seen it done in this way at home too.

JUNE:

Well, actually, what we did was to arrange letters from an anagram set on a dining room table, and use the upside down wine-glass type planchette. One advantage (or disadvantage) of this method is that six or eight people can get their fingers on the planchette at one time. This should reduce the chance of any one person pushing it where they want it to go.

LEN:

Now, if I can remember who-all was present at the party... Eddie and Marsha Jones, Norm Weedall, Ina and Norman Shorrocks, Bill and Mary Burns, Eric and Beryl Bentcliffe, Jenny and John Ramsey Campbell, Tony and Marge Edwards, Stan and Marge Nuttall, John Owen, Cherry Brown and Tony and Simone Walsh.

The party ended fairly early (1 a.m.) as June and I had to be up to catch a train Sunday morning. As the Joneses have no car, we had planned to take a taxi to the Liverpool train station to catch a 10 a.m. train to London. But Tony Walsh volunteered to pick us up at 9:15 and drive us to the station in his car, and we accepted his very kind offer.

Sunday, April 29

LEN:

Tony showed up on the dot, even phoning beforehand to be sure we were up and ready. We bid a fond farewell to Eddie and Marsha, and were off to Liverpool. Once again we went through the tunnel under the Mersey and onto the streets of Liverpool, which looked strangely deserted – as well they should be on a bright Sunday morning. Quite different from the way we had seen them on a busy Friday during shopping hours.

We arrived at the station in plenty of time. After boarding and settling our luggage (we traveled second-class this time, and found that the second-class carriages provide luggage space between the backs of adjoining seats) we waved to Tony who stood on the platform until the train left.

We arrived at Euston Station in London about 1:45 p.m., and took a taxi to Heathrow Airport. It was hours before our flight was scheduled to leave, but we wanted to get to the airport and check our suitcases. We spent the waiting time in shopping, getting a bite to eat, and trying to phone Ella and Ethel. Either the phone we used was out of order, or we just don't understand the various noises made by the British phone system.

JUNE:

At long last, on the upper floor of the airport building, we found the type of souvenir shop we had been looking for. We wanted Souvenirs for the folks back home, by gum, and here they were. We acquired a set of silver-colored salt and pepper shakers for Len's mother, with "City of London" adorning them in a modest, crest-shaped patch. We got a comb-and-nail-file set in a small leather case for Jerry, a bottle opener with one of those "City of London" crests, and a set of gold-colored cufflinks with three British lions on each, for Len.

Our souvenirs finally acquired, we stuck them in the faithful straw basket, and went on into the Departure Lounge. They checked our passports as we went in, and gave us our boarding checks for the plane. The Departure Lounge was much more comfortable than the area outside, being full of couches, a bar, a snack bar and a lot of duty-free shops.

One shop advertised tobacco and perfume, so Len asked if I wanted anything, since he was going over to buy some cigarettes anyway. I thought a

moment, and then said yes, if they had any Shalimar, would he get me a small bottle? “Shalimar?” he said, and I nodded. He walked off and disappeared for ten or fifteen minutes. When he came back, he was carrying a package with the “Guerlain” label. I thanked him, and then noticed that he didn’t have any cigarettes. I questioned him about it, and he told me that he hadn’t had sufficient pounds to buy cigarettes after buying the perfume. *Greater Love Hath No Man....*

LEN:

We were to fly Lufthansa to Frankfurt, and the flight was half an hour late in arriving in London. However, we weren’t nearly as bad off as those people who were waiting for their flight to Hanover. Their flight had been due for takeoff several hours before ours, and was not yet ready to leave by the time we left. A multilingual voice on the PA system announced that these unfortunate passengers could continue to wait, and the airline would provide them a free dinner at the airport – or, if there was some empty space on our Frankfurt flight, they could fly there and be taken to Hanover by bus. Obviously, some of them opted for the latter choice, as every seat in our plane was full, and there were three gentlemen left standing. It was the first time I ever saw SRO on a commercial airline. I know it isn’t legal over here, and I’m not sure it was over there, but what they did was to ask passengers who had small children to hold their kids in their laps during takeoff and landing, so that the stand-up passengers could sit down and strap in. The steward offered free drinks to those who held children on their laps. I offered to hold somebody’s kid on my lap, but got no takers, so I wasn’t able to con the help out of free drinks. However, the man sitting across from us really kept them busy, and I’m not sure how many free drinks he had before we reached Frankfurt, but he must have staggered off the plane.

JUNE:

It was dark when we reached Frankfurt, and we could see that it had been raining. The plane taxied to a stop somewhere out on the tarmac, and they provided a little bus to take us to the airport building. Entering Germany was certainly different than entering England. One of the first areas we went through was a Customs area. This was before we picked up our baggage. Then we went by Immigration, and an official looked at our passports. “Looked” is the right word, as he didn’t even touch them. We walked on as indicated, wondering when and if our passports would be stamped. (They

weren't.) Presently we got our luggage, and walked through the Green section of another Customs area. We didn't see any Customs officials about. Immediately beyond this, Bob was waiting for us.

LEN:

That's Bob Konigsberg, June's son, who is stationed at Coleman Barracks near Mannheim. He promptly took over as Tour Guide and Interpreter, and got us into a taxi. We had a reservation for the night at the Hotel Savigny. It was expensive, but was the only booking that the Auto Club had been able to make for us on the short notice that we had given them about going to Germany.

When we checked in at the hotel, the desk clerk handed us an envelope from Mario Bosnyak. It contained the German TAFF funds which Mario had promised us.

JUNE:

After we got settled in our room, about 10:30 or so, we debated calling Mario in Berlin. We decided that it was really too late to call that night, and settled down to sleep. Bob bunked on the floor. At 1 a.m. or so, a strange noise awakened us, and we realized that it was the phone ringing. I was closest to it, so I grabbed it and mumbled something. It was Mario. He was worried about us. He was also coughing like unto Camille in the last act. Between coughing spells, he told us that he was sick and that his doctor wanted to put him in the hospital.

LEN:

Apparently his doctor did not trust Mario to rest enough at home, and knowing how hyperactive Mario can be, we can understand his doctor's concern. He told us that we shouldn't plan on coming to Berlin, and we told him not to be silly, we'd come and visit him anyway – after all, we had our handy-dandy translator, Bob, with us.

Monday, April 30

LEN:

Bob was up early in the morning to catch a train to Mannheim and get to his base so that he could collect his paycheck and get his leave papers changed to include Berlin. Soon after Bob left, we finally got up. He had left us definite instructions on what train to take, and which Mannheim station to get off at. We found out later that there are three or four stops in Mannheim, only the final one of which is “Mannheim HBF” – the Haupt Bahn Hof – Main Railroad Station.

JUNE:

I observed our DM90-a-night room with some interest, wondering what it was that made it that expensive. It was a small room with twin beds, and there wasn't even room to put a roll-away bed, which was why Bob had slept on the floor. The bathroom had obviously been remodelled, and not quite finished. The tub was done up in pink tile, with a tasteful border of mermaids in turquoise.

The hotel provided a small packet of something called “Aqua-Marin” which I found sitting on the edge of the tub. According to its tri-lingual blurb (German, French and English) it was the most marvellous bath additive ever invented. I decided to give it a try – might as well get our money's worth – and found that it turned the water a beautiful shade of blue, highlighted by a few bubbles here and there.

LEN:

We finally got down to breakfast in the hotel dining room. Being unsure how much English the waiters had, we indicated that we would take the Continental breakfast that came with the room. Along with the coffee, tea, fruit juice and rolls came a plate of cheeses, which included the exotic foreign “Velveeta”.

