

WorldConNomicon



All quiet on the Northeastern Front

TAFF Report 2005

Thanks to:

My god, I have to thank so many people it isn't funny.

Best to start at the start: Mick O'Connor, it's all his fault.

Thanks to my nominators: Dave Baker, Claire Brialey, Dave Langford, Tracy Benton, and of course the wonderful Yvonne Rowse. Thanks to Anders Holmström for running and making it a real race. And thanks to everyone who voted; I appreciate it, and I hope I didn't waste your two quid or your vote.

The home team were essential: Mom and Dad, Trevor, and Andrew and Rebecca; Tobes and Max; James Shields for the website; Stef Lancaster for general support and laptop; all at the Dublin Sci-Fi Club; Randy Byers for advice, help, booze money and sending a chick to snog; Michael Carroll, Mark Plummer, Robert Rankin and Lee Justice for online articles; Jason and Mark and Josh for help with flights.

Once in the States, it's a mega list: well, Deb, it was a great convention. Thanks.

Persis, Inger, Sandra: thank you, Children's Services were brilliant. Bridget and Bill: you made it better. The kids: you rock. And all those cute moms: crikey. Well, Debra stands out – but thanks for making me grin broadly, all of you.

Alice, Vince, Steve, Colin, Farah, and everyone who was there from the UK: I appreciated your eye watching over me (I know you all did; I may not have seemed to know, but I knew). For all the favours, the help, everything – thanks. And thanks to Julie for the best hug ever.

Sharon and Ruth: thanks for being so kind. Priscilla: cheers, I loved each and every panel. Sweet Sheila: how helpful. TR and Ben: all was perfect. Paul in tech: great party, dude.

Thanks to Edie and Dalroy and Neil for the excellent Hugo awards; Bob, Mike and Teddy for the best panel ever; and Claire 'n' Mark and Tom for the suggestions. Thanks also to Patricia, Pat, and Peggy, for bestowing upon me a wonderful and amazing honour.

Mike Resnick: dude, you know when to say the coolest things.

Terry P: thanks for the few bob, mate; you're a star.

Geri, you are brilliant. Why has it taken us this long to meet? I wish I had met you when you were 24...

Joe: it was a pleasure to make your acquaintance. JOE FOR DUFF!

Thanks to Kevin and Cheryl for sorting out what needed sorting out.

John Hertz, Guy and Rose-Marie Lillian, and all at the wonderful fanzine lounge: you guys made me so welcome. Pete Weston too: cheers for the Hugo dude; good to get on, and by the way you have a nice wife. I'm tempted to ask about the daughters, but a hernia, heart attack and haemorrhage in one go might not be so good.

The party gang: beautiful and friendly Paula, stunning and cute Wendy, the ubiquitous Billy, the elusive Zara, Yhuda, Rick. Brotherhood without Banners and GRRM: you rock; Nippon 2007: *ok, maybe I'll be there; Kansas, Arisia, Xerps: cheers for all the booze.*

Moshe Feder: I appreciated your time and enjoyed your company immensely, and all your friends and colleagues in New York as well. By the way, Mick Farren rocks!

John Higgins and Garth Ennis: what a cool evening, thank you.

Ted White and Nic Farey for Trousercon. It's a must for all TAFF delegates. Bobbie, your daughters, Chris, the whole gang: you were great, and getting up so early too!!

Norman, it was an absolute pleasure to hang with you; I just wish you could come to Glasgow.

Thanks to Mark and Claire for helping with the editing of my report, and generally for speechwriting and a place to sleep and everything else; James Shields for doing the report; and Fran Dowd for helping me with the printing. And thanks to the BSFA, as I have ripped off the whole look of *Matrix* magazine, which is why some of you may recognise the layout here.

I suppose, if the truth be known, most of the women mentioned in the report fall into two categories: women who were lovely who I met, and girls I met who were lovely. So, one of the categories will understand this fantastical selection of images:

Next to a river, a warm sunny day, lush and rich green grass, a blanket spread out, books, nice picnic basket, pâté, Brie, not a care in the world, a dreamy place.

A harbour, a beach, a cold and grey Irish sea day, slight rain, a warm and inviting pub, a real fire, a pint, sea chowder and a laugh.

A lively yet darkened hotel room, strange things from the ceiling, and lots of booze, laughing, chatting, no bed, just people, partying, the hot warmth of energy.

Finally, connecting back to reality, the above images become real and I see her well-tanned face and quirky smile, and the look that knows who I am. My thanks to you, my love. All those phone calls, whether for cars or for Ted. Thanks for everything, really: brilliant. And thank you for having something wonderful for me to come home to – better even than Noreascon 4, and isn't that a hard task. Thank you, my love: Simoné.

And to the unknown fans, those of you who helped me who I have forgotten, you are entitled to a free beer next time you see me!

Thanks so very much to you all.

Welcome

So what's this lump of a yoke in your hand, you might well be off asking.

It's a report. I won a load of cash, and spent it going on a holiday; in return, I have to write about it – now, isn't that a bloody bargain?

The Transatlantic Fan Fund was set up, by fans, in response to the activity and efforts that fans had previously made to get Walt Willis, a Belfast fan, from Ireland to the US. This was in 1952 and the journey was made by steamship, at a time when travel was a rare thing unless you were off to Bangor or Bundoran.

As time has progressed, the fund has stayed with us and now, although it's easy enough to travel, the fund continues to send fans from one side to the other of the Atlantic.

If you have received this free, you may have contributed, or helped me, at some stage: or maybe it's just because you are interested. Even so, if you feel at the end of your read that it was worth it, please send £3 or \$5 to TAFF, c/o James Bacon, 211 Black Horse Avenue, Dublin 7, Ireland. It means you might be able to see another one from someone else in future.

I would never have gone to Noreascon 4, if not for the fan fund; that was important to me, at least. If I could have done, I wouldn't have felt the same. Many things were important, but most of all I really wanted to be a useful and helpful TAFF winner.

It was important to me to represent the fandom that is mine – the active, manic, hard-working conrunning fandom that includes insane conventions and Sproutlore. Nonetheless I was imbued with a healthy level of respect for what I was undertaking; when it was called for, I would be respectful and proper (as I already have to be as the administrator of the James White Award).

I was also intent that, apart from what I did at the convention, I would write a report. My plans initially were to get it done in time for Novacon in 2004, but as I type this now, the last item to go into the report, it looks like Corflu in the US and Paragon II (this year's Eastercon) will be the debut points.

I enjoyed writing this, and receiving contributions, and generally the whole post-con thing. Unfortunately, the wonderment and energy that was my TAFF trip feels so long ago; I still have energy, but the convention was something else. Having written about it, I suppose this stands as some sort of personal testament and a good reminder of what I remember it being like, that I can always go back to.

Of course, it's all lies. Everything: lies, lies and more lies.

Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer have been instrumental in this work, including assistance with the wordage. Claire re-edited my edited version of this report – well, mostly; I wouldn't want her name maligned with my later spelling mistakes and punctuation. Mark pointed out inaccuracies (lies), some of which I left in; so it's not an exact history, rather its how I remember it. I imagine that if you ask people, the fog of war may dim memories, and this may be the closest thing you'll find. Of course, the victor writes the history, so somehow that seems fitting.

It was a great laugh, and a bloody good time: a special time I will always remember or at least, now, be able to read about. It doesn't stop though; sometime soon it will be someone else going over. I hope that, as you read this, you may realise that any old ejit can win TAFF and do a half-decent job, so there is a fair chance you could too.

James Bacon
Dublin, Sunday 20th February 2005.

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Peer Groping on the Campaign Trail

by James Bacon

I will always feel instrumental in helping Tobes win TAFF in 2002. I gave him succour in his previous run and was gutted when he lost, but we rallied and he came through the next time. The web journal I set up for his trip is still there and I occasionally pop in to laugh.

Then last year at Novacon, Tobes mentioned it might be an idea to run. I first felt I was not known well enough in UK fandom, let alone US. But I thought I might give it a go, for the laugh. The other whispered contender at that stage was fan artist and Nova winner, Dave Hicks.

Now Dave is popular in the UK, and I heard Ted White's backing would give him a head start stateside. I assumed he was a shoo-in, and therefore I opted to run. Anders Holström was also interested, and I reckoned coming in third would be OK. Anders is obviously known in the UK and very active in Swedish and Nordic fandom. His frequent trips to Worldcon mean that he is known in the US, too.

