

So, you may be wondering, when was the first issue? It was a long time ago. *Amnesia* No. 1 was published for distribution in the August 1961 Shadow FAPA mailing and to a few friends. It was four pages, ditto'd, with a multi-colored ATom cover and a Bjo cartoon inside. Its contents are best forgotten, being pretty minor stuff. I don't have my original personal file copies of my fanzines, but if there was a second issue I've forgotten it, ahahahahaha. Anyway, I like the name.

I'd be the first to admit that my performance during my first year or so of Apathy membership has been shameless, also shameful, and I should be shamefaced. However, fannish guilt rests easy on my shoulders, for after all I must by now have joined the ranks of "those TAFF winners who never wrote a report" in the eyes of some fen. I expect Harry Cameron Andruschak, Brian Earl Brown, or someone else of similar ilk will be trashing me real soon now. I can live with all that.

Why, only last summer I was telling any fan who would listen that if you'd told me years ago that I'd be in an apa whose most active participant was Alexei Panshin, I would have punched you in the nose. It's not that I haven't received and read the mailings with a certain enthusiasm. Some of them even have check marks and indecipherable notations in the margins. I've written many a mailing comment in my mind, of course, but I've had too many other things going on, fannishly and otherwise, to shoehorn both time and inclination into my personal activity roster.

And anyway, I promised Steve I wouldn't let Apathy interfere with getting *Trap Door* out, and I haven't.

Although I recognize everyone's name on the roster, there are some of you I don't really know and don't recall ever meeting, namely Colleen Brown, Chris Couch, Vera Matich, Susan Palermo, Lou Stathis and Will Straw. Of this lot, I know that Colleen was married to rich at one time; that Chris is one of the many Couches who have graced fandom with their comfortable presence; that Lou Stathis is an old friend of Paul Williams; and that I've particularly enjoyed Will's articles I've run across in '70s fanzines. I recall meeting Paul Novitski in Seattle in 1978, when my ex-wife and I came to town to sell the books of *The Farm*. We stayed with John D. Berry and Paul. Sorry, Paul, but I don't remember anything about you. I suspect the only time I ever met Alexei was at the '68 Worldcon, but I think I was in a "secret apa" with him briefly back around 1969 or 70 during my final gasps of fannish activity before moving to Tennessee and entering a decade-long near-fafiation.

For those few who don't know me, here's a brief bio: 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. (My parents had moved from my birthplace, Cleveland, to Los Angeles in 1951. I continued to live there 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 UCLA I returned to the Bay Area, settling in San Francisco just in time for the very beginnings of the Hippie Era, in which I participated in my own modest fashion. I'd seen fanzine review columns before '58, in yellowing and crumbling issues of *Amazing* from the 1940's I perused 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* No. 24, *Grue* No. 29 and *A Bas* No. 10 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. Old habits die hard—35 years and running!

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 culled from the Bloch columns and from the letter and fanzine review sections of the dozen or so fanzines I'd received up to that point. To our 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 (and two more later on for FAPA), though Arv dropped out after the sixth issue when he left Los Angeles to attend university in the Bay Area. (I lost touch with him completely, but in the '80s sometime my mother sent me a clipping of him. He was pictured holding the rattlesnake left in some unfortunate soul's mailbox by a Synanon hit person. The connection was that Arv had become a physician and he treated Synanon's snakebitten victim.)

During this time I began joining apas and after *Psi-Phi* folded I published most of my fanzines for several years primarily for apas but, in some cases, with outside circulation in order to maintain trades, etc. In those days there was only a handful of fannish apas, and gradually I became a member of them all. 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. This was largely thanks to a dedicated hardcore of contributors which included Greg Benford, Norm Clarke, Calvin Demmon, Ray Nelson and Elmer Perdue. I even managed to resurrect (for one installment) an old *A Bas* column, "How The Other Half," by Rich "Alex" Kirs. (Kirs and I corresponded for a time following a lengthy meeting when he was visiting Southern California. We met at a sleazy Inglewood motel, where we conversed for many hours by typer.) Most of the artwork was done by Steve Stiles and Ray Nelson. *Frap* 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 more interesting genzines that showed up (mostly the faanish ones published by old friends—like Ted & John's *Egoboo* and Terry's *Mota*).