We had been instructed to catch the noon train to Mannheim, so we took a taxi to the train station. The station itself was under reconstruction, just to add to the confusion that one usually experiences in a busy station. The taxi driver, for some reason, did not let us off at the front entrance but at a side entrance. We didn't realize this at first, until we got inside and tried to find

some ticket windows. None were in sight, but we could see the train tracks and about umpteen shops, etc. I found a luggage cart and we loaded it with our stuff. We pushed it over to where a changeable sign informed us that the noon train for Mannheim would presently leave, and I left June there with the suitcases to go off in search of a ticket window.

JUNE:

The station was an immense barn of a place, with part of it hidden behind a high fence. There was a crane visible over the fence, so that meant that part was being remodeled. There was a clock near the sign that informed us that the Mannheim train would leave from this track at noon, and I watched it with some interest. It was the type where the minute hand moves once a minute, and it became more and more fascinating the closer it got to twelve o'clock.

Presently some lights next to the track began flashing, and I figured that probably meant that the train was on its way in. Sure enough, pretty soon the train backed slowly in, the rear car reaching nearly to where I was standing. People got off, and the persistent clock clicked steadily on. Finally it reached 12 o'clock straight up....

LEN:

I had stopped one kindly-looking gentleman and asked him about tickets, where one could buy them, etc. I did a lot of pantomiming, as I have little if any German, but I don't think he understood me. Either he did and didn't care, or maybe thought I was trying to sell him something. Anyway, he retorted angrily something that sounded like "Nyet!" Perhaps he was a Russian – but then so was I, rushin' around trying to find a ticket window before the train pulled out.

Taking off in the opposite direction, I spotted a group of American GIs at one end of the long building. I ran up to them and asked them where in hell one got tickets in this madhouse. One chap started to direct me upstairs, but was corrected by his sergeant who said that the upstairs place was for GIs. He told me to walk about halfway down the long building in the direction from which I had come, and turn left at the first passageway I came to. This would lead me to the front of the torn-up building, and that's where the ticket windows were. He was absolutely correct.

By the time I found the windows it was about two minutes to noon, and I hoped that for once the German railway system wouldn't be as efficient as

advertised. There were, of course, several windows, with a queue at each one, and I couldn't tell by reading the notices which would be the correct one to buy tickets to Mannheim. So I picked what looked like the shortest line and ahead the guy ahead of me if this was the right line for Mannheim. He said something that sounded like "Mannheim, ja," but he mumbled it, and I wasn't sure but what it was a negative reply. But I stayed in line, as I was now close to the window, and when I did ask for two tickets to Mannheim (slowly, but in English) the clerk sold me the same with polite thanks, and I took off at high port for the platform.

The train was still there, with June waiting and wondering what had happened to me. We got on board a few seconds before it started up.

JUNE:

The countryside that we passed through was Spring at its best. Farmland and forest alternated with towns, and there were fields of something bright yellow that I was pretty sure were dandelions. (I found out later that they were.) German trains are electric, and move noiselessly compared with our steam and/or diesel engines. At one point we passed an automobile graveyard almost hidden in a grove of flowering trees.

We were making pretty good time, stopping every so often at a station, when the train drew up to a halt, and all we could see was open country out the windows. The train stood there for about half an hour, while we wondered what the delay was. Len tried asking a man who was wearing a sort of uniform cap and looked like he might be vaguely official, but he didn't speak English.

He did his best to be helpful, though, and motioned with his hands to explain that we were on a side track waiting for an express to go through. He did it a couple of times to make sure we understood, and wound up his spiel with the word "Schnell!", which I understood to mean that as soon as the other train was out of the way, we would go fast. I fished into my vocabulary of perhaps a dozen German words and replied "Mach schnell!" which is all that I had that seemed to fit the occasion. We exchanged smiles, and were presently on our way again.

Bob met us at the station, and we taxied to the Weber Hotel where Bob had reserved a room for us. The little old lady who ran the motel spoke only German, but Bob was a good translator as well as tour guide.

Our room was just about large enough to hold an enormous double bed, a wardrobe and a table under the window. We had our own bath – quite

literally. The bathroom contained a tub and a wash basin. There was a small sign on the wall next to the mirror, which Bob translated for us. In essence it said

Please do not drop your electric razor into the water.

Thank you,

Your Electric Company

The toilets were in a separate room across the hall, for the use of all the roomers on the third floor. Bob told us that in Germany, double beds were usually composed of two single beds pushed together. This one was all one, but large enough. The usual continental quilt was present. Two of them, in fact – one for each half of the bed.

LEN:

After getting settled in our room, we went with Bob (via bus) to Coleman Barracks. Stepping onto the Army base was like stepping back into the States. All of a sudden signs were in English, cars were driving on the right, overheard conversation was in our own language, etc. We walked over to the snack bar to have lunch, and while waiting in the chow line we met Bob's Big Boss, Colonel Chappell, who had dropped in for a cup of coffee, or something. He was most friendly and courteous, as were all of the people we met at Coleman, officers or enlisted men.

It was some time around here that we found that Bob could not go to Berlin with us. To travel into Communist territory takes something called "flag orders" which must be applied for at least a month in advance. Since we had decided only a couple of weeks before leaving that we were going to Germany, we hadn't had the opportunity to notify Bob in time.

With Mario in the hospital, and our Interpreter taken away from us, it began to look like maybe not such a good idea to go to Berlin. There was also the fact that it would cost us more air fare, and we didn't feel that we should use TAFF money for this purpose. Our vacation time was running out and that meant we would prob'ly have only a night and a day there, if that long, so we finally decided not to go. Subsequently, we talked on the phone to Mario a couple of times, and he agreed that we would be better off touring what we could of West Germany without going to Berlin.

The TAFF money from the German fund had been sent to us by Mario and was waiting for us when we arrived. But since we saw only two fans in Germany (one of them being my stepson, Bob) and spoke to Mario only by phone, we did not use the TAFF money for our German tour, brief as it was.

Mario did put us in touch with another German fan in Frankfurt, about which more later.

Later, Bob introduced us to the man he works for directly, Major Benson. The Major invited us into his office, fed me coffee, and told us of what a great outfit they had. He advised us that the men in his outfit were all hand-picked, as their job was air and land transport for visiting VIPs, such as 3-star generals, the Secretary of Defense, etc. He said they had to be careful not to get sloppy, as they were so used to seeing VIPs it didn't awe them as much as it would other outfits who got only occasional visits from the big shots.

Bob then took us on a tour, showing us the planes and copters used for the VIPs. The seats are well-padded and comfortable-looking (and complete with seat belts on every one) and there are bars and other little conveniences that you don't find in the average copter.

The Night of the Chocolate Cockroach

JUNE:

That night, we took a train to Heidelberg to have dinner at Bob's favorite Italian restaurant, the Riviera. We walked up Hauptstrasse (Main Street) looking in the shop windows. That's all we could do, since the shops were closed. Unlike the States, they do not stay open on Monday night. We passed one shop with a collection of clocks in the window. There was a couple that I wouldn't have minded having – a little one with a jewel-blue face, and another with a swinging mechanism on top that was apparently magnetic in nature.

After that, we came to a confectioner's shop, and were admiring the various candies displayed therein, when our attention was suddenly riveted by what appeared to be chocolate reproductions of cockroaches. We studied them carefully – they even had six plastic feet sticking out from under the chocolate body.