News then came of Liam Proven's thoughts about running. Liam's very popular, a sort of biker dude fan. Liam would have added dimension to the race, but he thought only Anders was running. He chose not to run because he thought four candidates was too many, and didn't feel right running against me, us knowing each other so well. I was actually disappointed.

I received support from various corners, and took solace as it was put to me that such as Tobes and Peter Weston had also run and lost, but won at a later stage. With that in mind, I felt I walked among giants.

Dave Hicks seemed to hesitate, and then chose not to run either. That was hard news, as I was sure he would have won. Later I heard it was good news because he was planning something more permanent in the way of a child.

UK nominations proved easy enough. Dave Langford, Yvonne Rowse and Claire Brialey are all well-known fans who know me well. It was tougher in North America. I asked a couple of Americans, but found they'd already given their support to Anders. Tracy Benton kindly nominated me, and Sproutlore member Dave Baker from Detroit also stepped up. I wrote my platform and the race was on.

I felt sure to lose, so I didn't go mad or anything. I calmly waited and wondered.



A potential voter: Alison, Convivial

This lasted about five minutes.

Then I realised that I am running for TAFF, and although I am going to lose, I should at least give Anders a run for his money.

*

Irish-Swedish connections

Unknown to most, there is a strong connection between Swedish and Irish fandom, stronger than with any other mainland European nation. This began with Ylva Spangberg's trip to Ireland for Octocon, in the mid-'90s. She is a professional translator, and made great contacts



Entente Cordiale in neutral Glasgow

of you, but it does. It's easier to have sex with someone you won't see next week — well, so I am told. Swedish fans have often had sex with Irish fans, and this has somewhat glued the friendships, as only man glue can. That's important, as it's always been good for those involved. I must admit though that this Mick has never been with a Swede.

All these strong connections meant that I certainly knew who Anders was. This was mostly because he tried to kiss me while I was asleep and half-pissed at a Norwegian party at an Eastercon (aren't them lads fecking brilliant, the girls are mad, the fellas dole out beer, partly Irish I reckon), which was a funny way to meet a fellow fan. I woke up and nearly bludgeoned him, but that was okay. Later I became the live action Buckaroo, as people stacked beer cans on my head. Good party.

*

So I knew Anders. He is a decent, hard-working, well-known fan, and I reckoned the ultimate winner.

So as I sat at home drinking coffee, I knew I'd have to get the finger out (not out of a Swede, mind) and make an effort. I would be letting down the nominators if I didn't, and I dreaded getting six votes. I needed an excuse to do another issue of *Earisheen*, and this was good enough. So I produced a fanzine and sent it out into the world,

here. Soon Ylva was bringing colleagues and fans over to Ireland. We met a few, and at one stage Stefan Lancaster and I were even invited over as fan-guests to a con in Stockholm. (We couldn't go though.)

This continued as we met Swedish fans at Eastercons, and several Anderses turned up with Ylva at cons I ran in the UK. Our connection strengthened, and there came talk of a Swedo-Irish fan fund, but that never got further than long chats in bars. And don't forget all the SEX.

Yes, SEX. I have found that sometimes — only occasionally — SEX occurs at conventions. I know this may shock some



On the Clockwork Orange, Convivial, with Mick O'Connor



Another potential voter: Helen, Convivial



Another potential voter: Flick, quite Convivial

with a letter and a ballot therein. Then I went to a Sproutlore gathering in April. The thing about Sproutlore is that although there are maybe 400 members, the active ones would be recognisable in UK fandom. It's a good crossover. I touted myself around, pressing the flesh. Here's how it goes...

'How are ya, good to see ya, hows tings, grand. Did ya know I was running for this fecking taff ting, yeah, mad, I know, but sure the Swedish fella will win it, I haven't a bleedin chance at all, but would

you like to vote anyhow, you would, sound, its gonna cost ya two quid, don't be a mean bastard all your life, but sure, it's a holiday in the states for Anders, dodgy geezer, and ye all get rid of me for a couple of weeks if I were to win, feck off what do you mean, a one way ticket you bollix ya, are you active, I dunno, are you putting it out, how would I know, oh, you mean the form, er, how long, right, have you been to many events, grand, sure that's active then, no you can't put Tobes down as the person who knows you, sure he knows you well from the time he tried to shag you years ago, no, numbers, not a feckin X, bloody hell, OK OK that's grand, spot on, thanks a million, what, you reckon, OK OK, I'll post it then, no bother, thanks a million, yes yes, I'll drop me trousers, show the septics, grand, thanks.'

And so it went.

I got a good few votes, but one or two people gave me the look that asked, "How do I tell him I am going for Anders?" I was cool, though; knowing I was going to lose was a freedom. I had made my goal to get ballots and money in, and it didn't matter if the votes were for me.

I then did similar at our own Dublin Sci-Fi Club, and more votes came in.



Blowing a kangaroo at Eastercon; who said being a TAFF nominee was easy?

Then to Eastercon in Blackpool, where Anders worked the crowds, made an effort to be part of the masquerade and get noticed. I could feel the blood rising, sure I had to put up a fight. His efforts encouraged me to pester, hassle, and plead, and

in the case of ladies, to kiss, hold, hug and cop a feel. Ah, yes all in the name of fandom, I love it.

We both got votes. Some people voted no preference, I saw one person toss a coin, it was fun. I handed cash and ballots over to Tobes, and he mentioned that votes were coming in strong from the post. I was tempted to ask my old friend what the situation was, but I wouldn't

do that to him. I know him as a man of honour, and anyhow, it didn't matter, mostly.

That left Convivial, a Victorian SF Fun convention in Glasgow at the end of May, and bloody good it was too. I hadn't expected to see Anders there, and again he was pushing hard for votes, so I did too. Well, I tried, as I was busy gambling a lot and drinking and cavorting, so I did a bit.

Ballots were handed to Mark Plummer to be passed to Tobes, and as I went home, my friend Mick asked me if I thought I had a chance. I looked at him and as he saw my eyes he said, 'Well, you could go again, and it is a laugh. You seem to enjoy the hustings at least.'

It was fun. Usually I lobby committees to allow me to do something, but actually going up and asking for a vote was a bit of fun, mostly because it didn't matter, and it was an interesting way to start a conversation.



Marianne and Sarah in Brentford, April

Then last weekend, while at Bar-B-Q in James Shields', Tobes rang. I had forgotten about TAFF nearly, as I had been working and enjoying good company that weekend, and he told me I had won. I was very happy indeed, but woefully surprised.

I was even more surprised when I heard that 214 people voted. That's more than would attend a convention in the UK ('bout 140) and I hope an indication of interest.

Then I realised I had won, and now I am shitting myself. It's a serious deal, and I am looking forward to it. I have had a couple of invites which I welcome, and hope to travel around the East Coast mainly, visiting groups

and clubs either side of the con, suggestions welcomed.

I hope to get involved somehow at Worldcon, and will volunteer anyhow, and I have ideas for a website and ideas for a Worldconicomic, which may not happen, but sure I'll give it a lash. Just like the TAFF Ting.

Many thanks, I hope to see you there.



A last-minute masquerade entry - Count Otto Von Schwine Hund

Sproutlore is The Now Official Robert Rankin Fanclub. James Bacon is the main force behind the club. It's a very cynical grouping for a Fanclub and they publish a sort of quarterly zine, yet re-

fuse to publish sycophantic fan-fiction. Sproutlore have held events and conventions since 1997 attracting the fun and weirder end of British and Irish fandom.



One way ticket merchant: Stef

Taff Journal - Pre-Con

6th July 2004: Today I won TAFF



Meanwhile, Midnite, Stef and I get hammered. Brentford, August.

I was out at James Shields's last night. James lives in Drogheda, which is on the east coast of Ireland about 40 miles north of Dublin – for me, around a 30 minute drive on good roads. James has been involved in DTP and conrunning since about '92. Posters, flyers, *The Brentford Mercury*, websites; you name it, he has a hand in it. He had invited me up for dinner and to stay over that night for a barbecue he was having the next day. The evening went well, as a friend of his popped by who caught my interest.

The barbecue also went very well; we popped around to James's parents to pick up what can be only described as the Uber-Bar-B-Q. This massive machine runs off gas; it has gauges and thermometers and gets up to a fierce heat. It's the Tiger Tank of barbecues. Angie, James's fiancée, was pre-cooking most of the food in the oven anyhow, and there was a great selection of grub on offer.