In the spring of 1971, I moved with my then-new, now-ex wife to an intentional alternative community in Tennessee called "The Farm," founded by followers of hippie guru Stephen Gaskin. Four children, all boys, were born during my stay on The Farm, which lasted until 1980. Some six months after the final break-up of my marriage, I returned to California, accepted a job offer from Paul Williams, and settled in the small Northern California town of Glen Ellen. When I went to The Farm, 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. I came to consider him a fannish saint. My main contact with fandom during most of the '70s was getting John's fanzines and gossip-filled letters from Grania Davis. My major/only fan activity during that decade

consists of a couple of longish letters in his zines.

When I returned to California, I began working with Paul Williams in his Entwhistle Books enterprise. I once again began seeing fanzines. Ted White and Dan Steffan began publishing *Pong* in the fall of 1980 and sent it to Paul. I avidly read the early issues that arrived at Paul's door. They were fannish as hell (you never forget what "fannish" is like) and it was interesting to note that while many of the players were old familiar names, there were many new players as well. I began trying to figure out what was going on. Before long it was too much to continue to experience only vicariously, and I wrote a letter of comment. The rest, as they say, is fanhistory.

I've published fourteen issues of my current genzine, *Trap Door*, since 1983 and am currently working on the fifteenth. Most of you are on my mailing list, but if anyone who isn't wants to see a copy, please write to me directly. Besides publishing *Trap Door*, I've rejoined several apas I was active in during the '60s: FAPA (as mentioned before, and where I've been Secretary-Treasurer for many years) and SAPS. I'm also a member of another small invitational group, Lilapa (where I'm the "Goat," its equivalent of OE). This all keeps me adequately busy, fannishly speaking.

Not being quite ready to leap into anything as rash as mailing comments, I'm going to present here an article I wrote back in 1989. It originally appeared in somewhat different form in *Razbliuto* No. 7, my final publication before dropping out of the Intercourse apa. ("Razbliuto" is a Russian word meaning "the feeling one retains for someone he or she once loved.") No one in Apathy was in Intercourse then. I sent this version of it to Kristi Austin, who was talking about publishing a genzine back then. She never did, an unusual occurrence for me since everything I've sent out for publication elsewhere has always been accepted and appeared with reasonable promptness. Anyway, this piece has been orphaned on a disk since then.

My two children mentioned in the article are both five years older now. Some of the places I mention visiting on the trip are no longer in existence. This was the first time I wrote in fandom about Cantor's. But most significantly, a lot of the details concerning my parents have changed. I went through a few changes myself publishing this without an extensive rewrite, because my 1989 attitudes about my parents have been much modified by subsequent events. However, I chose neither to rewrite nor annotate the article and it is still exactly as I sent it to Kristi. I'll write more about my parents and the current situation regarding them following it. So, back to July '89....

My Westercon in 1989, as in many previous years of the decade, was brief and episodic. I went to Southern California primarily to visit my elderly parents for the first time in over three years. Two of my boys were with me, my oldest and youngest, Ben and Gabe. Going into the weekend, I had only the vaguest of ideas how things would flow and whether I'd make it to any of the con at all. My parents had indicated that they were treating various of us family members, as well as possibly my ex-mother-in-law, to a dinner at Cantor's, the justly famous huge Jewish deli, bakery and restaurant on Fairfax in Los Angeles. I hadn't been there since the late '60s, when its menu and my then new vegetarianism had a brief clash. The vegetables won. Now, in my new vegetarian-most-of-the-time way, I was looking forward to returning.

Unfortunately, for various reasons most of the potential attendees of this family reunion meal were unable to come. It shook down to being me and my kids, my brother John and Karen (his current girlfriend), and my parents. It was a great meal,

followed by a surprise. My oldest son, Ben, had turned 18 two days ago and my father would be 75 on July 4th. My father had arranged for a large cake, decorated with birthday messages for both Ben and him, to be brought out towards the end of the meal. Two waitresses – one of whom had an excellent voice and said to me afterwards she sang light opera in addition to waitressing – came out with the cake, candles ablaze, singing Happy Birthday. Between cake and dinner, we were all stuffed when we finally left Cantor's.

Earlier in the day Carol (my ex-mother-in-law) had come over to see us. She had also been invited to the meal, but was unable to attend because my parents insisted she not bring her mentally retarded thirtysomething son, Doug, who is usually pretty stomach-turning to be around when he's eating.

Carol was there (with Doug, who sat quietly listening to his Walkman) to see me and the boys, in case it was her only opportunity during our sojourn in the Southland, as well as to deliver some stuff for Lani, her daughter (my ex-wife), and pick up some stuff she'd inadvertently left while in our area several weeks ago for various graduations and which we'd hauled along. When she was getting ready to leave, I cornered her and asked if she had any interest in spending more time with the boys. I truthfully told her they were going nuts with boredom being at my parents' for longer than short bursts of time.

