



Neil Gaiman & killer tomato

Charles Fuller: An interesting read about volunteer tomatoes, a phenomenon with which I'm well familiar from a variety of settings both urban (Sonoma County) and rural (Tennessee). I've never had any "winter over," though, and live to produce another year. Perhaps if I'd been into vegetable gardening when I lived in Los Angeles I would have.

Shelby Vick: "I've run into problems with *Planetary Stories* and fanzines. Usedta be (at least, as my faulty memory tells me) a zine editor had the power to make changes, whether in a contributor's piece or from items artists sent in...these days it seems to have changed. Touch one line on a drawing or in an article, and the contributor blows their tops! 'Artistic temperament' and all that. Am I misremembering that badly?"

No, not at all—you're apparently dealing with a more prickly lot of contributors than you did in the '50s when you were publishing *Confusion*. I seldom have this problem myself, and it's my policy to send back contributions after I've had my editorial way with them to make sure I haven't overstepped my contributors' bounds of how much they'll tolerate. Almost no one has complained, and some have thanked me for improving their work. The only exception I can recall is a somewhat amusing one. Back in the day when articles were still coming on paper and had to be retyped by the editor, I once accidentally dropped a line from an article by the late rich brown. The funny thing is, due to the exact nature of the drop I couldn't tell that I'd done it when I read the file (obviously not a line reading from his manuscript). But when I sent it back to rich for checking, he blew his stack. He upbraided me up one side and down the other, and wanted to withdraw the article. It took a little back and forth correspondence (in letters on paper) to make it clear to him that I'd made an honest mistake, and he ultimately relented. And of course, later we were both able to laugh at the situation.

I suspect I probably watch more TV than you do—and my watching doesn't include shows such as *Jeopardy* or *Wheel of Fortune* that you mention (though I have had times in the past of watching them off and on)—but I'm in complete sync with your writing, "I have absolutely no idea what is



going on with *American Idol* or *Dancing With The Stars*, and couldn't care less." I've never even heard of the latter show. I resonated, though, with your excitement in telling Joe Green that there are 150 free movies on demand available on Comcast—Carol and I watch a lot of movies from a variety of sources and from all eras. We especially love the "pre-Code" films of the early '30s that show up frequently on TCM.

You summarize the *big* difference between you and Joe quite well: "Joe sees no future in fanzines because he can't make money there. Me? Egoboo is sufficient remuneration for me." Me, too, but it's a shame he's so narrowly focused he can't do both. As you know, some fans do and have done.

I liked this observation: "Back in the '40s a good collection of lettering guides, shading plates and styli would probably have cost—converting from dollars of the '40s to dollars of today—about the same as Adobe Photoshop." I'd never thought of it that way, but you're right! It's been decades since my own collection of such things got away from me, but I inherited Terry Carr's much larger set of them and keep it all in the same cigar box he used to. I just pulled it out and did a quick inventory: there are 25 lettering guides, four shading plates, fifteen styli, four burnishers and three shading wheels. If you priced them out at three '40s bucks apiece and applied inflation, you could buy the *full* version of Photoshop and probably have change left over.

"Whaaaa. . . ? TWO 160GB harddrives? Here I thought that going from 120GB to 160 was a great increase!" Two would be a lot if I had different stuff on each of them, but as I pointed out parenthetically in the paragraph you quoted (in part) each of them has the same information. One lives on my desk, the other in the car.