Eventually, our appetites not at all spoiled, we arrived at the Riviera. Bob escorted us to a table, and ordered cannelloni for three. They didn't have a wine list, so the waiter recited the names of his wines for us. When he got to "Valpolicella" I sat up and paid attention. He filled three glasses from a big bulbous bottle behind the bar, and we sipped while we awaited the cannelloni.

After dinner, we window-shopped down the other side of the street, and presently returned to Mannheim, where Bob took us to his favorite bar. The Official Name of it is the Gold Pflug (Golden Plow), but in the neighbourhood it is known as “Paul’s place”.

LEN:

Paul is a Canadian, but when he got to Germany during the war he liked it so much that he decided to stay. Bob introduced us to one of his favorite drinks – Coke and white wine, mixed 50-50. It is drinkable, but is not something I would want to drink a lot of. Bob orders it by the liter. As we were sipping it, Paul came over and asked if we also drank alcohol.

Over the music coming from the accordion player (and the singers at the bar) I advised him that yes, we had been known to drink alcohol on occasion, so he said he would bring us something special. He brought two shot glasses filled with something crystal-colored. It was corn whiskey with lemon, he said. It was the smooooootherest corn I’ve ever tasted. Good sippin’ whiskey.

JUNE:

There must have been some sugar in it, too, as it was more like a cordial.

LEN:

The place was quite lively with all the music, singing and talking. Some of the songs included old swing-era tunes, as well as the ubiquitous Beer Barrel Polka and a local favorite, *The Streets of Hamburg*. We got back to the motel by 1 a.m.

JUNE:

We walked up to the door of the motel, and found it locked. This was so totally unexpected that we must have rattled the door several times before we could really accept that it wouldn’t open for us. I had a momentary thought about having to spend the night out there in the parking lot, which didn’t appeal at all.

Presently Len discovered an intercom speaker set in the wall beside the door. As we were about to press the button, it occurred to us that the lady didn’t speak English, and we didn’t speak German, so there might be a communication problem. But anything was better than standing out there all night, so we pressed it.

An incomprehensible voice came back at us, and we said words that

were probably incomprehensible to her. However, she came out and let us in, then inquired something that I was somehow able to understand. She was asking didn't we have our room key? Room key? we said, with an astonished inflexion. Yes, the room key also opened the front door. Well, I'd always heard that travel was educational.

Tuesday, May 1

JUNE:

The next morning, we got up and went down to the motel dining room. Our room rate included breakfast, which was a good thing as Bob didn't get there until later, and I draw the line at trying to order food in a strange language. I know that "ei" is German for "egg", but I'd probably end up with a raw one if I tried it.

The regular breakfast was good, if strange to us. We discovered that in Germany (unlike England) they believe in hot toast. There were also several different kinds of bread, rolls, jam, mettwurst and a soft cheese. We watched another guest tackle his mettwurst. Apparently proper etiquette for dealing with it is to saw off the end of the tough casing with your knife, then scoop out the contents and spread it on your bread.

Coffee and tea were easy to order, being pronounced "kaffee" and "tee". The lady asked Len something and once more I managed to understand that she wanted to know how he liked his coffee. I replied "Schwarz!" It's a good thing that he likes it black – I have no idea how to say "with cream" in German.

LEN:

After breakfast, Bob arrived, and we went back to the Mannheim Haupt Bahnhof and caught a train to Heidelberg. We found out that May Day is a holiday in Germany, so that once again the shops were closed. We spotted the tail end of a parade going up the Hauptstrasse as we arrived. It was the Communist May Day parade and demonstration, as we found out when we caught up with it at the far end of the street. There were lots of bright red banners and posters, and the crowd was listening to a speech (in German) being broadcast over a PA system. The speaker himself was not in sight. Noticing a balcony across the street, we wondered why the speaker wasn't up there, as it seemed a perfect place from which to deliver a harangue. Bob pointed out that it would probably make the speaker an ideal target for a sniper, and that he was being smart by staying out of sight.

We noticed two policemen in the area, one of them carrying a walkie-talkie. Deciding that we had heard quite enough incomprehensible propaganda, we left the area and walked around the corner and across a plaza

toward Heidelberg Castle. There, just two blocks from the demonstration, and out of sight, was a group of riot policemen, standing by should there be a call from the man with the walkie-talkie. They were very much at ease, laughing and talking among themselves, carrying their helmets in their hands. June stopped and took a picture. One of them noticed her about the time the shutter snapped, and shouted “Achtung! Foto!” But June had already shot the photo, and we waved and smiled at them as we went on our way.

Bob guided us up a long, steep, cobblestoned path to the castle. I don’t know how high it is, but not being in the best of condition, we stopped a lot to take pictures. (*Or not to take pictures.*) As we climbed higher, we could look down at the town and the Neckar River. There were all kinds of scenes to photograph, and once we got up into the castle area we could aim a camera in almost any direction and get a good picture – or at least that’s the impression I got.

The castle is not in what one might call a good state of repair. It is indeed a ruined castle (as witness the wall shot on the cover of this report) but it and its well-cared-for garden surroundings are beautiful. We spent all afternoon there, and not just to rest from the uphill hike.

JUNE:

The castle had been done in by enemies armed with gunpowder. This became obvious once we saw one of the round corner towers, where a chunk of brickwork about a dozen feet long and almost as wide had been torn off the top of the tower and dropped to its base, much as if a petulant giant child had become impatient with a toy. The moat – or what had been a moat – was now a garden, and we saw a couple picnicking therein. In another spot, someone was taking a nap.

As we walked around to the back of the castle, there was a sort of snack stand, advertising “Eiskrem”. The ice cream turned out to be a Neapolitan-flavoured sandwich, and Bob very kindly went in and bought three of them. (If I hadn’t known the German for “three” before this, I’d have learned it on that trip.)

Eventually, we made our way into the inner courtyard, to admire the beautiful facade of the inner portion of the castle. It was lined with statues of knights, each one with some sort of animal at his feet. We were particularly enchanted by one knight with a lion. The lion had his paws crossed, chin on paws, and a rather pixilated look in his eye.

Standing on 222,000 Liters of Wine (Len)

LEN:

We walked down into the castle cellar to see The Largest Wine Keg in the world, or so the signs claimed. According to the information we were given, it contains 222,000 liters. I'm not sure how many gallons that is, but it's quite a few. We climbed up the stairway, walked out on top of the keg where we stood looking down over the edge for a while, and then went down the down staircase with a whole bunch of other tourists.

We found a bar where they were serving some of the wine, so we got some to sample. They served it in little shot glasses that bore a picture of the keg. The price of the wine included the glass, so we added three more souvenirs to our load.

On our way down, by a different route, we noticed that there was a funicular railway that transported people up and down the mountain. We felt a touch chagrined that we had walked when we could have ridden, but Bob said that he had deliberately refrained from using it because he felt it was unsafe – certainly not as safe as the Angel's Flight we used to have in Los Angeles. In any case, we didn't regret the walk, not only because it was probably Good For Us, but because of the lovely scenery en route.

We had a late lunch of pizza at the Riviera, and then took a boat ride on the Neckar, using up some more of our film.

By the time we got back to Mannheim, we were ready for dinner. But we found, to our dismay, that the motel dining room was closed because of the holiday, and so were neighborhood restaurants. It began to look like a long, hungry night, until Bob consulted with the lady at the desk. She didn't know of anywhere, but she had a friend there who did speak some English, and she directed us to a "Gasthaus" where she said we could get dinner. Actually, her directions were not quite right, but it didn't matter because Bob called a taxi and the driver knew exactly where to go. We could have walked (with the proper directions) but there was a bit of rain, though the day itself had been bright and sunny.