(My parents are more than a little peculiar. Going into the full details of that is outside of the purview of a Westercon report, but this is not *just* one of those and in order that this narrative make any sense at all, I should elaborate a little. Both of eastern European stock, they are pretty "old country," by which I mean they are narrow and fairly restricted in their beliefs and social interactions. They are also very Ruled By Their Stuff, of which they have mass quantities. My children dislike visiting them for long periods of time because they constantly either hover or worry out loud, or both, that the boys' movements in the house will result in broken kipple. The boys also don't like it that my parents don't Act Real. Now that all four are hulking teenagers, they've finally stopped with the horsey-ride and read-'em-a-story level of interaction – and now they seem at a loss for conversation with them. This translates into a lot of aimless small talk towards which the boys are polite but which they welcome the opportunity to depart from. For my own part, I think I lack strong family feelings towards them because of the repression I felt for the first 35 years or so of my life. I find their conversational range limited and am generally bored stiff after the first half hour or so of visiting with them. There's simply nothing much happening in their lives other than ongoing purchases of kipple to line their already overburdened hallways and walls. Though I don't spend much if any time when away from them brooding over my lack of warm affection towards them, it does come up whenever I visit. Sometimes I feel guilty that I don't feel more guilty about not having stronger positive feelings about them, but it doesn't last long.)

Through years of experience, Carol immediately understood and agreed to take the kids that evening, as soon as we would be able to leave following post-meal visiting at my parents' house. This gave me the opportunity I was seeking to take a break from my parents and go to the Westercon.

After dinner at Cantor's, we drove back to my parents'. My brother, whom I hadn't seen for a couple of years, wanted to get away with me so we could get sercon together. I suggested going to see the old junior high and high schools we had attended. These are in the middle of downtown Inglewood and appear pretty much unchanged from the time we attended in the late '50s and early '60s. The town has gone from being 99.9% lilywhite to about 80% black in the intervening years and so it was as a reminder of

this change that, as we stood outside the locked gates of the high school, we were checked out by a black Inglewood police officer in his cruiser. My brother looked paranoid but I shouted, "We're a couple of alumni checking out the old school!" and he went away. We drove through the heart of downtown Inglewood on Market Street, where we used to hang out after classes; it had changed almost beyond recognition, with only the stationery store still surviving from my youth.

To my parents, John is the black sheep of the two of us, and although he lives closer he keeps contact with them to a minimum because he finds it so unpleasant. Today was the first day he'd visited them in about two years, he told me as we drove slowly up Market Street (it was very congested, something true of all of Southern California). We talked about their state of health and well-being, our own respective personal situations, etc. Eventually we headed back because he was concerned about leaving Karen to fend for herself with them all that time. Actually, upon our return we learned that Karen and my boys had kept the folks well-occupied the entire time we were gone. We all sat around together on the back patio for another hour or so and then John and Karen made their goodbyes and split. Since it was by then after 7:00 and since I knew from the evening of our arrival that by 8:00 they would be settled into watching TV for the evening, I suggested to the boys that we should get going as well. They leapt at the suggestion to pack up their stuff for their stay at Carol's.

Naturally I wonder if my parents think *I'm* weird for seldom spending more than two or three hours in a row with them before taking a break. As I said above, after a short while they're reduced to small talk and I just get bored stiff. They don't seem comfortable around people in general except in measured doses. When they tell me of their meager social life, it consists of a very few interactions with their neighbors and rare visits from distant relatives. When I was growing up in their home, I remember just one couple that used to come and visit them and that maybe three or four times a year. They never visited anyone except that couple, and this rarely. (Both halves of that couple are now deceased.) Other than that, we visited various relations living in the greater Los Angeles area. Back then, I had grandparents, a great-aunt and -uncle, various uncles, aunts, and an increasing amount of cousins and nephews. Most of these are now either dead or disappeared. Anyway, what I'm driving at is that they appear to make few opportunities for socializing and thus are not even well-practiced.

When I was younger and into my adulthood, I would have political and social cause arguments with my father. A man who in his early working years was a CIO organizer, by the time I was of an age to discuss such matters with him, he had backtracked into a staunch rightwingedness. He was also quite a racist. I used to characterize my father as being "like Archie Bunker, only not funny." In more recent years he's eased off on his political opinions. He's now sorry he voted for Reagan; I don't know who he voted for last election. Since their neighborhood has filled up with middle class blacks, he has now had more opportunity for interaction and has seen firsthand that blacks are just like us white folks with all the same diversity. Still, I tend to avoid discussion in these areas with him these days, not wanting to stir him up.