There was a good crowd, and my interest was now piqued by some of James's other guests. The weather was fantastic; although we started eating at around 2 pm, the afternoon wore on lazily, and there was much entertainment to be wrought from Angie's four-year-old son, Jack.

To be absolutely honest, when James came out and said Tobes was on the phone, I was for just a moment flummoxed. Then I remembered: TAFF!

It's odd; I had been on the campaign trail and pressing the flesh only a week previously, at Convivial in the Central Hotel in Glasgow, so it shouldn't have been far from my mind. But I remember thinking about it on the Thursday and then, well, it was a good weekend, and I was busy.

Immediately I presumed the call was to let me know I had lost, but to my utter surprise I had actually won. Tobes was great: he congrat-

ulated me, gave me all the figures, told me what I needed to do, and what he would do in the meantime, and informed me of many things that I was not aware of.

For instance, I had no idea that the convention would effectively make me a guest, and therefore give me a complimentary membership. He then told me that occasionally the con committee also help with accommodation, if they have some rooms available.

Other bits of information, which previously I had reckoned on being superfluous to my candidature, then came to light. It was a good and long conversation; I could hear the enthusiasm coming from Tobes, and it only fired me up more.

I told everyone when I got off the phone and all were dead pleased, although some needed to have the whole SF convention thing explained. James offered to set up a website and started making plans, and as the evening wore on it got better, and ended on a real high.

It was going very fast. I was dead pleased obviously, and am still grinning from ear to ear. I am home now; it's very late, and there was a mail awaiting me from Tobes.

He congratulated me, and went on to give me some more insights. Key points were:

- The bank account details, and amount available.
- It's good practice to keep receipts/statements for anything TAFF-related. Not that anyone will want to look at them.
- This site is incredibly useful for administrators:
www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/SF-Archives/Taff/admin-faq.
- Max has notified all the usual news/discussion groups by email.
- He will send every voter a brief newsletter saying thank you, and will also pass on the address details of everyone who voted to me.
- He will also email the Worldcon soon and let them know I are coming.
- He thought it would be a good idea to try to visit my nominators, also mentioned Nic Farey, and not to worry since if my time is not completely booked I will get offers at Worldcon.
- The Worldcon will probably ask me to be on a few programme items that are fan-fund related.
- American Worldcons are huge, and they tend to lack a central bar. A good place to hang out is the fan room (go there after registration), where you will find free drink and food as well as people you know/who care who you are (the vast majority of a Worldcon won't). It's a good idea to make use of the voodoo board as well

to contact people.

Call me any time, said Tobes.

His last point worries me. I understand that fandom is apathetic and disjointed at best. Like, after all, only 40 people from the US voted; that's less than one percent.

I think the best thing I can do is get myself involved, remember that I am a conrunner first and foremost, get introduced to the movers and shakers who will help me achieve this, get seen, offer help, be helpful and volunteer to go onto panels, treat it like my first con, be full of energy, have a laugh, get around to as many fans as possible, promote European and especially Irish stuff, do a decent website, and a full report in time for Novacon,

It feels great. I am off to bed.

7th June

Thank yous and congratulations pour in, both from people who have nominated me. Then the serious mails arrive, first from Randy Byers, who is the US TAFF administrator. He lets me know that a piece about me is required for the Worldcon programme book, so I have mailed Michael Carroll about this. Then there is correspondence from Guy Lillian about the piece and then from Geri Sullivan, a fan whom I have corresponded with, due to our shared appreciation and friendship with the late James White. Crikey, I wonder what he would have made of this!

8th June

Michael gets a piece back to me, super fast. It's amazing. Over the years I have relied on him for so much; he is such an excellent wordsmith and good friend. I send it onto Guy. An appropriate picture heads off to Geri, and then I get word from James Shields that the web address will be <http://www.lostcarpark.com/taff>.

9th June

My first invitation: Nic Farey invites me to a cook out the weekend after Noreascon 4.

There are some thoughts on the name, which I find amusing:

‘Victor G christened the last TAFFbash “TobesCon”, and with this in mind I had previously suggested “TrouserCon” should you be the winner. “OirishEejitCon” has too many syllables, and frankly I don't think Randy Byers's suggestion of “CuntCon” would advertise well – they'd all probably think it had something to do with lap dancers...’

James suggests getting pieces for the website about who I am, so I mail Mark Plummer, Lee Justice and Robert Rankin: best to go for bias and variety I reckon.

10th June

TrouserCon is a go. Randy and Guy put it about that I am keen to be active. I drop the programming address a mail, introducing myself and letting them know that I would like to get involved as best I can.



Brentcon: I get a first look at the girl who will be my girlfriend, getting her tits signed by Robert Rankin

11th June

Priscilla Olsen, who is head of programming, contacts me with a very warm email, and asks me to take part: the first bit is letting them know what I am interested in by filling in an online questionnaire. At this stage I become stunned at the organisation and preparation of the programme.

13th June

I decide to go further and send the con Chairwoman an email, introducing myself and explaining that, as a conrunner, I want to be helpful and involved and intend to 'embed' with the committee if possible so that I can report on my experiences and what I see.

14th June

An AWESOME reply from Deb Geisler; she kicks ass and rocks. The reply is super efficient, cc'd to anyone who is relevant; it is not only courteous, it deals with every aspect or concern I could have and, at the same time, gently instructs any relevant staff as to what needs to be done. I am terribly impressed. Not that this is surprising: I am used to women Chairs being bloody good. From Helen Ryder to Maura McHugh to Fran Dowd, I have always had respect and a certain affinity for female con Chairs and always been impressed by their work.

I feel really good.

15th June

I volunteer to help out at the fan fund auction; well, it's only proper.

16th June

Some acceptance PR is sent out by Max, and James Shields puts a piece on lostcarpark about my TAFF success.

22nd June

There is some correspondence with Priscilla about the programme.

26th June

I decide to sort out my flights, with the assistance of my Dad. Jason Joiner, a good friend, has a contact State-side for flights and offers to help out, due to my win. He has some sort of corporate thing going on, due to the fact that he organises over a hundred flights to and from the US each year for his media shows.

First off I am offered business class with Virgin for the price of economy. This is an excellent deal, as anyone can imagine; the only downside is that Virgin does not fly out of Dublin so a trip to London would be involved, although that may tie in with a farewell gathering perhaps.

Secondly, his agent will organise all internal flights for me, at a good price. I consider my options.

29th June

Geri Sullivan invites me to her home, Toad Hall, and the chance to have a look through some of her James White correspondence and writing. I immediately jump at the opportunity, but caution that I won't make any certain plans until my flights are booked.

It's a day for invites: Moshe Feder invites me along to his place in New York. This also sounds excellent, until my allergy of cats comes up and puts a spanner in the works. Nevertheless, Moshe is dead sound and a gathering of some sorts will be in the offing.

30th June

Chaz Boston Baden and Christian B McGuire write to me and ask for a SFnal CV and a picture for their Fan Gallery. This gallery is news to me and I check it out, only to find many names of people up there who I know. I take my time looking through <http://scifiinc.net/scifiinc/gallery/> and get to put faces to many of the names of people I have been in touch with, which is a real boon.

I prepare some stuff and send it off.

1st July 2004

My brother, who is in the States, asks if I can come and visit during my trip. I consider this but explain that the TAFF duties come first.

4th July

Ben Yalow, who is in

charge of facilities, lets me know that he has organised my room. This is great news; again, the committee are so helpful and efficient. I am staying in the Marriott Hotel. I decide the best thing to do is fly directly to Boston just before the con and then spend two or three weeks in the States.

Guy Lillian lets me know that if I make it to New Orleans, I will be shown a good time. This will be possible if I go for a three-week visit. Much to consider.

Mark Olsen and Guy copy me in on the plans for the TAFF and DUFF reception that will be held in the fan lounge.

5th July

Edie and Dalroy, in their capacity as co-Directors for the Hugo Awards Ceremony at Noreascon 4, invite me to present one of the awards. I immediately agree, and enquire about the dress code. Again, the organisation is impressive; there is a rehearsal and everything is planned at this stage. I note what others will be wearing and thank them for bestowing such a huge honour to me.

I wrote a piece for Randy for the fanzine he co-edits, *Chunga*. The piece is called 'Peer Groping on the Campaign Trail'; he edits it a bit and it looks good. Something else for the WorldConNomicon, I reckon: this will be the name of my TAFF report, and, even at this stage, I reckon I should aim to have it done for Novacon. This makes sense as then I can give a good load out by hand, and save on the postage.

