



According to Arnie I'm the first non-Vegas fan to accept membership in the newly-expanded SNAPS, and I'm pleased to be here. As an extra-Vegan I've been receiving the mailings since their inception back when. I printed out all of the first couple but since then have been archiving them electronically instead. You may have noticed my occasional presence in the mailings before now; I've been one of Joyce's most faithful letterhacks in *Hard Science Tales* and *Place Holder*, even though my activity in this regard has been *far* less than my many letters to Arnie's *Vegas Fandom Weekly*.

I haven't been to Las Vegas for far too many years. One of the last times was to attend the Toner convention back in 1996. That's me at Toner as recorded by Geri Sullivan. Except for having much cooler glasses now, I don't look a whole lot different than I do here.

Although I don't have time to do a lot of original writing for this maiden voyage in SNAPS, for reasons you'll learn in the final piece of this issue, I'd like to introduce myself to the present generation of Vegas fans, few of whom I've met. To accomplish this I'm adapting a couple of introductory pieces I wrote for the Southern Fandom Press Alliance back in the '90s and hope you find them entertaining and informative.

Robert Lichtman was born in 1942 in Cleveland, Ohio, where he lived until 1951, when his parents decided to leave the frosty northern clime for Southern California and he went along for the ride. There he lived until 1965, except for a six-month period in 1961 spent living in (mostly) Ray Nelson's attic in the Bay Area. Upon graduation from university in early 1965, he returned to the Bay Area, settling in San Francisco just in time for the very beginnings of the Hippie Era, in which he participated in his own modest fashion.

In the spring of 1971, he moved with his then-new, now-ex wife to an intentional alternative community in Tennessee called "The Farm," founded by followers of hippie guru Stephen Gaskin, of which he was one. Four children, all boys, were born during his stay on The Farm, which lasted until 1980. Some six months after the final break-up of his marriage, he returned to California, accepting a job offer from Paul Williams (the "founder of rock journalism," not the "short fat pop singer") and settling in the small Northern California town of Glen Ellen, where he lived until August 2005 (though the job with Paul evaporated in 1983 and he worked from 1987 to his retirement for the City of Santa Rosa), when he moved to Oakland to live with his wife, Carol Carr.

That's the straight biographical stuff. Here's the fannish version:

My first appearance was in 1942, but due to mundane considerations I didn't discover fandom until 1958, when I ran across Robert Bloch's fanzine review column in an odd issue of William Hamling's *Imagination*, a now long-vanished prozine. I'd seen fanzine review columns before that, in yellowing and crumbling issues of *Amazing* from the 1940s on frequent visits to large used book stores in Hollywood. Rog Phillips' "Clubhouse" columns showed me an interesting world of fanzines and s-f clubs spread around the country and, apparently, the world; but somehow it didn't occur to me that such a phenomenon might still exist until Bloch's column proved otherwise. I promptly taped some quarters to 3x5 cards, rendering them "sticky," and soon received my Very First Fanzines (*Oopsla*, *Grue* and *A Bas* being the first three). Fantisted by these, I sent away for more and soon was hooked on fandom, most especially "fannish" fandom, a vice which has persisted, with interruptions, to this day.

Publication of my own fanzine soon followed. The first issue of my first genzine, *Psi-Phi*, appeared in the waning months of 1958, coedited with Arv Underman, whose father was a paper salesman (thus, free paper) and who had a ditto machine. I had just turned 16. We sent this rather typical (*i.e.*, pretty awful but promising) first issue to some 75 unsuspecting fans, names and addresses culled from the Bloch columns and from the letter and fanzine review sections of the handful of fanzines I'd received up to that point. To our considerable amazement, it was actually somewhat well received. Letters of comment and even contributions towards a next issue trickled in. *Psi-Phi* went on to publish seven issues as a genzine, though Arv dropped out after the sixth issue when he left Los Angeles to attend university in the Bay Area. (He became a doctor and eventually returned to Southern California. Some years back, my parents sent me a newspaper shot of him holding a dead snake which had been found by some unsuspecting person in his mailbox, it having been placed there by humorless Synanonites. Arv treated that person's snake bites.)

During this time I began joining apas and after *Psi-Phi* folded I published most of my fanzines for several years for apas. In those days there were only a handful of fannish apas, and gradually I became a member of all of them. But by 1963 the time seemed right for a return to genzine publishing. With the connivance of Greg and Jim Benford, Calvin Demmon and Don Fitch, I launched *Frap*, a bimonthly ultra-fannish fanzine that actually appeared on schedule for the one year of its existence and was very well received. It was done in by the ugliness of the Walter Breen affair, which wiped out a lot of fannish fandom's momentum at the time. I once again retreated into the apas, though fewer of them, and my fannish activity receded gradually until by the end of the decade I was primarily active (barely) publishing for FAPA and writing letters of comment to the genzines that showed up.

In 1971 I went to The Farm and my fan activity went into nearly complete hibernation. I wrote a few letters of comment during that period, but because time was at a premium and money for postage was scarce, I wasn't able to keep up much

activity. One by one fanzine editors dropped me from their lists until only John D. Berry was still sending me his fanzines. My major fan activity during the '70s consists of a couple of longish letters in his zines and one in Ray Nelson's *Garden Library*.