I think I may tend to overdraw my parents' strangeness somewhat. Upon examination, their stuff is the stuff of many members of society. Doubtless much of this would apply to many of your parents as well. One could perhaps characterize them as typical Americans, not quite Ugly but not far off the mark. Anyway, this is drifting off-course.

Maybe, I like to think, they enjoy the break from us we provide, too, for a return to their normal routine of life. (At their age, they have settled into a definite rut.) Whatever, it was with

great whoops and hollers of relief (once out of earshot) that the boys and I set off around 7:30 Saturday evening to travel first to Fullerton, where Carol lives, and then me alone on to Anaheim and the Westercon. I was much pleased upon arriving in Fullerton to learn that Carol was eager to keep the boys and would do so until around 6:00 p.m. Sunday evening. From her place, I called the Magic Carpet Motel, where Art Widner, Bryan Barrett and Lucy Huntzinger were sharing a room. They weren't in; I left a message and said I'd call again later. Spending about half an hour visiting with Carol—she's got her little ways, too, such as being a Jesus freak, but is a great relief to visit with after my parents—I excused myself and high-tailed out of Fullerton to the convention.

During the 1984 Worldcon, held in the same area, I discovered that one could park without being towed away in the parking lot of the Quality Inn, a large motel/restaurant/gift shop complex next to the Marriott. Checking their lot, I found that there were numerous available parking spaces. I selected one off in a corner and locked up the car. It was just shy of 9:00 p.m. and, not having taken time to refer to a recent *Locus* for complete information about the convention, I headed off to the huge convention center complex adjacent to the Hilton, which is itself across the street from the Marriott. Arriving at the north end of the complex just in time for an unobstructed view of fireworks which had begun to be shot off at Disneyland across the way, I settled down from my day with my parents and my trip on the freeways of Southern California to watch the fireworks. It was a pleasure to be watching fireworks that were purely commercially motivated rather than commemorating the founding of a country in which abortion is now once again restricted while local and national "patriotic" yokels make political hoo-haw over the flag as a religious object.

After the fireworks I determined that the Westercon was not happening at either the Convention Center or the Hilton. I crossed over to the Marriott to have a look and, of course, there it was with all its telltale signs (the posters on the wall announcing parties, the little stacks of printed matter everywhere). I put on two buttons I had brought with me—my "TAFF Winner" button and my membership button from Contrivance—and walked inside. The masquerade was going on and I ducked in to have a look. Finding it incredibly boring and tedious after only a few minutes, I headed out again. I found a pile of various issues of the convention daily newsletter on a counter and picked them up. On another counter I found stacks of copies of various books published by the now defunct Bluejay. Most of them were unknown to me but I did pick up a copy of Edgar Pangborn's classic *A Mirror for Observers*. I folded the con papers into the book so that I could easily refer to the listing of parties supposed to be taking place that night. They were all being put on by groups bidding for various conventions. Still not running into anyone I knew, I headed off to see if anything was happening at any of the parties.

They all had about six people in attendance—the organizers and their friends, no doubt—and as I passed them, some of the people beckoned and shouted for me to come in. Not recognizing anyone, and not wanting yet to get into conversation with likeable strangers (or even unlikable ones), I kept moving. As I passed by the door of the room in which the Orange County stf club was holding its party, I paused as I heard a wisp of conversation about "Orange County authors." Never myself thinking of Orange County as actually *being* anywhere in and of itself, it boggled me to hear to the unseen speaker referring to Greg Benford as an "Orange County author."

Striking out on finding anything or anyone immediately interesting at all of the parties I could locate, and learning in the course of doing so that the hotel floor plan and room numbering system was quite bizarre, I headed back down to the area of the

masquerade. It was just letting out and people in and out of costume were heading off in all directions. I finally located someone I knew when Milt Stevens appeared out of the crowd. We spoke but briefly when he announced that he had been on his way to the toilets and urgently departed. I continued to filter through the crowd but didn't see anyone else I recognized. Taking time while pondering the likelihood of my running into *anyone* I knew at this Westercon (beyond Milt Stevens) to observe one of the slimmer and nuder of the masquerade women pass slowly through the hall trailed by a huge throng of slack-jawed men, I began to get a little despondent over my prospects and the results so far. Only slightly daunted, in fairly short order I decided to try the parties again.