9th July

Ted White invites me to his gathering: 'Second Fridays occur at my house in Falls Church, VA.' This ties in perfectly with Nic Farey's TrouserCon, as he lives nearby and I have an offer to stay there, so this is brilliant. Also means that I get to meet Washington fans, which is part of my remit.

15th July

Guy and Randy correspond about the TAFF and DUFF reception and the fan fund auction. I still have some James White Award beer so I think that might make a good start.

17th July

After much humming and hawing, I decide to book flights from Dublin. The cost of an economy flight with Virgin is so much more expensive anyhow, regardless of the offer I have received of a free upgrade, I just cannot justify it; then on top of that there would be the



The sort of people who sent me away: a sproutlore gathering

flight to and from London and staying over and everything. Dad arranges open tickets so that I can think further about how long I can stay over; I can easily change them. At the moment they are for a three-week trip, but that's something that I will decide closer to the time.

20th July

More communication with Ben Yalow about my room, as I need to definitely have an address for the visa waiver form and proof that I will be staying there. I am concerned about the visa aspect. I had thought of going for a proper visa, but next week I am going to San Diego: a surprise trip, just for the weekend, with my friend Jason Joiner, his business partner Mark Woolard, and Stef Lancaster. We are to help him at the San Diego Comic Con. No time for a visa there, so waivers it is.

25th July

I receive the schedule of programme items I am to be on from Priscilla Olsen, and am blown away. I am on panels with the likes of Terry Pratchett and Mike Resnick. I have no idea how I will be with these guys, but intend to do my best. As usual I am impressed with the level of professionalism that is apparent. Details, times, emails – everything I need is there. Where the green room is to where I get my back of badge sticker; it's brilliant.

Guy Lillian needs a piece about Michael Carroll, as he wrote the piece about me (hehehe). So I ask Michael for one, and he obliges.

Still cannot believe the standard of programme items I am on.

28th July

Further correspondence from Ben Yalow, confirming accommodation details and generally making me welcome.

30th July

Guy Lillian talks to me about the reception in the fanzine lounge. Guy is the current DUFF administrator, as well as the editor of the convention souvenir book. I agree to be there, although it is a squeeze between two panels, but should not be too difficult.

2nd August 2004

Guy confirms all is good with the reception and also the fan fund auction. I am unsure how this auction will work, but agree to help of course.

3rd August

I realise that the fan fund auction is clashing with one of the panels. Randy Byers contacts Priscilla Olsen and, after a swift flutter of mails, Priscilla lets me know that the 'Dead Fans don't Pub their Ish' programme item has been moved

to a later time to avoid the clash. I am a bit surprised at the ease that such a change can be made, but obviously very thankful.

Following this, another panel has a slight change and I expect someone else has had a similar quandary as me; again, the efficiency is something to behold.

4th August

Grant Kruger, a South African, drops me and my fellow panel members a mail about the programme item he is leading, called 'Making connections in the SF Community'. He is going to make badges, and I suggest ones such as 'Hey, I am single – are you?' but he is not sure of my motives, and quite rightly so! Joel Zakem also has some badge suggestions, and various panellists who are on 'Dead Fans don't Pub their Ish' confirm their acknowledgement of the programme change.

My brother contacts me again about a potential visit at the end of my TAFF trip; since he will be putting me up and also paying for my flight, I see it as a good way to wind down after my trip and get started on my report. I do wonder whether such a detour would be considered inappropriate but, after some brief correspondence, it is generally agreed that two days is not an infraction.

5th August

There is more correspondence about badges.

6th August

Randy wonders about a TAFF itinerary, and gives me a two week deadline. This is a good kick in the arse and focuses my mind on the job in hand.

9th August

Jim Young contacts all participants on his panel, and lets us know what he hopes we will talk about. This is well organised and I feel confident about the friendliness that is prevalent in all emails to date.

10th August

A minor time change. At this stage I have an Excel spreadsheet running with all my various duties and in preparation for publication. I decide upon some goals that I would like to achieve.

11th August

I receive a form letter from Edie and Dalroy giving very simple and straightforward details about the Hugo presentation duties, where to be and suchlike.

I get a mail from the guy whom Jason Joiner who has put me in touch with. This gentleman, who shall remain anonymous, is his flight con-



Elvis, Stef, me and Hitler. Think about it. EXACTLY!!!!

tact person, and essentially put at my disposal.

12th August

Nic Farey makes contact to confirm some details about TrouserCon, plans for which I expect are going well – or so it seems from Nic's mail.

13th August

Decision time: after much procrastination, and then further consideration of many things from my mortgage to my sanity, it is impressed upon me that I won't be able to take a three-week trip. My mom, who is also my boss, looks at my scheduling till November. In two months I want to do the following: TAFF Trip, Collectormania 6 in Milton Keynes, James Shields's wedding, Octocon, London Film and Comic Con, and Novacon. Her laughter is quite cruel, as I realise that it's going to be a two-week trip.

In all honesty, though, my involvement and participation in things SFnal have won me the trip, so it's hardly surprising that I am busy.

14th August

I send out a long email – my schedule – to all and sundry. As follows:

Hi all,

This is just a quick courtesy mail, about my taff trip, as you have shown interest, or I thought I should drop you a line about it all. Its also going to the Nurofen and Eastercon lists.

Obviously some of you will be busy, so its not that important. Just thought you should have it. Also, feel free to pass it on, to any one SFictional who may be interested. (esp US based)

Taff Trip

I depart for the United States on Tuesday the 31st of September and arrive in Boston On Tuesday evening.

I will be staying in Boston at that stage, a plan of some of my activities at Noreascon Four, is at the end of this mail. I am going to stay in Boston at Noreascon until Tuesday the 7th of September. Tuesday I hope to meet/relax with Boston/NESFA based fans, if they are still alive ;-) that evening I have an offer of somewhere to stay to, so hope to use that

Wednesday the 8th I hope to go to New York and meet the New York fans, if they have returned

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from the con.

Thursday be in New York meet fans etc

Friday the 9th I hope to go to Washington for Ted Whites meeting.

Saturday Nic Farey is having 'TrouserCon' again in Washinton.

Moday and Tuesday are not decided as of yet.

But reckoning on some brief down time for me.

Wednesday I am again in Boston and depart for Ireland, Via Shannon on Wednesday the 16th of September.

I had hoped to spend more time stateside, but have found that two weeks is the best I can do, I am afarid, which means I shant be seeing nawlins, (sorry). I had hoped to be able torelax more and see more.

I am keen to meet fans, esp in New York, Washington and Boston, and I have had offers, so, take this as I'll be there and let your friends know :- (to get the hell out perhaps)

My Taff Mission as I see it:

To promote cross atlantic ties. Be friendly.

Greet, meet and chat with as many people as possible at Noreascon 4.

Be involved, helpful and volunteer as best as one can at a worldcon.

Embed with con people, for reportage.

Maintain an online Journal for Pictures and Reportage (all quiet on the Noreastern Front) www.lostcarpark.com/taff This website is being built as of Now.

Talk about Interaction, Octocon, Novacon, Dangercon Eastercon and fun SF stuff a lot. Collect Fanzines. Get address of those who want a Taff Report. Report about the convention. Promote the James White Award. Learn about Noreascon 4 Kids programme. Have a good time. Meet fans in other cities.

Finally, I hope to do a Taff report in time to distribute at Novacon 2004. The Worldconomicon. (need to check spelling BUT i have said it now, so I expect it will be really difficult for me not to do it!!!)

at this stage, any suggestions, opinion and generally feedback would be welcomed, but ONLY directly to me at piglet@indigo.ie please many thanks

James Bacon

I will be at:

Thursday 2nd September

2.00pm Thursday 2:00pm Fandom...as a Way of Making Money

4.00pm Thursday 4:00pm Your Dream Convention

5.00pm Thursday 5:00pm Welcome to the SF Community: Making connections

7.00pm Thursday 7:00pm Terry on Trial

8.00pm Guff and Taff reception

11.00pm Thursday 11:00pm

Friday 3rd September

4:00pm Beyond the Con: Connecting to World-wide Fandom

Night Time - Retro Hugos

Saturday 4th Sepetmber



A man (not me!!) getting sick down a toilet – one week before I head off

1.00pm The Hugo Rehearsal is from 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM on Saturday.