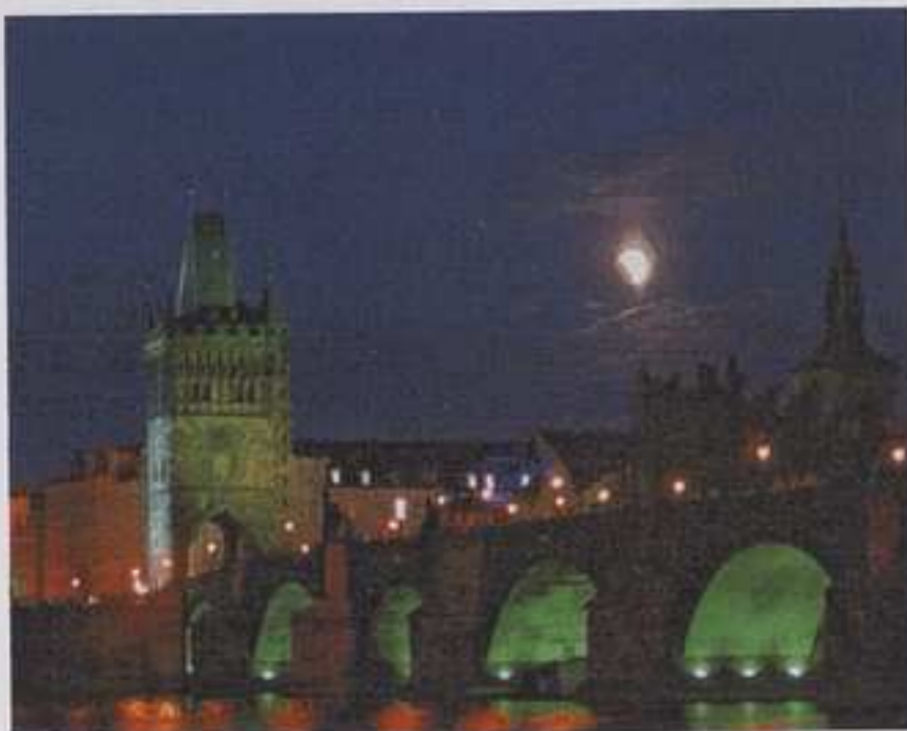
To Uncle Johnny you write, "I like (you may shudder) Frankie Laine, Tennessee Ernie Ford, Les Paul and Mary Ford." I'm more or less neutral about Frankie Laine and Tennessee Ernie because the only songs of theirs I can remember



Scrivner's Drive-In - 1958

from my teen years are, respectively, "Most Happy Fella" and "Sixteen Tons." But I loved "How High the Moon" when it came out in 1951 (when I was only nine) and years later I discovered the flip side of the single, "Walking and Whistling Blues," done by Les as a solo instrumental with whistling. It was the theme music for disk jockey Art Laboe's late afternoon radio show in Los Angeles—a show on which he was live from Scrivner's Drive-In on Crenshaw taking requests and dedications from people





Lunar Eclipse over Prague - May 2004

sitting in their cars chomping on burgers and onion rings. (For more on him, check out http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_Laboe.) About five years ago I won a set of cassette tapes of their work on eBay and enjoy playing his intricate and fast-paced instrumentals in the car.

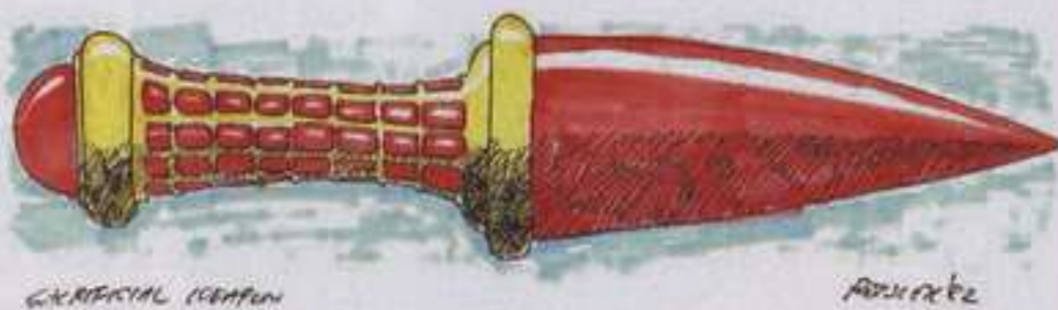
R-Laurraine Tutihasi: "Did any of you get to see the lunar eclipse last month?" No, it was too cloudy here—as I suspected leading up to it. So I saw it only on TV and the Web. I didn't feel bad about missing it in person because I've seen them before.

"We signed up for Mike's company's retiree health insurance plan in December. When we received a bill for January, it was three times the amount he had been quoted. He later had it reduced, as the company had made an error. However it appears that retirees that signed up in January or after have to pay that exorbitant amount. Here in Arizona it would be very much less expensive to pay for health insurance through AARP." It's a good thing you didn't procrastinate!

To Uncle Johnny you write, "PBS and NPR stations do not run ads and are largely supported by donations." That's not entirely true, since they accept corporate contributions and in return offer what might be called "uncommercials" to those entities. The lead-in to the PBS *News Hour* has a full minute of those plus lists of "lesser" contributors, which we skip through with two 30-second advance clicks of our remote.