Most of them were still pretty small, but when I arrived at the party for San Francisco's 1993 Worldcon bid, I found not only considerably more people in general but also Don Fitch. After a few loud moments, we moved out onto the balcony overlooking the Hilton so we could talk without Don's having to turn his hearing aid up so high and could enjoy our respective smokes. We rambled for some time about the state of fandom past, present and future. I observed through the window that people came and went from the party with considerable rapidity. There was no else I recognized except for a fleeting glimpse of the newly shorn Marty Cantor, who was in and out so quickly I didn't even have time to consider whether or not I wanted to push my way through the crowds to call to him. It was a long way from the far end of the balcony, which is where we were.

When we'd begun to approach Using each other Up, Don and I set out to check out some of the other parties and seek new blood. Arriving back on the lobby floor from the San Francisco party, we encountered Art Widner about to get on the lift. We told him that we'd just been to the San Francisco party, which was where he'd been heading, and persuaded him to accompany us on a cruise of what else this Westercon had to offer party-wise. On the way up in the elevator to check out the parties, Art told me that Lucy was not feeling well that evening but hoped to be in the huckster room Sunday.

The first party we encountered was the Nashville in '94 Worldcon bid. This offered two bowls of lemonade, the darker of which had been laced with Jack Daniels ("the green label kind," said one of the hostesses, wanting to impress us; it didn't work on me since I recall the green label J.D. being the cheaper, less good kind when I lived in Tennessee). After I'd scooped up a cupful nonetheless, Art Widner loudly proclaimed that I wouldn't be having any since I don't drink. He took it reasonably well when I displayed my half-drained cup. It was just as well that it was green label Daniels, since Jack's distilled spirits are (in my humble opinion) best served straight, perhaps over a cube of ice. One could taste the J.D., but it was much muddied by the lemonade. Good, though.

We learned that the Nashville bid is for the convention center and hotels around Opryland. Remembering that Opryland is across the Cumberland River from most of central Nashville and not surrounded by very interesting stuff, I expressed the politically incorrect (in that room) opinion that Opryland might not be the best venue for a Worldcon. Naturally, I was swiftly rebutted by my hostess (Sue Francis of Louisville), who assured me that there *were* interesting things to do near Opryland. Though privately I believe as above, inasmuch as everyone was so darn nice and had real southern drawls such as I seldom hear anymore and their punch was really all right too, I didn't want to press matters concerning a convention I wouldn't expect to be attending, anyway, and presently we wandered out.

Eventually we returned to the San Francisco party, all the

others having proved deficient in some fashion. I should note that along the way I did run into obscure Long Beach fan, Noocey Alex Bratmon, with whom I drove north in the very early '60s to attend a "NonCon" at Joe and Felice Rolfe's old place in Palo Alto. We had borrowed Don Fitch's aging Hillman Minx, which blew a fan belt on the freeway near South San Francisco. We were both pretty surprised to see each other again. I also encountered a glum Marty Cantor in the hallway, who told me that he was out of work, had been job hunting for two weeks, and was pretty discouraged. He seemed uninterested in further conversation and moved on pretty quickly. At yet another point in our meanderings, I saw from a distance Walter Breen accompanied by what looked to be a 12-year-old boy in a costume involving a long clerical robe. This stirred up dusty old memories in me, needless to say.

Back at the San Francisco party, I met neofan C.S.F. Baden. He said he was commuting to the convention from his home in not so nearby Costa Mesa. I commiserated with him, having done the same commute myself during the 1984 Worldcon, when I stayed at a friend's house just off Harbor. There is no freeway linking Anaheim and Costa Mesa, so one is reduced to some fifteen miles of crawling up Harbor Boulevard. This is the Harbor of Philip K. Dick's later novels and it lives up to its billing, a true slice of Orange County life. (When I used to visit my ex-mother-in-law in Fullerton back in the '70s, I'd think of phoning up PKD, since I knew more or less exactly where he lived, but never did. I don't recall if his phone number was even listed.)

It was getting late, and my sense of chronology began to blur. At some point Walter Breen appeared in the room, *sans* boy. I engaged him in conversation and mentioned my earlier thoughts about times long past. He said that the boy had "adopted him as a godfather" and smiled—somewhat enigmatically, I thought. A moment later he told me that several years ago Donaho had called him up and wanted to apologize, to "get straight," for his actions of 1963-64. Walter found this rather incredible and said he found Donaho's actions from back then unforgivable. When I told him that Donaho had gone off drugs and drink some years ago and was doing the A.A. scene, and had lost a lot of weight, Donaho's efforts became more understandable to Walter. Still, he expressed no desire to make things up with Bill. We amused each other by recounting stories about times we'd seen Donaho break chairs by sitting on them. Walter told me of the huge coin encyclopedia of his that had been published in 1988, causing him apparently to have a new burst of popularity in coin fandom. He described his role in coin fandom as some sort of *enfant terrible*, their token hippie. He said he strictly limits his activity there, and does not act as a dealer at any time, only an appraiser.