When I returned to California and began working with Paul Williams, I once again began seeing other fanzines. Ted White and Dan Steffan began publishing *Pong* in the fall of 1980 and I avidly read the early issues that arrived at Paul's door. They were fannish as hell (you never forget what "fannish" is like) but because fandom had so many new players they also had an air of being something fresh and new. Yet somehow desirable. Soon it was too much to continue to semi-ignore and I wrote a letter of comment, a dangerous move marking the end of my gaffiation. In 1983 I started publishing a genzine again, *Trap Door*, which has now seen two issues and received Hugo nominations in 1987 and 1992. I also rejoined SAPS and FAPA, two of the apas I'd been in during the '60s, and am still active in both of them. I've been the Secretary-Treasurer of FAPA, fandom's oldest apa, since 1986. I'm also in a couple of small, monthly invitational apas. So I must be nuts to take on SNAPS as well, but here I am.

In 1989 fandom awarded me the honor of being that year's TAFF delegate. My trip took me to Jersey in the Channel Islands, just fourteen miles off the coast of France, to a British National Convention (Eastercon). At about 800 attendees, it seemed small to me but it was apparently one of the larger Eastercons. I also traveled considerably in England and Wales, mostly by train except for one memorable drive from Bristol to Llangorse, Wales. My trip also included a flight to Northern Ireland, where I spent several days with Walt and Madeleine Willis, also visiting with James and Peggy White.

Though once a Southern semi-gaffiate myself, I purposely made no in-person contact with fandom while I was living in Tennessee. I used to haunt The Great Escape, a huge comics emporium on outer Broadway in Nashville, during my last couple years on The Farm (it was where I could get *Howard the Duck* comics laid away for me to pick up on my occasional Nashville journeys). Sometimes I would overhear snatches of conversation that lead me to believe the speakers might possibly be connected with some aspect of fandom, but I was being really underground then and never tried to join in any of these wisps of potential fannishness.

[The above appeared in a zine I did for the thirtieth anniversary SFPA mailing in 1991 when I was on the waiting list. In 1997 I finally attained membership after allowing myself to bounce up and down that waiting list a few times and introduced myself again. It's somewhat repetitive in places of the introduction above, but I literally have only a few hours to get this to Arnie in time for the mailing.]

I got into fandom in the summer of 1958, discovering it through Robert Bloch's column in *Imagination*, and published my first fanzine late that year. I had just turned sixteen. I was super-active, putting out nearly 800 pages of fanzines in my first three years. My first apa was SAPS, which I joined in 1959, and I came close to being an omniapan by the early '60s (when there were only a relative

handful of apas and it was possible). Later on in the '60s (when they became The Sixties), I slowed down considerably, mostly publishing an annual FAPazine to preserve my membership with a few extras for friends. Everyday life in the San Francisco Bay Area was more demanding of my time and attention and, let's face it, more diverting than a constant round of mailing comments.

In March 1969 I began attending a weekly meeting that called itself "Monday Night Class" after the night it occurred. Several fans had told me about Monday Night Class: Andy Main and Bill Meyers – the latter a former Southern fan, who published a handful of issues of *Spectre* in the late '50s while living in Chattanooga. Through happenstance I ended up at the first of these to be held at the Straight Theater on Haight Street in San Francisco. These were conducted by one Stephen Gaskin, who had been a teaching assistant at San Francisco State (his claim to fame was being Hayakawa's TA) before discovering LSD and dropping out.

Monday Night Class caught my attention. I kept going week after week, and before long I had as many friends through this medium as through Bay Area fandom, my other social outlet at the time. Stephen went on a cross-country speaking tour in 1970, doing his own driving in a school bus converted to a camper, and followed by numerous other homes on wheels populated by a couple hundred people. I didn't go on that, but after they returned to San Francisco and then left again to find land in Tennessee – that being the friendliest place they'd encountered on "the Caravan" – my girlfriend (soon to be wife, and six months pregnant) and I got an old San Francisco mail truck together and headed out to find them.

We ended up being pioneers on The Farm, a 1,700-acre "hippie" commune (though we called it a "spiritual community") outside Summertown, Lewis County, Tennessee, of which I imagine at least some of you have heard. (The county seat is tiny Hohenwald – a town which – I got the impression when I first saw it – had never recovered from the Great Depression.) Our first-born son was the second kid born on The Farm – in our mail truck with midwives. Because living there meant voluntary poverty and lots of work, I no longer had much money or time to engage in fanac, and one by one I was cut off most faneds' lists.

When I could, I checked out fan columns in the various prozines (usually only possible on Nashville runs) and noticed at one time someone was publishing a fanzine out of Loretto, Tennessee, not far from The Farm. I never looked up its editor. In the late '70s I began visiting The Great Escape, an SF and comics shop in Nashville near Vanderbilt. Sometimes I would buy science fiction, especially if a new Philip K. Dick paperback appeared, but mostly I indulged my affection for the *Howard the Duck* comics that were appearing. (I still love *Howard the Duck*.) I definitely saw fan types there – possibly even one or more of y'all – but avoided contact.