To Arnie you note, "Perhaps more members should comment while they read, as I do. I always have my next issue open at the same time as I'm reading the mailing." That's how I do it, too, using the clipboard feature on my Acrobat to cut out the things on which I'm commenting so that reference to prior mailings isn't necessary for readers of the current one. Because I don't print out the mailings and therefore there's no way to make marginal notations (well, there is in Acrobat but I choose not to use it), this is the most efficient way to write comments.

John Nielsen Hall: In a depressed mode you write, "Despite the new lease of life that the internet has given fanzine fans, its hard to see what's going to happen after all of us old farts are gone. Unless Chris Garcia starts having babies as quickly as he produces issues of *Drink Tank*, there are not going to be any fanzine fans left in another thirty years. No more fan writing, no more Rotsler fillos, no more Harry Bell covers, no more Roy Kettle, Rob Jackson, no more



WAHF's, no more four letter flights of fancy from Graham Charnock and no more boring old tripe from me. As I drove home, I reflected on the next thirty years, and I cannot see how it will get any better. True, fanzine fandom is more an Anglo-American thing these days, and there may be hope lurking in corners I know not of." I know not those non-English speaking corners, either, so far as fanzine fandom is concerned. But it seems to me you may well be right. It could be that fanzine fandom arising out of science fiction is a phenomenon that was linked to a specific set of circumstances, and that the playing field has now changed irrevocably. The urge to self-publish predates fanzine fandom by ages, though, and I suspect it will continue—just not in the form we know and love.



"In order to insert a little colour into the proceedings, I have nicked an idea from Robert Lichtman, and scanned a few CD covers that happen to be lying around. They bear no relation to the text, but then neither do old pulp novels or fanzines. They are just good to look at." For the most part that's my aim in including them, too, but sometimes they illustrate something in the surrounding text—either directly or tangentially.

"The time it takes to get from London out to the deeper parts of Wales is more a reflection on the ludicrous hotch-potch that is our railway system rather than the distance." Is it worse now that it's been privatized? I found it quite efficient and at times even charming when I was TAFF delegate in 1989. When I went to visit Mal & Hazel Ashworth from London, I was first on one of the bullet trains, then on a regular train, and finally on a truly antique small train whose coaches looked for all the world like a horse-drawn conveyance perched atop a set of train wheels and which was very slow. My own trip to Wales started from Bristol and was the only time during my visit that I drove. I borrowed a stodgy Hillman from Peter Fred Thompson (then-husband of Christina Lake) and headed out across a toll bridge on ever smaller and narrower highways until I reached Llangorse, where I visited with one Mike Christie. This was a town of what appeared to be maybe a couple hundred people, and yet it had at least five or six pubs. One of them provided me the best beer of my entire trip—their own house brew—and a lunch of "buckwheat crumble" that was vegetarian and tasty and served in a large tureen-like bowl.



Ditmar, of course

John Purcell: To me you write, "Since you use artwork by Ditmar to close out this current contribution, here's one from the stash Dick sent me earlier this year." I have 490 files of his work and am not likely to run out any time soon. I wonder how many



Ray Nelson, Frank Lunney & me - 1993

we have in common.

“I know something else that can happen in less than one second: losing all of the work you’ve done on a fanzine, forcing you to re-do the whole frigging zine **ALL OVER AGAIN!!!!** *aarrggghh....* Arnie and the other faneds in this apa can tell you all about that.” Having had this happen to me on even a few occasions—not only with fanzines but also letters and e-mails—I’m an obsessive believer in saving as you go along. In composing this, I save

at least after each person’s comments (and more frequently on long ones).

“For me, doing fanac is a hobby interest. I try not to spend too much time at it... Fanac can overpower you if you are not careful... So I enjoy my fanac nowadays as a diversion, as something that can keep me sane when compared to the frenetic pace of the daily grind at school and raising a family at home. Being a parent is a damned hard job!” As you write elsewhere, you’ve heavily involved in career and family pursuits—and as such I can well understand your desire to limit fanac. Being retired and with no family to raise, I’m enjoying the freedom to spend as much time as I wish on fanac. It’s a pleasure to be in contact with friends all over the place, and because I’m focused and well organized I give the appearance of being much more active than I actually am. Fanzines are a large part of my reading, but I also read books (both fiction and non-fiction) and magazines (including many items in the *New Yorker* and *Harper’s* that Carol flags for me), watch movies, garden some, and of course all the usual stuff of real life.

I hope you turn out to be wrong about attending Corflu. Of course, by the time you read these words we’ll both know the answer.