Eventually Don Fitch went off to get some sleep. Widner and I agreed that we could well do the same and together we left. I joined the late night L.A. freeway crowd (a wild bunch, let me tell you!) for my commute back to my parents' house. I crawled into my sleeping bag at around 3 a.m. and didn't emerge again until nearly 10 in the morning.

Before coming down to Southern California, my father had told me during my visit he was going to make me an offer "I'd be stupid to refuse." He said he wouldn't talk on the phone about it, but wanted to discuss whatever it was in person. This Sunday morning was the time scheduled for that. Nonetheless, it was left up to me to cut through the unending small talk after breakfast. They'd previously told me they wanted me to be the executor of their estate, so I opened with questions designed to fill me in on what foundation had been laid for me to work from.

Not much, I found out. Both my mother and father have handwritten (or "holographic" as they put it) wills, each essentially leaving everything to the survivor. I learned that there was nothing

in either document covering the eventuality of them both going at once, say in an auto accident in their enormous 1964 Cadillac Sedan de Ville (a car my brother and Karen drooled over during that final hour of their visit), a not unlikely possibility, considering my father still drives around three to four hundred miles a month. There was something in the wills, apparently, to add my name to the house title along with the survivor. (And my father told me that the house is in my mother's name only these days.) They told me that dispersal of money to their grandchildren was covered in the wills ("all the usual sort of stuff," was how my dad put it) and then they led up to "the offer I'd be stupid to refuse."

With great seriousness, they told me they wanted me to come live with and take care whoever survived. (With emotion, my father said he especially wanted my mother to get to live out her years in their house. He didn't go into details, but I took it as an obvious signal that he expects to die first. Considering his general health compared to hers, this is a not unlikely scenario.) Upon the death of the survivor, the house and all its contents would become mine. I felt a little flush of excitement pass through me ("I can sell it and buy a house in Glen Ellen," I thought). But then came the punch line. They wanted to write into the survivor's will that the house would have to remain in the family *forever*. I couldn't sell it and transfer the wealth to a home elsewhere, just pass it on to another descendant later on. This brought up a whole bunch of old feelings about how I used to feel suppressed by them when I was growing up. It felt to me like the final act in that particular play. Without saying anything, as they spoke of this, their final wish, anger surged through me.

It was a moment for great diplomacy. As to the first point, I told them that I would have to see what else was happening in my life at the point it became necessary to figure things out. I said that if it was impossible for me to do it myself at that particular juncture, I would make the best arrangements possible depending on the condition of the survivor at that time. This spared them the spectacle of their suddenly crazed first born shouting, "What!? Are you crazy? Come live in Los Angeles with one of you, indefinitely?" and running out of the house ranting and raving. By speaking of "the best arrangements possible," I was going about as far as I was willing to go to indicate to them the unlikelihood of my giving up an unknown chunk of my life to come do this.

On the second point I was a little more blunt. I admitted that I liked their house, but that I couldn't imagine ever wanting to live in it because of its location. If I couldn't ever sell it, I told them, my choices would be two-fold: I could attempt to rent it out, hoping that I'd make good choices and it wouldn't end up getting trashed; or I could board it up, construct a tall chain link fence with electrified barbed wire along the top, close it off forever, and hope that the estate had enough money to pay the property taxes. Offering me the house under their desired ultimate circumstances, I made it clear, was not something that interested me whether I took care of one of them or not. They would have, I told them, to rethink their position on this and try hard to see my point of view.

No immediate response was forthcoming. I went on to other matters, like suggesting that rather than waiting until one of them died to deal with these eventualities, when ghod only knows if the survivor would still be competent to handle his or her own affairs, they should go see an attorney well-versed in real estate and inheritance law and sort it all out, and do so soon. Their handwritten wills, I said, were good as far as they went, but they needed to do more *now*, not at some nebulous later date. I reassured them that I was glad to serve as the final executor of their estate, but that I preferred for them to set their house in order early on, rather than relying on one of them being able to do it later as survivor. I *think* I may have made some impression on them in this regard.

The conversation drifted back to small talk eventually, and I excused myself to go off to the convention and later to pick up the boys and return. They wanted to know if we would have had dinner by the time we reappeared. I assured them it would be covered and hit the road at about 1:45.