6.00pm Onwards the Hugo's Presenting the Fanzine Hugo.

Sunday 5th of September

12:00 noon America's Best Comics

2.00pm Fan Fund Auction room 205 in the Hynes.

4.00pm Sunday 4:00pm Dead Fans Don't Pub Their Ish

15th August

I correspond with Geri Sullivan, mostly to let her know what my plans are and bring her up to speed; she had agreed to put me up if I wanted, which sounds great, especially if we can rummage through her fanzines as suggested.

Randy thinks the itinerary is good.

16th August

I contact Persis Thorndyke and ask to spend a bit time with her while she is working with Children's Services. She sends me back a lovely mail, not only being helpful, but also offering anything I need from her in the way of records etc.

17th August

Flick, a UK fan, who I have known for – crikey – eight or nine years now, is looking to share a room with someone at Worldcon. I immediately offer, as I feel it is only proper to offer crash space, since TAFF is paying for the room.

18th August

I correspond with Farah Mendlesohn as she is looking after the literary part of children's programming at Interaction. This is good, as I like her, and we agree to chat at Worldcon.

19th August

Dave Langford pops my TAFF info onto the fan fund website that he hosts.

Ted White sends me directions to his house.

Moshe Feder arranges a meet for the Thursday after Worldcon when I am in New York.

Steve and Alice Lawson remind me that they will see me at Noreascon; this is good as Alice is very good with me, and I like Steve a lot. I know they are further back-up should I need it.

Randy asks for a shadow TAFF report from all comers who meet me.

I receive best wishes from Dave Lally (Ireland's best SF ambassador), Eugene Docherty, various UK fans and Irish fans, following the bulk mailout of my TAFF Trip Plan.

I receive a wonderful email from Peter Weston, who interestingly doesn't actually remember meeting me, although I do remember him from cons as far back as Albacon. We correspond, and it's good to know there will be someone else I know there.

20th August

Vince Docherty, chairman of next year's Worldcon, drops me a line about various ideas I have contacted him about, and invites me to an informal gathering on the Wednesday before the convention in his suite; it's an Interaction party.

21st August

I arrange the transfer of funds from Tobes over to my account here in Ireland; I set up a bank account but it will take time for it to become active. I realise that I should have arranged the transfer sooner, but it's been very busy.

23rd August

Max helps me out big-time with the aforementioned transfer.

26th August

I correspond further with Geri.

27th August

Farah Mendlesohn also looks to crash, in a bulk mailout. I offer further space, but she gets a room share. Two women in my room may have been just too much for me.

Nic Farey confirms and makes more good sounds about TrouserCon.

James Shields gets a mock version of 'All Quiet on the Western Front' finished and I send him some amendments.

29th August

Randy informs me that John Hertz will be throwing a Tea Party on the Saturday afternoon, another TAFF and DUFF reception, and another showing of kindness.

That is my final mail before I leave for the States.

The TAFF Report

30TH AUGUST 2004. MONDAY. DUBLIN.

The last two days have been manic, packing and preparing for this trip. I don't think I have been away from home for two weeks since I was a teenager.

I realised that I only have 12 pairs of boxer shorts and, following the operation of pairing the socks, it became apparent that although I have hundreds, I am lucky that I have fourteen actual pairs. Simoné, my girlfriend, commented that men wearing odd socks would no longer be a mystery.

I have bought a few new shirts, and a linen suit for the retro Hugos, and I've hired some formal wear for the Hugo presentation. James Shields has been modifying the TAFF website and I have added some dates and suchlike.

I took a trip to Tesco. The last time I was in the States, I noticed that they didn't have Diet Red Bull. Now, I know it sounds odd, but I know what the con is going to be like, and the last thing I want to do is pile on the pounds. So I buy 16 cans. Also on the list is a large amount of toiletries, a good selection of vitamins and a load of flu and cold remedies; sure, if I am going to run myself down, I might as well fight it as much as possible.

The parents have been pretty good to me, as always; I have borrowed a Dictaphone, a huge suitcase and loads of small bits and pieces like a wash bag – deciding that my traditional use of a Tesco shopping bag would just not do, considering my official capacity.

31ST AUGUST. TUESDAY. DUBLIN TO SHANNON TO BOSTON.

Dad drove Simoné and me to the airport, which was pretty swift as there was little in the way of traffic and he was pushing the car a little bit (it's an old Jag, so I suppose if you have four litres of oomph best to use it).

As I was wandering with Simoné around the departure gates, I met Rod O'Hanlon, a Worldcon regular, who was going on an interesting route to Boston. Due to incentive through his work – Rod is a barrister – he gets a great deal on flights to Boston if he flies through Reykjavik. Well, why not; business class is expensive but he was getting it for the same as I fly economy. He would arrive a few hours after me.

I also glean vital information from Rod. Despite some checking I was still unsure of the best way to get from the airport to the con. 'There is a courtesy bus to your hotel' comes as great news from this very softly spoken man; 'otherwise there is a ferry.' I start to feel quite good about this prospect.

We chat a while and Rod tells me of a planned gathering the next day in the Sheraton, where he and the usual suspects he hangs with will be meeting. This would be the ubiquitous James Peart, Persona Non Grata Farmer and Urban from Sweden to name a few. These guys are always at Worldcons; I think James and Rod, both native Dubliners, have been to them all since 1995. I shared a room with James Peart in Glasgow in 1995, and there's no better man for a few pints.

Simoné and I depart, and prepare to part. We had been going out for two weeks, but I did not realise then that as the next two weeks went by, our relationship would be strengthened. I had expected the opposite.

Even though I am flying from Dublin to Boston, an easy distance for modern aircraft, we will be stopping at Shannon airport, where I will be going through immigration.

Shannon: There is sort of a mad law here, whereby half the flights that have Ireland as a destination have to stop over at Shannon airport. Shannon at one stage was

the cream of airports, boasting the first ever Duty Free shop and generally being well kept; it was then an important point for all transatlantic flights. Once planes could fly further, and specifically to Dublin, Shannon was facing a death. Or so you would think, but the Government imposed this 'stop over' thing. Shortly thereafter, although planes could make it straight to their final destinations, we were stuck with this rule. Unfortunately, instead of turning Dublin or even Shannon itself into hubs where flights could spider out across Europe, we just protected jobs in the west of Ireland.

Now stopping there is an annoyance. The Airbus A330-300 can seat about 240 people; from Dublin to Shannon, a flight of thirty minutes, there are about 40 people on board.

Still, Shannon has a US immigration bureau and I get processed fairly quickly using the Visa Waiver scheme; a few quick questions and I am through. We then re-board the same plane, but there are now more people; despite this the flight is far from full – which surprises me, considering the cost of tickets, but means I can use the table beside me for the computer mouse.

It's now 7.15 PM, but local time is 2.15. We have landed at Boston Logan airport, and I get a shared van in to the Marriott hotel where I am staying.

The journey from the airport to the hotel was very interesting: I noticed that, just like Dublin, there is older brick-like architecture, and a number of areas that look a bit run down; then as we get closer to downtown the buildings rapidly get taller and grander. Then, as we turn off a road that is elevated, I see the Hynes Convention Centre in the distance.

I check into my hotel very easily. It's quite nice and well-apportioned. The lobby is vast; reminds me of a train station back home. There are 37 floors, which make it way taller than anything we have in Ireland. The room is similar to a bloody good hotel at home and I spend some time hanging up all my clothes and then have a shower.

It's now about 4 o'clock so I wander downstairs. The hotel is connected by a covered road bridge to a shopping centre. This has a Saks and loads of other expensive shops, and the mall winds its way around the Prudential Center, which is huge and dwarfs my tall hotel, until I reach an entrance to the Hynes centre and, to the left, the mall entrance to the Sheraton hotel, which is where some of the smaller programme rooms are and also the party rooms.

I am immediately impressed at the co-location of everything here. I wander into the bar in the Sheraton and am surprised to find that the bar is about half the size

of the upstairs of the Florence Nightingale pub (where London fan meetings were then being held) or the Marine Hotels bar in Dun Laoghaire.

It's also the only bar here, and that surprises me too.

I relax for a while, build up some gumption and courage and then head into the Hynes; I hope they will be looking for volunteers, as I am getting bored. The Hynes centre and the various buildings in this block are neatly built around one another. This is how I imagine American convention centres are; I walk in around some greenery and down a slope that is about 30 feet wide. There is no concrete here: marble, wood and *carpet!*

I walk into registration and it's a huge room; there is a lot of concrete here, and it reminds me of somewhere. Somewhere, er, Scottish maybe: a Worldcon type of place?