Life on The Farm was a form of science fiction in itself – reinventing society on an impoverished level in a rural part of the world's richest country. William Meyers ended up living there, too. (I called him Bill above, but he became William on The Farm in the same way I went from Bob to Robert.) Sometimes we would get together and laugh about how we'd more or less ended up in "the love camp in the



Me in 1980 at the American Booksellers Association convention in Chicago
(photo by Andy Porter)

Ozarks" of which the notorious Claude Degler wrote over half a century ago – though we were on the Highland Rim, not in the Ozarks. Close enough, we thought.

I stayed there until the summer of 1980 when – my marriage having broken up – I moved to Glen Ellen and began working with Paul Williams (the one who began *Crawdaddy!*) on his Entwhistle Books publishing venture. For five years one of my jobs on The Farm had been doing sales and promotion for their publishing wing, The Book Publishing Company, so I had lots of experience.

From my marriage, I have four sons, born in 1971, 1972, 1974 and 1976. Ben, the oldest, lives in the Mill Valley area with my first grandchild, a girl named Arianna born May 2, 1996. He runs a successful (so he tells me) travel Web site. The second, Arthur, also lives in Mill Valley and works with Ben. No. 3 son, Joseph, is getting by on his wits in the hills around Taos,

New Mexico, where he owns a passive solar house on a few acres outside town. And my youngest, Gabe, is living with his wife, Azure, near Santa Cruz where they bought a "manufactured" home a couple years ago. He works as a mortgage consultant these days, after years of being employed at Trader Joe's.

By the time you read this in the middle of October, Carol and I will have gone and returned from a ten-day trip to the southwest. We'll be leaving bright and early the morning of October 4th and going to visit my son Joseph, who lives in a solar house outside Taos, New Mexico. We will have jammed on the first day, driving just over six hundred miles in order to get out of California quickly, and will spend the first night in Kingman, Arizona (too tired after all that driving to connect up with Earl Kemp, alas).

After that our pace will slow considerably. The second day out we'll enjoy a leisurely drive through the Hopi and Navajo reservations, making stops at places like Old Oraibi, Keams Canyon, and the Hubbell Trading Post at Ganado. We'll spend the second night at Gallup, New Mexico.

The following day we'll visit the Zuni and Acoma reservations before ending up at the end of the day at Joseph's. We'll spend the weekend with him and his new girlfriend (who we haven't met), and among other things will visit the Millicent Rogers Museum collection of native American arts and crafts in Taos.

On Monday we'll drive off to Santa Fe, stopping on our way to visit the Santa Clara and San Ildefonso reservations, and beginning to take in the Four Museums clustered together in Santa Fe as well as some of the town itself. We'll spend the

night there and finish with the museums on Tuesday. Then we'll drive to Chinle, Arizona, where we'll spend the night and take a jeep tour down into Canyon de Chelly the following morning. After that, we'll begin making our way home. We haven't planned our final couple of days, but don't think we'll experience any difficulties in finding excellent diversions along the way.

What these various reservations have in common is that they all have a long-standing and excellent tradition of their members producing excellent arts and crafts—pottery, stone carving, weaving, etc. The most painful part of the trip will be resisting numerous urges to buy some wonderful craft item, but we really can't afford to *and* we don't have room for more. Somehow, though, I suspect we'll get *something*.

Checking the ten-day weather forecasts on-line this morning, there appears to be a possible rain cloud hanging over the trip starting the weekend of October 7th and 8th, when some rain is forecast in Taos. That won't stop us, but that the forecast includes possible thunderstorms two days before our Canyon de Chelly tour and possible showers the day of the tour *could* cause it to be cancelled due to road conditions down in the canyon. Or, more to the point, the absence of roads. There's this explanation at the tour's Web site:

"Canyon De Chelly has no conventional roads. Sandy washes that are often the beds of flowing streams serve as major thoroughfares. Unmaintained trails often cut across wooded regions. Private SUVs should be in excellent mechanical condition and not prone to overheating. High clearance is a plus, since often you will travel through ruts created by another concessionaire's 2½-ton trucks. Knowledgeable guides are essential. It is not unusual for a vehicle to be trapped in the wet sand when water is flowing. This is caused when unseen water flowing beneath the surface of the sand is forced up to the surface when it meets an impenetrable rock formation. The upward moving water suspends the sand grains and they no longer can support weight, thus forming a pocket of what is commonly referred to as 'quicksand.' Extraction is costly. Our 'wet-season' usually runs from February to May. Ice may coat the canyon floors from December through February. In past years, the advent of winter often closed the Canyon to tourism. The weather in the last few winters, however, has been extremely mild. The Canyon has remained open all year. Inquire of the conditions before you depart. Sudden summer thunderstorms may produce flooding although the rain is miles away in the mountains. It is not unknown for the canyon bottom to go from almost dry, to four feet deep, then again become driveable before the day is over."

We're obviously hoping the weather changes!