Although this was the 4th of July weekend – notably one of the deadliest of any given year's holiday weekends – I was driving at offpeak periods. Traffic on the freeways was moderate for the Los Angeles area, which means there were a lot of cars on the road but they were fairly well spaced and all traveling at a median speed of around 65. This would be fine except for the crazies. Los Angeles has an incredibly higher percentage of crazed drivers roaming its freeways, individuals who are trying to maintain a speed of somewhere around 80 and who are not too subtle in their driving habits. One can be sure that one or more of these maniacs will be careening down the road in your vicinity every mile or two. You start to wonder when there's a lull. Despite these jokers, it was a quick and relatively painless drive from my parents' house to the convention hotel.

My primary destination was the huckster room and Lucy Huntzinger, who was working at Bryan Barrett's booth. As is the case at these modern conventions, the huckster room is guarded by minions seeking badges. Strolling through the entrance as though I belonged there, I was asked for mine by a costumed woman with a staff badge. Looking down and pointing at my Contrivance and "TAFF Winner" badges with a quizzical look on my face, I intoned gently, "I'm here to see one of the book dealers," and walked on. I heard her say "Okay" from about ten feet away as I headed for the far end of the room from the entrance. As I walked I thought, "If after thirty years of attending conventions and seldom paying for them I haven't mastered the art of Being There, how could I look myself in the face and consider myself a trufan?" It was a good moment.

Once in the back I began to browse. Here and there among the swords, jewelry, capes and film scripts, there are booths with actual scientifiction books and magazines. I always carry in my head a shortlist of books I would probably buy if I came across a suitable copy at a suitable price. If I am lucky, I will run across one or two of these at a typical huckster room. So I like huckster rooms; they're the stuff of wish fulfillment. Slowly I made my way up the aisles until finally, in a booth at the end of the corridor from the entrance so recently crashed, I found Bryan Barrett and his commodious booth. The person at the door who'd let me in had been replaced for now, Lucy was off getting some food, and Bryan and I settled down to gossip about British fandom and watch the people. Eventually Lucy showed up with food for Bryan. We settled down to yet more British fandom gossip.

This was leavened with crowd-watching and Lucy's occasional forays away from the booth to run credit card transactions through a nearby huckster's little table-top device to imprint the receipt. Having run the gauntlet to get into the huckster room, I didn't want to leave, for in the event I found nothing to do outside the room I didn't want to have to wangle my way in once again.

There were only two familiar faces in the crowd that entire afternoon. The first of these was the bearded mug of Arthur D. Hlavaty, who was incongruously the fan guest of honor. (Incongruous because he lives in the South and has never to my knowledge lived in California, so why make him FGoH at a west coast regional con?) He was moving quickly and we were unable to attract his attention. Later in the afternoon I spotted Rotsler walking in. At that particular time I was watching the booth because both Lucy and Bryan were elsewhere. He disappeared into the crowd but I knew I could at the very least spot him on the way out, since there was but one entrance/exit. As it turned out, I spotted

him in the center of the room later and made my way over to where he stood with and introduced me to his companions, a young lady and a man about whom I remember nothing. Our visit was brief but enjoyable.

Eventually it was time to leave and so I ventured out. One of the things I'd thought about doing was checking out the fan room. I headed there and got to the front door. The only person I saw inside was Bruce Pelz sitting at a table surrounded by piles of old fanzines. This was not quite what I had in mind. I had no desire that afternoon to get lured into the possibility of wanting to sort through and possibly buy old fanzines, and so I turned around, strode out of the hotel, and drove off into the Sunday afternoon traffic on Harbor Blvd. As far as I was concerned, the 42nd Westercon was history.

Picking up the boys, we headed back towards Los Angeles. I veered off the normal route back to my parents' house and went up to Fairfax, where we found an open bakery and purchased several loaves of good L.A. Jewish rye bread to take back to the Bay Area, where a source of bread of such quality is not known to me. We arrived back at my folks' house close to 9:00, watched a little TV with them, and then the boys and I went out on an hour-long walk around and through the immediate neighborhood. When we returned, the boys went off to bed and I stayed up with my folks watching the local news until it was over at 11:00. Then off to bed for us lot.

Fairly early the following morning was photo opportunity time. Ben and I have identical Kodak cameras. We herded my folks out into the back yard and took picture after picture of us and them in various combinations. After that, we visited a little longer and began packing up the car. I reminded my parents to think about the stuff we'd talked about Sunday morning, again getting no real response from them. Finally, all goodbyes behind us, we headed out.