I see the volunteer table and decide that's the best place to start. I head down and say loudly I want to volunteer, and the devious ladies smile and greet me and make me welcome, as only those heinous types can who suck you into the dangerous web of working at a con.

I get a light blue ribbon, a sticker, and a record sheet, and then ask what's to be done. I then am told to go to the registration desk, who need help, and I do that; registration is easy to understand and well-run. I am sent on a couple of quick errands and then back to the registration desk. I meet my first committee member, Ruth, who dispatches me to the art show as they are now under control at registration.

Upstairs I went, trying to remember my route: a lift here and a turn there and into the exhibition room, a nice ballroom with a carpet and fashionable lights. Here men work at a pace, constructing displays made out of board and tubing.

I meet a lady who seems to be in charge and tell her that I am a volunteer; she greets me warmly and gets me shifting boxes that are destined for her office area. I shift them with alacrity and ease. After this we have a team: Del who is from London and knows my name and shares my birthday (Jesus I hate fucking LiveJournal – but Del is cool, mind), Ellen and Shirley. We work for this lady, who I now find out is Gay Allen, who runs the art show.

I find myself stuffing a couple of hundred envelopes with a variety of items for the artists; this is familiar territory for me, and time flies by. Next thing it's eight o'clock and Mark Olsen and another committee member bring in chow. He comes over and forces us to take some, since otherwise it will be thrown out; and I encounter the best filled sandwich I have ever had. It's wonderful: layers of ham and a soft cream cheese, tomatoes and cucumber. It's bloody good. I also have a seltzer with cranberry and lime, as I am keen not to totally bulk out. (Seltzer is a flavoured sparkling water and is very refreshing.)

Back to work for another hour, and the office end of things seems to be coming to an end. Not so for the art show construction, I notice, as I continue with jobs of monotony (more envelopes!). Strangely there are maintenance guys who seem just to be using wrenches while fans work on the tubing. I don't realise yet, but these are teamsters.

It slows the work, but I notice Sam Pierce, the safety officer. I thank him for any concern he may have when he comes over to our table, and point out that we are being very careful of paper cuts; I get the impression he gets a lot of that. Shortly afterwards the teamster guy starts ribbing him for wearing sandals while working. I find this a bit amusing, but Sam is a good guy, so not in a nasty way.

I am given my leave by Gay Allen. It's after nine now, and I head down to the bar; I wander about and don't recognise anyone, which is a bit sort of stomach-churning as I fancy a beer, but don't fancy it on my own. I was

JAMES GETS INSPIRATION FOR HIS Pictionary PANEL:



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meant to meet Moshe Feder at some stage and he mentioned he would be in town by now, but I don't find him.

Everyone looks, er, not like me or my mates Stef or Elvis. I ponder whether I should be heading back to the hotel and am not too keen on the solitary drink; and then, to my relief, I see a waving hand. It could have been anyone, I was so relieved. Even better, it was Vince Docherty and I say hello and join him. I realise that the fans in his circle are the elite of conrunners; this is the Tuesday before the convention and anyone who's here already is involved. Vince goes to introduce me, but I ask him not to; I am just a volunteer. We chat about the Young Adult Fun Activities (YAFA) programme for Interaction and I start to shock and upset Vince with some of my ideas. I enjoy it every time he raises an eyebrow in that 'Are you being serious?' way: the tilt of his head, the thinning of his lips into a smile; and then he realises I am!

I head for bed at about 12 o'clock.

Quote of the day: Two fans looking at an Orang-utan toy:



Artshow prep

'I don't know what it's about. Maybe we should read some Pratchett; he is the guest of honour after all...'

1ST SEPTEMBER. WEDNESDAY. NOREASCON 4, PRE-CON.

I get up at about 8 AM and head over to the convention centre. Here I notice one of the biggest differences between UK/Irish conventions and the US: it's that there isn't the huge gathering of hungover fans in the breakfast lounge, because American hotels don't do bed and breakfast rates. That's kind of annoying, actually, as it is a great way to socialise.

I head over and to the volunteer desk; at this stage I am told that I have to register properly and get my badge, so I do so, and their system works well. I get a superb-looking programme book; I am impressed, and in a moment of self-gratification check out the TAFF section and am even further impressed. Michael Carroll had written an awesome bio – all lies – and it's grand. Naomi Fisher also did DUFF very proud with a wonderful piece. My moment of vanity over, I look through this magnificent tome. Geri Sullivan and Guy Lillian have done a superb job.

The convention guide is brilliant; it's A4 and a veritable bible. I glance through and find it easy to work out, although there seem to be a couple of names missing off the map, but then there are dozens of rooms so I am not surprised. It's all arranged in order of time, but there are a number of cross-referenced indexes which prove very useful. This is usually called a pocket guide, so I fold it in half and it fits perfectly into my combat shorts pocket, where it lives for the weekend.

I also realised at this stage that it was my responsibility to organise and communicate with the guys on the Pictionary item. I send an email later that night, but eventually realise that I will have to catch up with them here at the con.

I see and greet Larry van der Putte, a Netherlands fan who is involved with a lot of UK stuff. Here he is something important in the Noreascon registration zone. (imagine van der valk music here, I always do).

I meet and greet Ruth again. As I am about to go, with a 'HEEEYYYYY! HIII, I am Sharon.' This is Shamemberships and is well known to my friend Flick. There touch with Sharon in advance. She lets everyone in earshot me a bit differently; I explain that the con has not started way over to the volunteer table.

I know it sounds strange, but I must make my mark a con, so I must volunteer, get involved; this is the way

At the volunteer table Melanie surveys me, and The loading dock is underground. Here, in a base-unloading – from articulated lorries to cars, vans, 4x4 jeep squealing; it's great. I watch for a couple of moments as UK and Ireland we allow trailers of 44'; here they allow

I meet Angela, who is checking in dealers; she has a She assigns me to Geoff, who is helping dealers unload.

Teamsters: These are union guys, who are employed although there are only 16 of them, if they get upset, I am told they are linked to the mob, organised

So the vehicles back up to the loading dock, and the Then the dealers, and people like me, unload the vehicle and put the stuff onto the dock; then a teamster – when one is allocated to you – loads it on the trolley. Slowly. Then he takes it upstairs and watches as the dealer unloads it. They are obviously trained to use *no* initiative whatsoever, so unless you ask them they will congregate in a corner and look unpleasant, overweight and like a bunch of lazy fuckers.

Geoff finds this restrictive and talks to the manager of this gang. He lets us know that if people have their own trolley then they can unload onto it and bring their stuff up the lift – but not the huge goods lift; also we can't use the docks with ramps.

This helps to get stuff moving, and we direct people who don't need help to this separate area and then help with the unloading. As I direct and unload, the 'Roach truck' arrives. This is a large enough rigid truck, which opens up on all sides and displays a huge selection of food and goodies. The teamsters drop everything and chow down, which is something to see, and nothing happens for about 40 minutes.

Meanwhile we are unloading and continuing the work. I encounter the stupidity of the Bitchy Dealer. A number of them are unhappy about the slowness of the work. I explain that this is not a committee issue, rather that it is a way of avoiding low pay; if they are really unhappy about it, they should talk to an elected representative, get them to ban trades unions and employ foreign cheap labour. This generally is greeted with a bemused look and they go away.

Of course, the most stupid thing I saw were two vans joined together with a tow-bar, the second van acting like a trailer; and the tow-bar was a serious contraption, involving welding. The woman using it was bemoaning the fact that the 'trailer van' blocked the dock, and she would have to haul the stuff from the 'drive van' to the dock. I told her that this could be avoided by not having a trailer, and unloaded her drive van.

I met Deb Geisler down there, and briefly said hello. Then I continue, and it's good work: lots of lugging, sweating and hauling, and observing the inefficiency of the teamsters. Slowly but surely, a system is gently pressed upon them involving giving dealers Post-It notes with numbers, in order, and as soon as a teamster is free, sending them to the person with the next number. It is blindly apparent that such efficiency is totally alien to these guys, but since being efficiently utilised is not something they can really object to, they get on with it.

I meet a nice lady – a blonde and pretty with it, a couple of years my senior – called Paula. I chat with her; she is also a volunteer. I meet her again over the weekend.