It seems that in Germany they have these Gasthauses (Guest Houses), which serve food but aren't exactly restaurants. We noticed people there sitting around and playing cards, as well as eating. One gentleman bore a striking resemblance to Bob Bloch – but the accent wasn't right.

JUNE:

We started the meal with “bouillon mit ei” – clear soup with an egg in it. As hungry as we were, it was the single most delicious thing I’d tasted in some time. For the main course we had Bob’s favorite dish, Jagerschnitzel, which is veal cooked in wine and slathered with mushrooms. About three-quarters of the way through my plateful, I realized that I wasn’t going to be able to finish it. I put my fork down and heaved a sigh of repletion.

“You’re supposed to clean your plate,” Bob warned. I looked at him, surprised.

“But I’m stuffed,” I explained. I essayed another bite, but I could feel my bursting point arriving.

Presently the lady came to clear away the dishes. She looked at my plate. I cringed. Having been warned what to expect by Bob, I was able to translate her questions. “What’s the matter? Isn’t it good?”

“Sehr gut,” I replied, and made the hand-to-throat gesture for “stuffed full”. She understood, and laughed.

We walked back to the motel through a few warm spring showers, bade Bob goodnight, and were (thankfully) in bed by eleven.

Wednesday, May 2

LEN:

It was rainy-looking but clearing in the morning. At breakfast we saw the man who resembles Bob Bloch in the dining room, consuming a boiled egg. By the time Bob came to pick us up, it was quite sunny. We spent the day on a shopping tour at his base, and in Mannheim.

JUNE:

It may have been just because it was spring, but there seemed to be lots more flowers planted around German cities than we have over here. On our way into Mannheim, Bob took us on a different bus, one that spent an hour or so driving hither, thither and yon about Mannheim, giving us a look at the countryside.

One of the interesting things Bob pointed out was the welfare housing. It seems that if someone decides he does not want to work for a living, the government will give him a small plot of land – usually next to the railroad tracks, or somewhere else that nobody else wants to live. (Being next to the railroad is not quite as bad as it would be in this country, since their trains run by electricity and are relatively quiet.)

Since the tiny houses on these plots of land are all different, we assumed that it is up to the individual welfare recipient to build his own. They ranged in quality from a neat wooden house to a tar-paper-and-corrugated-iron shack. The houses are tiny because most of the land is taken up with a garden. These people raise a good deal of their own food.

When we passed by them later on in the dark, they were invisible. Bob pointed out that they don't have electricity. It makes me wonder if they have any of the city services that we take for granted – do they get their water, for instance, from the equivalent of the village well? Bob said that sometimes these people sit out in their yard and laugh at the people who are going to or from work. My reply was that you can't argue with taste – if they think they've got a better deal than working for a living, let 'em think so. In my personal opinion they're working hard for less than I do.

Or, as my grandmother used to put it: "Every man to his own taste, said the old woman, as she kissed the cow."

LEN:

Impressions of German cities: The streets are narrow, which is why most of the populace drive little cars such as VWs or Peugeots. It is perfectly legal to park partly or even entirely on the sidewalk, just as long as there is a little room left for pedestrians to squeeze by. The sidewalks are marked for bicycle traffic. Most of the people we observed on bikes were middle-aged or older. There were some miniskirt-and-pram combinations here, too.

JUNE:

The main street of Mannheim that we walked up and down is a WIDE street, and the cars do NOT park on the sidewalks. We decided to do some more souvenir shopping, as I wanted to get some cigars for my boss. We found a tobacco shop, and spent a few minutes studying the window display. Finally I decided on a small wooden box of Sumatran cigars, and we went in to make the purchase. I was a little surprised when the clerk didn't put the cigars in a bag, but even more surprised when there was no cash register receipt.

Then I remembered that in England, as well as in Germany, women carried their shopping bags with them and had no need for paper bags. (Might not be a bad idea in the States!) As for the receipt, this was a small store, and presumably they felt that they would know whether a customer had actually bought something or not.

After some discussion, we found a place to have lunch. It was a cafeteria-style restaurant, which displayed plastic models of the food to be had. Bob pointed out a plate of Jagerschnitzel, which looked like a full dinner. We said that would be too much, so we wound up with Germany's equivalent of a hot dog. Each of us had a Bratwurst – a long, thick sausage – with a “brotchen” – German for bun. The bun was about three inches in diameter, and obviously had not been designed to fit around that twelve inch wurst. So we ate our “hot dogs” by alternating bites of bun with bites of wurst dipped in mustard.

After lunch, we continued walking around Mannheim, window-shopping. We were a little surprised to find, in a department-store window that was being “dressed”, some naked mannequins with nipples on their breasts. The shape of the nipple was moulded into the figure, and touched delicately with a darker pink than that used on the rest of the body. We had already observed that the Germans seem to have a much more casual attitude towards the female breast than we do. Advertisements in the slick magazines

may show a girl unclothed above the waist, and no one seems to make any fuss over it. On the other hand, a display in the doorway of one of the sex shows that we passed showed a life-size photo of the nude girl greeting the potential customers with a bright smile and a bright-red carnation – held casually where it would do the most good.

We also noticed that the Germans are very fond of those two Gallic heroes, Asterix and Obelix. We saw some silver pins in a jewelry-store window made to look like Asterix waving hello in his jolly way, and Obelix both with and without menhir. Later, we found some decals in an auto-supply shop also showing A. and O.

Toward the end of our day of walking around the city, Bob took pity on us and guided us to a quiet bar where we could sit down and have something to drink. Bob ordered his “shola” – the Coke and white wine drink that he’s so fond of. I had plain Coke, which I found is a good deal stronger and sweeter in Germany than it is in Southern California. We had some confusion about the “shola” in Heidelberg – when Bob ordered one, they brought him white wine mixed with mineral water. The waitress insisted that that was what he had ordered. Bob said it wasn’t. It may have had something to do with the regional dialects – apparently there is a Mannheim dialect.

LEN:

This time, we got back in time to have dinner in the motel restaurant. We made an early night of it, since we had to be up early in the morning.

Thursday, May 3

LEN:

We checked out of the Weber, and Bob went with us back to Frankfurt, once again by train. We had had the Monopol Hotel recommended to us, so we carried our bags out to a taxi and told the driver we wanted to go to the Monopol. He laughed and pointed down the block. “There it is,” he said. Feeling somewhat irritated at the person who had told us it was quite some distance away, we picked up our luggage again and made our way to it.

JUNE:

Naturally, we asked for a double room with bath, but were told they didn't have any available. We decided that we could stand it for one night, and took a double room without. On the way to our room, we saw an empty room with bath, and wondered a little, but decided it was probably reserved. Our room was large, light and airy, with a Real German Double Bed – two twin beds pegged together like the leaves of a dining room table. Once again, the ubiquitous Continental quilts were present. There was a washstand in the corner, and the toilet was just down the hall a bit. We never did find the bathroom, as such.

As we were leaving to meet Mario's friend, the Herr Professor Doktor Karl Krejci-Graf, we met some other people in the hall. Not only were they speaking English, they were speaking it with Texas accents. All the rooms with baths had gone to a tour group from Texas, who were just in the process of arriving, as we found out when our elevator got to the ground floor and we had to detour around what seemed like several hundred suitcases stacked all over the lobby floor.