Teresa Cochran: I really enjoyed your Catalina trip report! Amazingly, although I lived in Southern California from 1950 to 1965 I never bothered to go there. The closest I ever came was when “26 Miles” by the Four Preps was on the hit parade. (“Twenty-six miles across the sea / Santa Catalina is a-waitin’ for me / Santa Catalina, the island of romance / Romance, romance, romance...”)

James Taylor: How interesting that you might get a job working at/for Zappos! I’m well familiar with them as a source for my beloved Clark’s Air Movers; their prices are somewhat below those in retail stores, plus there’s no sales tax and free shipping, and I’ve gotten a couple pairs from them over the years. (I’ve been wearing Air Movers since at least the early



'90s as my primary footwear—the most comfortable shoes I've ever owned. However, I notice from the comments on Zappos' Website that they're now made in China—not in England or Portugal as previously—and many are unhappy with them.) Of them you write, "Once I'd waited out the 120 or so day waiting period I would get company health benefits. It's a very casual work environment for a cube farm, Lax dress code, free lunch and vending machines." Do I correctly assume that this "cube farm" is in Las Vegas? How does an "online shoe salesman" actually do his job? Is this code for processing orders and answering questions?



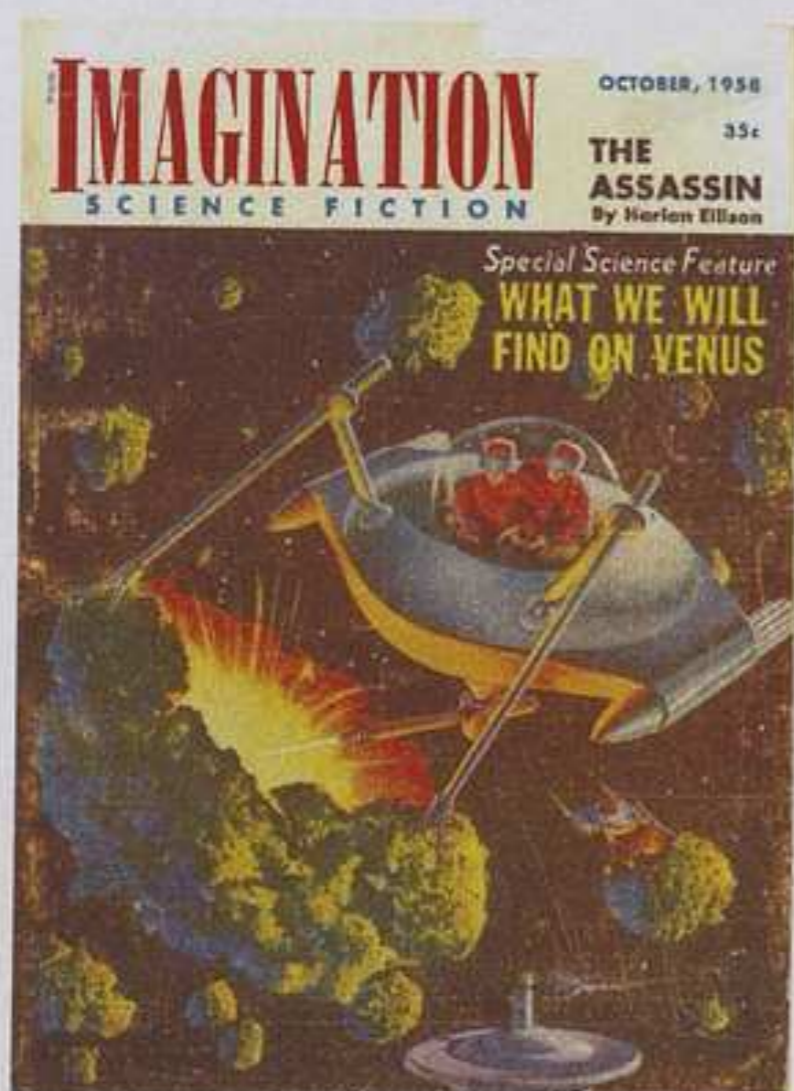
To me you write, "I also use Word Perfect for some issues of *der Fliegender Hollander*, using Open Office for the rest. Recently got the gift of a laptop from my sister to facilitate my joining her in the exacting world of currency arbitrage and it has Word 2007 on it. Teresa used it for current issue of *Bat Signals* and I may try it out next time myself." As you know from my frequent disparaging comments, I dislike Word and only use it when necessary (I have the version that's part of Office 2000). For \$25 (or less) including shipping you can get a copy of WordPerfect 12 (what I have) on eBay from numerous sources. It's a far superior program in every way.