More volunteers arrive and there are more occasional moments of nothingness to do. I head off at this stage. I'd been on the go for a couple of hours; it was an experience, but I had hoped to get involved with all aspects of the convention and next I wanted to get to meet a lady called Persis Thorndike, who was running the children's programme.

I head upstairs to registration, which is now busier, and the volunteer section has moved upstairs to room 207 in the Hynes. I bump into Moshe Feder at this stage, and he encourages me to drop by his room, or at least call it, later that night at about 10 PM as he is having a party there.



Peter Weston receives a warm welcome

a lady quizzes my badge, and I display it; I am greeted ron Sbarsky, who is the committee member in charge of is much hand-shaking and congratulation, as I had been in know that I am the TAFF delegate, and now Ruth looks at and for now I am just a volunteer, and quickly make my

for me, not by being a TAFF delegate. I am a conrunner at to make friends, I reckon.

promptly dispatches me to the loading dock. ment of gargantuan proportions, every type of vehicle is type things and rigid trucks – reversing, beeping, brakes an eighteen-wheeler pirouettes and reverses back. In the 58' – another example of the big American thing, I suppose. plan, badges, and ribbons, and also seems to have a system. Here I encounter teamsters.

by companies to do jobs. They cannot be upset because, they go on strike, and that closes down the whole facility. crime and the such. Ah: freedom fighters.

teamster adjusts the ramp when he is requested to do so.



Girls from 'welcome to Worldcon' panel



More girls from welcome panel – sisters

I meet Ruth again, who is now extra terribly polite and extra really helpful; not what I wanted, but she is pretty too, in a petite cute way, and she directs me to Inger Myers, who is running the children's programme with Persis. I explained to Inger that I am a volunteer that needs to help out as I am helping with Interaction.

Inger is another pretty lady. Actually this is something that is a trend of the weekend; I meet many pretty ladies, whom I call gurls and really like them. All of them. Some more than others, but my adoration is probably apparent. Inger is bespectacled; she comes from far, far away in the middle of America and is really pleasant, a pretty smile and coy look, with nice hair. I inform her I am here to help, which is of course greeted warmly, and as we go to the kids' area I explain that I will be helping with Young Adult programming at Interaction.

The kids' area is not in the actual Hynes convention centre but rather in the adjoining Hotel; the join is seamless, and we walk through the concourse, which has sounds of banging and piles of boxes all about.

The kids' area is really very extensive. They have eight rooms, each with a capacity of between 25 to 45 people; they also have a large activity room that would seat about 75 people.

One room is an office, and this is where I start my volunteer work, moving boxes to begin with. There are three general play areas: one for tweenies, which is not manned by volunteers; one room that is for 1–6 year olds; and one for 6–12 year olds. Then there are two rooms for the Kiddie Corp, a childminding service, which is manned by four professionals. There is a general programming room, which is not manned and is accessible to all; and there is a quiet room, where kids who are either stressed out or having a bit of a moment can chill out and relax – something I was a bit wondrous about. The much bigger room is the Gardner; again, this is separate from the 'demilitarised zone' and accessible to all, but is for the larger children's events.

I spend the next number of hours moving boxes and unloading them as they arrive up from the loading dock (on our own trolleys and with our own really hard-working and efficient volunteers). Then we sort out the boxes. The amount of material that these guys have is incredible, about 50 tote boxes in all from Boskone and SF groups

locally, and there was a large amount of donations; this cuts down on the expense required. Just as we think we are finished, boxes arrive from Arisia.

I work hard with Inger and really enjoy it, and we start to set up all the various rooms for their eventual usage. I also quiz Inger on the whole set up of the kids' section. It is vastly different from what I expect or understand Interaction's kids area' to be like.

First off, Noreascon don't really cater for anyone over 12; they just expect that these kids will want to be in the adult programme, which is fair enough as they often do. The kids are then separated into 1–6 and 6–12. Persis looks after the older group and Inger the younger; they fall within the programming arm of the organisation. Then the programme items are further broken down into finer groups such as 2–4 and 5–8 and 9–12.

At some stage I have a short break and go downstairs to the lobby. I meet Mark Plummer and Claire Brialey, who over the weekend act like my own personal death squad (I mean support team), they introduce me to Justin Ackroyd and Richard Lewis who are book dealers. I have a quick enough coffee and head back off.

That afternoon I meet Sandra Childress, who works for Children's Services and is in charge of the various checking-in systems and controls. I work hard all day, and by the evening I am asked if I will be about a bit over the course of the weekend; I let them know I will be, and then they move me up the food chain to staff for Children's Services. This is a shock: from volunteer to staff in 24 hours. It's also great.

Although my plan of working in four different areas on this day is gone askew, I feel very at home and welcomed; but most of all, I am useful to these guys, and I feel part of the team. I like Children's Services.

After my promotion the moment doesn't last long, as more work is required. I get to go shopping with Sandra, with a list from Inger, to buy a selection of foods in case the kids feel hungry or weak.

The trip to the supermarket was fun as I like to see other foods and stuff, and there are certain cultural differences – like what's the fucking deal with burnt biscuits? Foods are sold in bigger bulk in the US: no Tayto Crisps of 40 grams here I am afraid; and I notice that, as I was told, the soft drinks are sweetened with corn syrup – an atrocious additive, much more fattening and generally unsettling for kids than sugar.

After this we spend time sorting stuff out and preparing for Thursday, and the time goes by rather quickly. I unpack boxes, sort the stuff out, and then bring it to the various rooms. I ask occasional questions, and quickly learn what age group is interested in what.

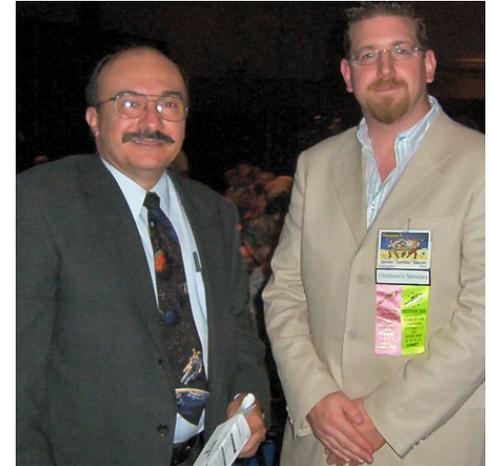
As we go a guy comes up from the gaming room and gives us a selection of stuff; they are cardboard Japanese anime cut outs and games, and these prove hugely popular later. Then other staff pop by from different areas and conventions to make sure we have everything we need or should have, including Rick who is in charge of logistics. I realise that there is huge collateral to be gained from running stuff for kids; there is an incredible amount of

goodwill forthcoming from everyone.

We agree to finish at about 7 PM. I am a bit tired; even so I head off towards the bar. There I see Vince Docherty and many other fans, and then there's a resounding shout of 'James!' I turn to be wrestled in the strong arms of my good friend, Billy Stirling, who is in great form. I see Mark and Claire and we create a sort of area for ourselves.

I am then introduced to Eileen and Peter Weston, whom I had some excellent correspondence with. Eileen is a good-looking lady, and she knows it (as the boy Streets would say), but she is fun with it.

Peter is a good sort and we get on very well. I had seen him at Albacon previously and had heard Tobes make mention of a room party that Peter had invited him to. It was good to meet Peter. He was surprised when I was announced as the TAFF winner that he didn't have a clue who I was; it's a large community, I suppose, but he was a bit miffed with himself as he felt he had let things slip. We made up for this slippage by sipping beer and



Nervous before the Retro Hugos – with Joe

diet Pepsi. He told me his Rat Fan story for the first time at this stage.

We have a few beers and colas here, and chat about various things. It's good to relax; I feel quite hyped, mostly 'cause I was working during the day. I then meet Vince who lets me know where exactly the Interaction party is on. I get him to write it down.

I meet Farah Mendlesohn, who I chat with a lot about Interaction's programme; at this stage I am answering to the Head of Programming for Interaction and since Farah is in charge of literary programme and suchlike it's important that we liaise in order to get lit into young adult programme and vice versa. She is a good laugh.

Pat McMurray chats with me about Australia, and I meet an Australian fan called Zara, who apparently, I am told, is not my type. She's female so this takes me a moment or two to figure out. Farah lets me in on the situation, but it is much later in the weekend when Flick has the courtesy to explain to me in full. I am naïve in such things. It's odd, as Zara is very nice and pretty, and Australian, if you know what I mean: lively. I make great play of her not being my type. *All weekend.*

I chill out in the bar; it's not fucking cheap, but it's good to be with people I know, for a bit at least. It's commented on, and amusingly so, that I am not doing much for making new fan connections yet.