LEN:

The Herr Professor Doktor had invited us to meet him at his office and go to lunch with him. Obtaining a map from the hotel clerk, we decided that the address was within walking distance from the hotel. We should have remembered that the map is not the territory....

For one thing, they were busy tearing up the streets in that section of the city, so there were many detours for pedestrians as well as for street traffic. It turned out to be a much longer walk than we had expected, and I don't think

we were fully recovered from our hike up to Heidelberg Castle, let alone all of the walking we'd done in England.

But we made it, and discovered that it was the address of the University. Karl is Professor Emeritus, and his field is geology. We climbed the stairs to the 2nd floor, and after a couple of tries, Bob found the right office. He tapped on the door and stuck his head in, and sure enough, there was the Professor.

Karl was in shirtsleeves, and immediately excused himself and dashed off to another room to don coat and necktie so that he would be properly dressed to meet his guests, especially the lady.

He asked if we would like something to drink, and since we were a bit thirsty from the long walk, we readily accepted. He began to name several different items, most of which we didn't recognize. Not because his English wasn't good (it was excellent) but the names themselves were unfamiliar. So he took us into his back room, where he has a small refrigerator, and started producing bottles of schnapps. We selected one, after some discussion as to which ones had the real fruit flavor. He gave June and me each a shotglass full, and one for himself. Bob decided not to have any, as he is more the beer or Coke-and-wine type drinker.

I sipped at mine and found it fantastic. Karl toasted our health, and we his, and he downed his glass at a gulp. I followed suit manfully, but June continued to sip at hers.

JUNE:

After a couple of sips, I suddenly realized that my lips had gone numb where the liquor touched them!

LEN:

Karl showed us a piece of moon rock – actually a replica made by one of his students. He also showed us the certificate he had from the BSI*, signed by Dr. Julian Wolff. Karl is a Sherlockian scholar as well as an s-f collector. He gave us copies of papers that he has had published in the London journal of the Sherlock Holmes Society, and we in turn gave him a copy of the *JDM Bibliophile*.

* *Baker Street Irregulars, the Sherlockian society. [Ed.]*

He phoned for a taxi, and asked us what kind of food we would like for lunch. He suggested Chinese? Rumanian? Yugoslavian? and then decided that we wouldn't want Chinese as we can get that in the States. We settled on

Yugoslavian, so he had the taxi take us to the Adler Restaurant. I mean, where else would a Sherlockian eat?

JUNE:

Once in the restaurant, there was again the problem of choosing something from a menu full of unfamiliar items. I saw Bob's favorite, Jagerschnitzel, but we finally persuaded the Good Doktor to order for us. He suggested the Balkan platter, as he said it had a little of everything, and we could sample lots of different things. That sounds like a good idea, so we agreed, and he ordered the Balkan Platter For Four.

Meanwhile, the waiter brought a bottle of red Yugoslavian wine, a richly full-bodied wine, and we sipped and talked. It was a good half hour, maybe longer, that the Balkan Platter took to prepare, but well worth the wait. The waiter bore this enormous platter full of food to our table, and our first impression was that they had prepared the Balkan Platter For Eight by mistake.

One end of the platter was taken up with salad material, and the rest was a magnificent collection of meats of different kinds. I could recognize veal, some sort of smoky, spicy bacon, and some kind of sausage. At the far end of the platter were some slices of meat that, when removed, revealed rice in some sort of sauce. It looked a little like Spanish rice, but it didn't taste like it.

Eventually, we had eaten all we could. There was still some of that good food left on the platter, and the good doctor kept pushing it over to Bob. "The young man should eat more," he said. Bob allowed as how he couldn't hold another bite.

How about dessert? inquired the good doctor. Upon being assured that we were really-truly Stuffed, he assured us in turn that what he had in mind was something nice and light. He didn't know what we called it in English, but... So we told him okay, as long as it was light. He gave the waiter the order, but I didn't understand what he said. During the 30-minute or so wait that followed, I tried to get some sort of clue to its composition, hoping to be able to put a name to it. The best the Good Doktor could do in describing it was to say it was made with eggs beaten up with flour.

When the waiter finally set the dessert plates in front of us, I cried aloud in recognition.

"Blintzes!"

"What did you call them?"

“Blintzes – blini,” I said, switching from Yiddish to Russian hoping that would make it clearer. Sure enough, there they were – two blintzes, dusted with sugar and rolled up, reposing on each plate. Somehow, we ate them, too.

LEN:

It was a two-hour lunch, with much conversation as well as good food. Karl is an Austrian, a veteran of World War I, and I would guess that he is in his late 70s or early 80s. (My mother is 83, and he would have to be in the same generation.)

He has traveled to many parts of the world, including teaching in China, and the story of his life would make a really interesting book. His knowledge of the Holmes canon is detailed, of course, but he knew little of the various movie versions of the stories, so we at least had something to tell him that he didn't know. We also talked about book collecting, and though we didn't get to see his collection, I had the feeling that it would be not only extensive but expensive.

I didn't really expect him to be interested in an author as modern as John D. MacDonald, but after we returned home, we sent him a copy of the *JDM Master Checklist*. His response to that was to ask us to obtain a couple of the rarest titles for him. Fortunately, we had duplicates in our collection, and sent them to him.

We will be forever indebted to Mario for putting us in touch with Karl. We still regret that we did not get to meet more German fans (of course, we saw Tom Schlück and his bride-to-be Eva at the OMPAcon) but the ones we have met thus far have proved to be just as friendly and fannish as trufans anywhere.

After lunch, Karl had to go off to another appointment, and we took a taxi back to the hotel to rest up after that tremendous lunch. We made no plans for dinner that night – we didn't need it. June and I eventually went out on a brief shopping tour, leaving Bob collapsed in our room.

JUNE:

We still wanted to get gifts for various members of the family – particularly for Bob, who had been so indefatigable escorting us. It was near closing time for the shops, but we found a leather goods place still open. It occurred to us that Bob's wallet was rather worn out, and it might be a good idea to get him another one.

A salesgirl stepped up to us and – I presume – asked if she could help

us.

“Sprechen Sie English?” I inquired, looking her straight in the eye.

“Uh – bisse” (a little bit) was her answer.

So with a combination of English, German and sign language, we managed to buy a nice black leather wallet for Bob. They even gift-wrapped it for us.

On the way back to the hotel, we found a sort of knick-knack shop with an “English Spoken Here” sign in the window. They also had some rather attractive pendants, which I thought Cathy might like. So we went in. The girl behind the counter greeted us in German, to which I replied “Good afternoon” just to set the record straight. The sign was correct – she spoke English very well. After looking over the stock, we picked out a pendant for Cathy. Then Len picked one out for me.

Walking back to the hotel, our ears were attracted by some Dixieland-type music, Tailgate Ramble, played with vim, vigor and the unmistakable “oom-pah!” of a German band. Looking around, we discovered that it came from a beer-hall type of place with a live band. We translated the sign on the marquee to mean that there was a big concert starting at 6 p.m. (Good thing that numbers are the same in both languages – it may be three or drei but it still looks like “3”.) It sounded like fun, and we decided to go back there once we had collected Bob.

LEN:

We went back to the hotel, rested a bit, and then the three of us went back to the Beer Hall. It was a huge hall with a mezzanine around three walls, comic murals wherever they could find room to put one, and tables all over the place. The band was on a stage at the far end of the room, and apparently they were playing for schnapps, food and tips.