My normal route out of town is to head for Venice and drive north along the waterfront, getting on the Pacific Coast Highway in Santa Monica and taking that long slow cruise through and beyond the Malibu – the ocean shimmering on one side, the hills looming sharply above us on the other – before joining the 101 rat race. It was a good trip home, punctuated with a purposeful beachfront detour around downtown Santa Barbara and through the Hope Ranch before rejoining 101 briefly, getting off again to buy snackage at the Isla Vista Food Co-op (a surviving '60s-style establishment) before heading up the Gaviota Pass. Further up we allowed ourselves to get ripped off at one of the few remaining cherry stands south of San Jose, but the cherries *were* good. In San Francisco we bought gas and stopped to have huge burritos from Gordo's, on outer Clement, before crossing the Golden Gate bridge for the final leg of our journey.

Dropping Gabe off at his mother's house and finally landing in Glen Ellen, I unloaded, unpacked, and settled in to unwind. Ben stayed home a whole fifteen minutes before disappearing into the local teen subculture for the evening...

– Robert Lichtman, August 1989

More about my parents' current situation, as promised....

My folks had 6137 S. Croft Avenue, Los Angeles 56 – which many of you will remember as my fanciest address – designed and built in 1951. We moved in during the summer of that year and they lived there the next 43 years. A year or so after I wrote the above account, my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and has gradually faded away. She now only really knows who I am – and then just briefly – when I introduce myself by the childhood nickname they gave me. However, she's otherwise still in pretty good health ("strong as a horse," as my father says).

Until earlier this year my father was still undertaking all the care of my mother, despite needing (and putting off) hip replacement surgery, the lack of which caused him to suffer constant pain, and his increasing frailty in general. This was partly because he didn't want strangers in the house, but also because he's into saving money. (A whole story in itself.) But last fall he reported to me that he'd experienced what he termed a "minor stroke." I asked him if he'd been checked out by a doctor and he was evasive and vague in a way that told me he hadn't. Not long after that I began noticing that he was having increasing difficulty in dealing with his affairs and was increasingly forgetful. The most curious of these mental lapses is that he now considers himself ethnically Hungarian, even though it's my mother who's Hungarian (my father is German Jewish born in Manhattan).

In March of this year my brother and I received separate calls from a man who said he was Jim, a neighbor of my parents', who revealed that he'd been "on call" for my father over the past decade and increasingly so of late. It had gotten too much for him to handle, he said, and he wanted us to know what was going on. My parents needed for people to come in, Jim said; my father couldn't keep on taking care of everything without help. I hadn't known any of this. I explained to Jim about my father's secretive nature, and he said he'd seen that, too, and he understood why neither my brother John nor I had known how bad things had really become. I told him I would be in Los Angeles the following month, and looked forward to meeting him. We agreed both to try to get my brother to come around at the same time. My brother initially said he would, but then backed out at the last minute. I went to see my parents after Silvercon and met Jim then. We hit it off well. He was only too happy to offer to make arrangements to have someone come in during the day. My father reluctantly agreed. He still wanted privacy during the evening, though, he said, and he kvetched a lot about spending the money for care. Jim offered to continue to take my dad's nighttime calls, and we agreed that we'd monitor the situation and stay in touch. Before long, help appeared on the scene and for a time it seemed like that would suffice.

Things continued to get worse, though, and just last month they just moved out to take up residence in San Diego, so as to be near my brother. My father had earlier approached both my brother and me about the possibility of moving closer to one of us, but changed his mind about Sonoma claiming the weather extremes would be too much. This was not before I'd done some checking around and located any number of nice homes for them, and had also made preliminary inquiries into care arrangements. I pointed out that they could live basically indoors during the hot and cold times, but his mind was made up. In their new home they have 24-hour live-in care, a couple who are there five days and various relief people. I haven't met any of them yet, but spoke with the man of the couple by phone. He sounds like a good person. When I spoke with my father a few days ago, he said he liked his new digs, and that the live-in couple treated him and my mother "like royalty." But he also said he hadn't really wanted to move and he missed his old house. The house in L.A. is being fixed up – the interior had become quite run down – and will be rented out through a property manager; it's not tax-advantageous to sell it. This will offset the rent for their new place. I'm concerned about their financial affairs being under some degree of control by my brother, who I don't consider the most altruistic person, especially where large sums of money are concerned, and am taking steps to clarify the situation. There will probably be a trip to Southern California in the cards for me sometime this fall.

Anyway, it's a developing situation. I'll keep y'all informed.

– Robert Lichtman, September 2, 1994