Arnie Katz: Thank you for pushing the next SNAPS deadline into May! That was very thoughtful of you.

Although of course none of it was alien to me as a fanzine publisher going back to 1958, still I enjoyed reading your blow by blow description of how paper fanzines were done in olden times. I never owned a mimeograph—my mimeo'd fanzines back then were run off on the LASFS's Gestetner or Rex Rotary (although the very earliest ones were done on a church A.B. Dick courtesy of a non-fan friend, an arrangement that ended when some of the other members of the church ran across and read crudsheets I'd left behind and disapproved), and *Frap* was done for me by Don Fitch, who also partially angeled its production—so I never got into cutting up stenciled artwork received from artists with multiple drawings on a single page. I *did* get good at keeping stencils in the correct position in a typewriter after application of corflu, though. Most of my fanzines were done using ditto machines. The earliest issues of *Psi-Phi* (my first genzine) were



Cover artwork by Ted White



run off on my coeditor Arv Underman's father's hand-fed ditto machine. He was a paper salesman, used the ditto for producing price sheets, and had a huge stash of high-quality paper (including slick coated litho paper and 11x17 sheets we used for wraparound covers on the first six issues, running them carefully through the machine four times). After Arv went off to Stanford and I continued doing *Psi-Phi*, its seventh (and final genzine) issue was done on a decrepit old ditto machine I bought from Andy Main for only seven dollars, including shipping from Santa Barbara, when he upgraded to a better one. That machine's feed mechanism never worked right, so in the interests of not generating vast piles of crudsheets I hand-fed everything. Those were the days (of great dedication to the hobby).

"I'm going to vote for the Democratic Party candidate for President. After eight miserable, scandal-ridden years of the Bush regime, that's a given." It is here, too. Unlike you I didn't have a period of supporting Hillary Clinton, although if Barack Obama doesn't get the Democratic nomination I will hold my nose and vote for her.

"I just celebrated the 45th anniversary of my introduction to Fandom." My 50th anniversary is in July, in which month in 1958 I sent off for my first fanzines guided by Robert Bloch's recommendations in the final "Fandora's Box" column in the final issue of *Imagination* (which I bought mainly because the cover blurb—"Special Science Feature: What We Will Find On Venus"—captured my attention). Like you, there are people I miss and appreciation for those still active and with us—including, most definitely, your estimable self.

Joyce Katz: "Last week my mouse completely died. This was a new one on me—I had never had a mouse fail me before, and it took a day to figure out that it wasn't the computer itself, but the mouse that was giving me such fits." Coincidentally, I had to replace my mouse last month, too. I've had a Logitech MX700 cordless optical mouse for quite a while, but after one fall too many something inside broke so that the scroll wheel no longer worked. At first I thought a setting in the mouse software might



Logitech MX700 in dock/receiver

have gone wonky, but unfortunately that wasn't the case. What I like about this particular mouse is that it takes rechargeable batteries that are charged by docking the mouse when not being used in the receiving station, which doubles as a battery charger (it has a cord leading to a wall outlet). I've only had to replace the batteries once in the many years I've had the mouse, and those were the cheap original Brand X variety that came with it. When I went shopping for a new I was very disappointed that the MX700 no longer existed and that all similar mice took regular batteries *and* relied on a tiny USB receiver that could not be used with a PS2 adapter. My computer is old and has no spare USB ports. One of them is hooked up to my color laser printer, the other to a hub with four ports all of which are in use. I despaired until I checked eBay, where I found a place about 25 miles away that was selling "open box" MX700s. Because I figured they wouldn't be available forever, I got three of them. Now I feel truly mouse-secure!



Navajo "Duintwater" colors

"But even more than that, I've been irritated to almost the point of rudeness by cries about the price of rooms now that the room block reservation date has past. Oddly enough, it's not even the people trying to obtain the rooms that have been annoying; it's the hue and cry raised by one or two fans who apparently are just trying to make me feel bad." Like you I have no sympathy for the fans who couldn't be bothered to make their hotel arrangements during the extremely lengthy period the Corflu rates were available, and as for those "one or two fans" I think we should take out a contract on them. No, not really, but it would make a good faan fiction story (cue Arnie here).



"Lace interests me, and I've been thinking of writing an article explaining the different kinds of lace from around the world." That would be interesting. I knew of lace at a very early age, because my Hungarian grandparents used it liberally in their home decor.