Every once in a while, the bandleader would come down into the audience with a Bavarian hat mit feather in hand, which he would place on someone’s head. This meant that they were to come up and lead the band. Further audience participation was encouraged, such as people singing along, clapping hands or stomping feet in time with the lively music. They were playing polkas and marches for the most part, and we were wondering when they would do some more German-style Dixieland.

JUNE:

Bob was particularly pleased when the beer he and Len had ordered

arrived and he found out that it was his favorite German beer – “Bindings” by name. Apparently it’s strictly a local product, not exported. I indulged in the other German national drink – apfelsaft, or as we call it, apple juice. It was quite different from the apple juice we get here in the States. Good, too. They also served food, but we were in no condition to care about that.

LEN:

Finally Bob went up to the stage, and asked the leader to play some Dixieland. “Kennst Du Dixieland?” I think is the way he said he put it. There followed negotiations on how much he should tip them. Being an experienced bargainer, Bob got them to settle for about half the original figure named by the leader.

Presently, the band began to play a medley of old American-type tunes, including such old jazz classics as *Five Foot Two*. They finished off with *Dixie*, played in a sort of New Orleans style with a touch of Chicago and a healthy dollop of Frankfurt.

Just before we left for the evening, about the last thing we saw was a Japanese lady, dressed up in kimono and obi, wearing the feathered Bavarian hat and leading the band with great gusto. There was a group of Japanese tourists or businessmen (mayhap both) with their wives sitting around one long table, and it was a good demonstration of how Western Japan has become. When I was in Nagasaki in 1945, a proper Japanese lady wouldn’t have been caught dead doing such a thing.

JUNE:

Maybe she still wouldn’t – in Japan.

LEN:

We walked back to the hotel in a glow of good feeling, and bid a fond goodbye to Bob, who departed for Mannheim.

A word of advice: Whenever you travel to a foreign country – learn the language. Between us, June and I have a little German, but it wouldn’t have been nearly enough, and we might have had all kinds of problems if Bob had not been there as our guide and interpreter. We would have studied up on the language had we known in advance that we were going to Germany, but the decision to go there was pretty much a last-minute one, depending as it did on time and finances. It would have been nice to visit other countries over there too, but Foo knows there just wasn’t time or money enough for that. Hopefully someday....

Friday, May 4

JUNE:

We had left a call with the desk for seven, but we were up when it came. We washed sketchily at the basin in the room, and the morning was further enlivened by one of the ladies from Texas in an adjoining room looking for her shoes. Not that she came into our room, but her voice did. It's a nice hotel, but the walls are not over-thick, and when there's a dramatic soprano looking out loud for something, all we could be thankful for was that it was morning and not the middle of the night.

There was some small confusion when Len called the desk for a porter and a taxi, and the clerk assured him that all arrangements were already taken care of for the tour group. Len in turn assured the clerk that we were NOT part of the tour group. I suppose the clerk figured that everyone in the hotel who spoke English had to be part of that Texan tour group. I wonder if he heard any difference in the accents?

Somewhere along the line we had breakfast in the hotel dining room. A Texan foursome was sitting near us, and we were treated to one lady's account of how she had been cheated by a German merchant. The others nodded sagely and agreed that you just can't trust those furriners. I choked down several remarks about Texans that rose to the top of my mind, and reminded myself that Texans really have no corner on intolerance. Even Germans can be intolerant – or so I've heard.

The taxi that took us to the airport chose what was probably a direct route, but it took us through some of the most beautiful woodlands I've ever seen. I tried for a picture, but we were moving too fast and it blurred. We recognized one railroad crossing that our train had passed the day before, so we almost felt as if we were in familiar territory.

Once in the airport, the passport-inspecting official again declined to touch our passports, satisfying himself with a look at our pictures therein. I always thought that any country one entered was supposed to stamp passports, but ours remain innocent of any indication that we were in Germany at all.

Once we were in the Departure Lounge section (it is incredibly large, complex and beautiful) I suggested to Len that we exchange our remaining

marks for dollars at one of the exchange counters that were set here and there. He demurred, saying that why didn't we do a little shopping first?

So we wandered among the shops, admiring expensive things like cameras and watches, but not even considering such purchases. Presently, I saw what looked like a handsome silk shirt hanging in a shop, and asked Len how he would like that. We went in to look more closely at it, and discovered that it was a lady's blouse. Since I do all my clothes buying in the tall shops, there wasn't any point in seeing if they had it in my size. However, they did have some very nice silk scarves, so we wound up buying one for me and one for Cathy. Then we went to the bank window and exchanged our marks for dollars.

The security checks before going onto the plane turned out to be different in each case. Here in Frankfurt, we were each taken into a curtained booth, and patted down, as well as having our hand luggage looked through. (It sure beats having the plane hijacked. Just going someplace else than your destination is bad enough, but some of these nuts that want to divert planes from their routes nowadays want to Do Things with the passengers, like making hostages of them or holding them for ransom.)

As we gained altitude over Frankfurt, we were again impressed with the incredibly emerald green of the countryside. It looked like something out of a travel folder, but there it was, unretouched, sitting below us.

The flight over the Atlantic was largely uneventful. The air was clear, and there's an awful lot of wrinkled grey water down there. One time the pilot told us to look down and we'd see icebergs, which we did. Another time, I spotted what must have been the Queen Elizabeth, steaming toward New York.

Unaccustomed As I Am...

We landed in Washington without seeing any of the government buildings that we were watching for. I guess we'll have to go to Discon next year to see them. But now – NOW was our first experience in going through American customs. No red and green signs here. We collected our luggage and got in line.

We had to pass the health-certificate check before we actually got to the customs inspector. We had the yellow health certificates ready, showing that we weren't bringing smallpox back into the States with us. The lady showed

us a list of countries – Bangladesh, Pakistan, etc., etc. – and asked if we had visited any of these within the last two weeks. No, we hadn't. She passed us without even mentioning England. My smallpox vaccination gave a reminiscent itch.

The customs inspector was very pleasant. He asked how much we thought we'd spent for the stuff we were bringing back. I said that I sure thought it was less than the \$200 we were allowed. He asked what sort of things we had bought.

"Well, we got a salt-and-pepper shaker set for Len's mother...."

"Silver?"

I gave him an incredulous look. "Well... silver-colored."

"Any clothing?"

"No," I answered, forgetting about the ties, which Len promptly reminded me of.

Eventually the nice man asked someone to hand him that "little white suitcase" over there. Since that was mine, I informed him that it might be "little" to him, but I'd been hauling it around two countries and it felt pretty big to me. He smiled and opened it, poked around the edges a bit and closed it.

"Any tobacco?"

"Just a small box of cigars."

"Cuban?" By his tone I could tell he was hot on a scent.

"No – according to the label, they're Sumatran." He didn't even ask to see them. He did open Len's briefcase, but Len had it stuffed with his dirty laundry, which didn't really interest him. Presently he called a porter for us, and sent us on our way.

We thankfully left the porter to check our main luggage through to the plane, and went upstairs to find the telephone so that we could call Len's sister and let her know that we were back in the country and would be in LA tonight as fast as TWA would let us.

Her first question on hearing Len's voice was: "Did your plane get in early?" Then we told her we were in Washington.

We went through the security check (the metal-arch type) with no trouble at all, and re-boarded our plane to find that our new seat assignments were one place ahead of the ones we'd had before. We were still behind the wing, where we had a fairly good view, so no complaints.

LEN:

The movies we saw on this flight were *Shamus* and *Travels with My Aunt*, the latter being by far the better movie of the two. We arrived late at LAX due to bad weather, and it was so good to get home and sleep in our own bed.

It took us about three or four days to get readjusted to our own time, and by then I think we were ready to take off again for another British and European tour. We have had a taste of the fine wine of world-wide friendship and visiting and touring, and we are hooked. By some manner or means we must do it again – but we are grateful for what we did manage to see and do in those three short weeks, grateful to all of you who voted and donated to TAFF, and to all of you fine fannish friends over there who added immeasurably to our enjoyment of the trip.

I have noticed that we have done very little name-dropping in this report. Actually, we should mention many, many names, because there wasn't a fan over there who wasn't good to us in one way or another.

“I do hope we haven't left anything out, or offended anybody.”

“Not bloody likely.”

Appendix

The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund by Len Moffatt

Back in 1963, Ron Ellik and I wrote a brief history and explanation of TAFF. It was published as *Fandbook No. 4* by the National Fantasy Fan Federation, the actual printing being done by Ron on the LASFS Rex Rotary.

I can do no better than to quote from *Fandbook No. 4* in order to tell you what TAFF was then – and what it still is.

“Historically speaking, TAFF stems from the travel and popularity of three British fans. In 1949 Ted Carnell attended the Cincinnati convention largely at his own expense, but with a boost from the Big Pond Fund started by Forry Ackerman. In 1952 Walter Willis attended the Chicago convention as the idol of the Sixth Fandom movement. In 1953, Bert Campbell went to Philadelphia – but unlike Carnell and Willis, he paid all expenses, and the primary reason for the trip was business, not fannish pleasure.

“And suddenly it was evident that there are enough science-fiction fans, though spread over the globe, to tax themselves only very slightly to aid a popular fellow fan to travel to an overseas convention. At about this time, Don Ford and the Cincinnati group failed to convince Norman Ashfield to travel to the States as their guest, and threw the offer open to any British fan – Walt Willis, Ted Carnell and others organized and announced at the 1953 Britcon a Two-Way Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund to help both British and American fans attend each other’s cons as elected delegates.

“Since the first chosen representative (V. Clarke) was unable to travel, a new election was held for ’55 and Ken Bulmer attended the Cleveland con, with wife Pamela accompanying him at their expense.

“The third election was held to choose an American to attend the 1956 British convention; Lee Hoffman won, but declined, and made the trip later on her own. Runner-up Ackerman couldn’t make it, and the third-place man, Kyle, was not offered the trip as he hadn’t polled a quarter of the total votes – one of the few rules of the Fund, designed to make sure winners were chosen by a large number of fans.

“Despite somewhat shaky beginnings, with winners declining or unable to travel, and growing pains inherent in a group forever unincorporated, and controversy over who did and didn’t deserve the honor and who could or couldn’t vote, TAFF emerged from its infancy with a firm, workable structure and a growing history of successful trips.

“With each administration, the functioning of the Fund became smoother, and the primary purpose of its existence (mutually beneficial travel and the promotion of transoceanic friendships) far outshone the difficulties. Indeed, the major result of the early complications was to prepare TAFF for unusual circumstances, and to leave it with broad policies that cover most situations. Administrators have grown wary of jumping to conclusions, and TAFF has seemed always to rise above petty squabbles.

“Nominating requirements are circulated throughout fandom in flyer sheets, and printed in various fan publications. After nominations close, the official TAFF ballot is printed, and it specifies basic voting requirements as well as listing candidates and their platforms. To stand as a candidate, a fan must meet four requirements; by constant hashing over of ‘What is a fan?’ it has become assumed that if a body can meet these requirements he or she is likely to make a good delegate, in the sense of TAFF’s purposes and functions:

“(1) Five nominators – three from the fan’s own country and two from overseas. For greater effect it’s best to get nominators from various parts of the fan domain, geographically speaking. Naturally it would be an easy thing to get two or three home-town fannish pals to sign; but five different fans, coming from five different parts of the world, each attracting to the candidate by their recommendation the interest of different types of fans, will do a campaign the most good. No longer can one lone fan nominate himself and get his name on the ballot.

“(2) A hundred-word platform, to appear on the official ballot. This should be written by the nominating fans, and should at once boost the favorite, and acquaint the general fan with his background – that is, it can’t be all jokes and boff to the exclusion of facts about him, but it must also interest voters in him as a desirable representative.

“(3) Five dollars (35 shillings in England) as bond of good faith, and a donation to the Fund. Fans exist who would get nominated and entertain no intention of ever making the trip – all to be on the ballot. The bond acts as a deterrent, and helps the TAFF treasury. As it’s a bond of the candidate’s

interest, reason says he should provide it; often, however, the nominators prefer to put it up.

“(4) A statement signed by the candidate to the effect that he or she is ready, willing and able to make the trip, barring acts of God, etc. Coupled with (3), this assures fandom of a slate of well-intentioned nominees.

“And so, by being really nothing more than an s-f fan able to talk intelligently with any other enthusiast you might meet, you qualify to stand for TAFF.”

Later in the *Fandbook* we went into more detail on what is expected of a TAFF candidate – and of a TAFF winner:

“...TAFF candidates are closely inspected by the voters, and besides personality and fannish accomplishments, such qualities as responsibility and maturity should figure in arguments pro & con favorites.

“However, it’s obvious that there are a number of other factors to be considered in obtaining candidates. The fact that a fan, be he old-timer or neo, enjoys a fair degree of popularity among his fellow-fans isn’t, by far, everything required to make him ideal TAFF material; he may be well-liked by several fans in certain areas – and not actually disliked by anyone anywhere – but he still may not possess all the qualities that should characterize a representative of his country and his national fandom.

“Ideally, he should be a well-rounded fan, one who really knows fandom and its many facets. It is assumed that he is a science-fiction or fantasy fan, not just a fan-for-the-sake-of-being-fannish fan, and that he attends conventions to enjoy both stfnal and fannish elements – if he attends only for the panels and auctions, he’s not likely to get along with party-type people, and if he gets nothing out of cons except drunk he’s going to distress and disappoint his hosts for the most part.

“Just what is a ‘well-rounded’ fan? Well, to begin with, he should have a general acquaintance with fandom, rather than being solely devoted to just one phase of crifanac. Nobody can do everything – it’s a rare soul who attends meetings of the club in his local area, reads *all* current science-fiction, gets to every convention within reach, publishes fanzines and enjoys talking to everybody he meets – but obviously such a fan would be nicely suited to be a TAFF candidate, and, if elected, would enjoy the trip to the utmost, would delight the host country endlessly and would be well fitted to administer the Fund.

“Thus, the greater your store of these qualities, the better you will be suited to stand for TAFF. It takes time to acquire this general knowledge and enter the many fields of activity available in fandom, and this indicates that a would-be candidate should have been in fandom for a reasonable period of time. Not since the Year One – but long enough to have a speaking acquaintance with the various facets of our microcosmos.

“Through attending conventions, reading fanzines, corresponding and meeting other fans, a potential candidate can get in-person knowledge of the sf fans in his own country and some advance knowledge of the people who will host him on foreign soil. This perhaps sums up the most basic requirements – that you know your hosts at least by name, and that you know your fellow fans at home at least by name, and that you be able to talk to people.

“Besides these personality qualities, there’s the head for business required by the handling of large amounts of money. After the trip, the delegate’s duties as TAFF winner have only just started – he and his opposite number across the Atlantic must administer the Fund, and this is no small job.

“Upon election he will be given, not as charity but as an aid to his finances, \$600; this may be a lump-sum award, or part of it may be advanced and the rest given him overseas, depending on the state of the TAFF treasury at the time. This is to cover jet fare from the eastern U.S. to London – if he lives in the western part of America, or plans to do extra traveling besides to-and-from the convention, it must be at his own expense. Any such travel is naturally something extra for the winner and for the hosts – it makes the trip more than a convention, and gives everyone an opportunity to meet the distant visitor.

“TAFF rules require that the winner attend the con but do not require that he travel about visiting on his own. But he’s going to receive invitations to visit his hosts in their homes, and must be able to afford travel from one city to the next. In 1958, Ron Bennett arrived in New York and was carried by a caravan of fans cross-country to Los Angeles and back; but it won’t happen all the time, and travel can be expensive.

“The purpose of TAFF is to elect a candidate and to provide sufficient funds to aid him in making the trip. The funds can be managed so that he spends little or none of his own money for plane or boat fares, but as we have seen, it depends on how far he wants to travel outside the convention weekend. Fans leap at an opportunity to host TAFF winners, or to drive them

to or from conventions when it can be arranged to fit in with their personal schedule, and the smart TAFFman will allow for this help – but not gamble on it.

“It should be emphasized that TAFF elections pick out a popular fan, and in no way are the losers prevented from standing as often as they like. If a race is approached with an ‘all or nothing’ attitude, the runners-up finish with a sour taste in the mouth. But, everyone should remember that dozens of fans nominated and voted for each candidate, and next year might turn the trick. Four fans have stood a second time; runner-up John Berry was supported by so active a group that he came to the U.S. the year after winner Ron Bennett, on a special Berry Fund; runner-up Eric Bentcliffe stood again five years later, and won a solid victory.

“After the excitement and hustle of the trip, a TAFFman has to settle down to his private life, his private fanac, and the administration of the Fund. The latest TAFF winner across the ocean becomes the senior Administrator, and the two of them set voting qualifications, revise outdated rules, collect money, and set deadlines for campaigns. Their decisions in all matters rule TAFF.

“Raising money is one of their chief worries; the standard polling fee of one dollar does not bring in enough money for each trip; and many other sources are tapped – among them special raffles and auctions, private donations beyond the minimum required contribution, and, most especially, large contributions from the proceeds of conventions. Starting in 1958, World Conventions have found themselves able to make gifts of over a hundred dollars to TAFF after settling all their debts – these donations, which held at two hundred dollars for three years running, have been the prime explanation for TAFF’s stability.

“Another chief occupation for Administrators is raising candidates. It’s a unique problem – acting mainly through correspondence, recruiting has to go on to get people to stand up and announce their interest in one of fandom’s highest honors.

“The obvious path to candidates is to ask people to ask their friends to stand; if a group of fans approaches a popular, qualified potential candidate, the question can be so placed that he agrees to be a candidate – no one should ever be required to do his own campaigning.

“The British absolutely abhor self-centered horn-blowing – their candidates must be asked to stand, and must allow others to conduct their

campaigns. It amounts to a national code of conduct, and at times they are quite surprised to find Americans not only active in their own campaigns, but supported in this activity by voters. No rules exist on this topic – the Fund lets you and your nominators conduct the campaign as you like, trusting to the voters to approve or condemn your methods. (It might be noted that American candidates are tending toward the U.K. attitude in recent years – but fans from each side still and always will retain their characteristic, national attitudes toward TAFF.)

“Appearances by TAFF winners are taken for granted everywhere – a TAFFman may be anything from a noted visitor to a royally-hosted dignitary at his special convention overseas, and should be prepared to ‘say a few words’ for five minutes or half an hour. Con committees may ask him to say something at the banquet, or to appear on a panel, or to judge a costume ball – simple requests, remembering that many committees have been generous enough to pay for the TAFF winner’s hotel room.

“Later, back home, he will still be a noted attendee at gatherings; his will be the TAFF address for contributions and votes, and his election will have made him part of a select group – former winners.

“And the report. It all started with Willis, of course – after his hero’s tour of the States in 1952, he wrote that eloquent memoir, *The Harp Stateside*. Each TAFF delegate since then has written a report to spread the experience of his trip to others – most of them have appeared in single-volume form, others have been published only in serial form in fanzines. It has become one of TAFF’s traditions, without ever becoming a rule, that the winner’s account of his trip be published for general distribution (proceeds beyond cost are usually donated to the Fund).

“In conclusion, we hope you find the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund as important and valuable a part of fandom as we do, whether you ever stand for election or not. As a science-fiction fan you may take part in the elections as nominator, voter, candidate or contributor; and your opinions on any part of the Fund will always be read with interest by the Administrators.”

-oOo-

TAFF ELECTIONS 1954-1974

Winners (underlined) and runners-up:

1954: *A. Vincent Clarke*, James White, Derek Pickles, Tony Thorne.
(Clarke did not make the trip.)

1955: *H.K. "Ken" Bulmer*, Eric Bentcliffe, Terry Jeeves, Ted Tubb,
Stuart Mackenzie.

1956: *Lee Hoffman*, Forrest J. Ackerman, David Kyle, Lou Tabakow,
Gertrude Carr, Wally Weber, Hal Shapiro, Kent Corey. (Lee declined, funds
held over.)

1957: *Bob Madle*, Stuart Hoffman, Richard Eney, Dick Ellington, Boyd
Raeburn, Forrest J. Ackerman, Ed McNulty, George Nims Raybin.
(Ackerman withdrew soon after the start of the voting.)

1958: *Ron Bennett*, John Berry, Dave Newman, Roberta Wild. (Wild
withdrew during campaign.)

1959: *Don Ford*, Terry Carr, Bjo Wells.

1960: *Eric Bentcliffe*, Mal Ashworth, H.P. Sanderson.

1961: *Ron Ellik*, Richard Eney.

1962: *Ethel Lindsay*, Eddie Jones.

1963: *Wally Weber*, Marion Z. Bradley, Bruce E. Pelz.

1964: *Arthur Thomson*, Phil Rogers.

1965: *Terry Carr*, Bill Donaho, Jock Root.

1966: *Thomas Schluck*, Eric Jones, Bo Stenfors, Pete Weston.

1967: None

1968: *Steve Stiles*, Ed Cox, Ted Johnstone.

1969: *Eddie Jones*, Bob Shaw.

1970: *Elliot Shorter*, Bill Rotsler, Charlie Brown.

1971: *Mario Bosnyak*, Per Insulander, Terry Jeeves, Pete Weston.

1972: None

1973: *Len & June Moffatt*, Howard Devore, Frank & Anne Dietz.

1974: *Pete Weston*, Peter Roberts.

TAFF PUBLICATIONS

*TAFF Tales**

Ken Bulmer

*A Fakefan in London**

Bob Madle

Colonial Excursion

Ron Bennett

TAFF Baedeker (2 parts)

Don Ford

Epitaff

Eric Bentcliffe

<i>The Squirrel's Tale</i>	Ron Ellik
<i>The Lindsay Report</i>	Ethel Lindsay
<i>Atom Abroad</i>	Arthur Thomson
<i>The Moffatt House Abroad</i>	Len & June Moffatt

* Not collected into a single volume.

Original Title Page

The Moffatt House Abroad

The 1973 Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund Trip Report by Len and June Moffatt

Illustrated with photographs by the authors and by Mervyn Barrett
Cartoons by Arthur Thomson and Terry Jeeves
Captions for the Jeeves cartoons by: Anonymous, Charles Burbee, Ed Cox,
Dean Grennell, Dave Locke and June Moffatt
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The End

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

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Thank You!

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Appendix The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund by Len Moffatt