Shortly after this I head back to my own hotel, the Marriott, where the Interaction party is also on, and change for the evening. It's late enough at this stage. I head upstairs with some UK fans to the party; I had met Billy who, strangely enough, had met Paula.

This party again has most of the UK fans at Worldcon present. There is cheese and crackers, which is good, as this will be my dinner for the day. I tuck into anything that looks blueish or Briesh. It's good grub.

I enjoy a bit of craic with Colin Harris, who turns out to be more of a laugh than I expected, and I get him



Insane in the brain

shouting out Mi-Hinge. I am a bit surprised at how easy-going he is, as in email he seems more anal than an analyst, or something; in real life he is much more relaxed and in great form. I meet TR Smith who is Ben Yalow's number two on facilities; she is quite organised and in real life turns out to have a senior position in the US embassy business. I like her; she is very European for a Yank.

The party is more subdued than I would normally expect, but jumping up and down on Vince's wardrobe is not advised. After using the toilet I mock Vince's choice of bathrobe – purple satin is not what I expected – but he lets me know that's TR's bathroom. Blunder.

I discuss a variety of things about the children's programme with Colin, who notices my ribbon. 'A staff ribbon, eh?' he says, a bit surprised.

Ribbons: When you join a Worldcon you receive a rectangular badge. This has your name and number on it. From this badge, ribbons can be hung. Ribbons are a Worldcon tradition, and allow immediate and easy identification of people who require such identification. They are long, and two will usually fit side by side hanging from the badge.

I had received a pale blue volunteer ribbon on Tuesday night; this was then superseded by a light blue staff ribbon on Wednesday. Committee, Area and Division heads and the con Chair all had royal blue ribbons. I also had a participant ribbon, which was dark red. Exhibitors had purple, dealers had pink and artists had some other colour. I also received a special ribbon which was dark pink with gold writing, as I was the TAFF delegate. Norman Cates, the DUFF delegate, received one similar. Ex-Worldcon chairs had a grey ribbon and those who had won Hugos previously or been nominated this year had silver and ivory respectively.

The coolest ribbons were highlighter shades of yellow and pink, which denoted 'comets' and 'satellites' in the children's area. These were really bright, and a big part of checking-in and control in Children's Services. Essentially, kids who could come and go received a comet ribbon and kids who had to always be with parents wore satellites (you get the idea).

I don't like wearing ribbons, so at first I didn't; this was OK until I got hassle from security while I was doing my duties, so I attached a staff one for a while. Vince or Mark or someone else I respected had said I should *really* wear my TAFF ribbon – like I should identify myself – so by Thursday afternoon I did, but I also removed my staff one and replaced it with the dayglow yellow of a comet. When quizzed I would say, honestly, 'It means I can come and go as I like.' The rest of the Children's Services and programming team agreed with my assertion that these were the coolest ribbons, and we all wore them for quick identification.

There were also home-made ribbons, such as 'Evil Smof' and 'Second Generation Fan' (or even third!), along with many convention-related and hoax ribbons.



Our Glorious Leader

Some people wore dozens, and there were even people with all their old Worldcon badges, so long that they dragged along the floor. No one had their badges attached to their cuff, though, which was a shame as I was hoping to meet Dave Lally's evil clone.

I should also mention that various conventions and parties produce tiny stickers, which they attach to your badge. I met one girl who had been to every party, and her badge was covered, totally. There were also badges denoting how many Worldcons people had been to; I found this scary as I met a girl who was 24 who had been to over a dozen. She was pretty too.

I kept my ribbons in my A4 programme guide envelope and, folded neatly, it fitted into the leg pocket of my combat shorts. It was Wednesday, before the con started, and I had already amassed a good stack. The shame.

Colin proves much more fun than I had expected, although in fairness at this stage I am very enthusiastic about many things and this perhaps carries him along.

After the party – which had free booze, although I was mostly on the Diet Pepsi – I went back across to the bar with Billy again. We had another few drinks, and I decided to turn in fairly early.



Persis Thorndike – Childcare Boss

2ND SEPTEMBER. THURSDAY. NOREASCON 4 BEGINS.

The convention begins early over at Children's Services; I was there for 8 AM. I met Persis for the first time, as she was very busy the day before off-site. She was in charge of the programming for kids between 6 and 12. She welcomed me, as Inger and Sharon had, and we got to work making sure everything was set up. At this stage I had gleaned considerable information from their 'kids' programme book and from quizzing Inger. We got the various bits and pieces ready for the beginning of programming, which was at 12.30.

There are more deliveries of children's programming material. Essentially two conventions have passed on the use of their kids' material: Boskone, whose children's programme is known as Dragon's Lair, and Arisia, whose kids' programme is known as Fast Track. I am so impressed with all this.

Persis runs these programmes at both these conventions. Again, she is lovely; she is a little bit older than Inger and also wears glasses, and has a warmth about her. But onwards... She is impressed that I am now staff, although I think as time goes by she sees why, as we run about and make things happen. Time is limited; registration and programming begin at 12.

Then technology raises its horned head. We need to have a couple of TVs set up by 12; it's now 10 and I get detailed with 'make them work'. I do my best, but realise after a while that I haven't a hope. The cables just are not the right ones, and I am flummoxed. I am not a tech-head at all.



Inger Myer – Childcare Boss

I explain the situation and head off to tech ops. There I meet Paul, who is in charge of all of tech. I explain I need some support, and that we need the TVs connected. Oddly he berates me a little bit for not being exact about which room the TVs are situated in, 'children's programme' being too loose for his likening and delegation purposes. I apologise. I am now only wearing a very yellow comet ribbon.

We head off to find a tech support operative. As we go he is friendly; I too am a volunteer, after all. We go into the auditorium and, after a few minutes and two failed attempts at finding someone with more knowledge than me about TVs, I am given to Bill, who is in charge of the auditorium and Paul's deputy. He then passes me to Z (pronounced Zee not Zed) and Seph. Both live nearby and only go to the convention to do tech. I decide the best thing to do is to be a presence; I will wait and be seen rather than go back and have to retrace my steps when I am forgotten. This way I know I will get the job done.

Seph asks me to 'follow him' as he finishes off two other jobs. My presence deters others. He comes over with me to Children's Services, looks at the TV situation and decides we need F cables. He sets the TVs up and we head off again looking for the right parts.

This involves going through the various tech sections that I would never usually see: the control room of the auditorium, the balcony with movie projectors, back rooms and corridors and stairways, all alien to me and off the congoers' beaten track.

Seph suggests I wear my volunteer ribbon. He is a bit surprised when I open my envelope and a selection spill out: 'You ain't here just to help out are you?'

'Mostly,' I reply.

Eventually Seph jury-rigs and builds the cables I require, and borrows the connectors needed from AV HQ Chuck, a big man with a serious moustache.

While this is going on Persis communicates to me that we need the projector set up in the main kids' room by twelve, just as Seph and I part company. I pass on this new request, which is passed forward to Pug, who says it's on the to-do list. I shake hands with Seph and promise to meet him again for a drink perhaps. He is a decent fella; an example of what makes the tech guys tick, or whiz or pop or whatever.

Back at Children's it's starting to come together and participants start to turn up. I set up the control desk, where we check kids in and out, and generally ward off browsers. Just as I finish setting it up, Persis asks me if I know how it works; I do. So she suggests I man it; I do. By 1.30 I have signed in dozens of kids.

The worst bit is explaining to stupid parents what the deal is, and that they cannot just dump their four-year-old off, and yes they have to watch him, and yes it costs money for baby-sitting, and no I don't think a four-year-old would be safe, and how I am so sorry they may miss part of the programme that they had planned to see, and how I have come to realise that parents who don't want to be burdened with their children should

either opt for abortion at an earlier stage or not take them to a convention.

The best bit is the pretty Moms who aren't stupid. There are many of these.

Fortunately, a young man called Bill and a young lady called Bridget are here to help; both in their early teens, they learn quick and are of great assistance, despite parents occasionally choosing to dismiss or ignore them due to their youth. Something I am a bit intolerant of, this, and use any 'people skill' I have and a bit of guile to show this contempt in return: 'I heard what he said; what don't you comprehend?' In fairness the majority of people are just brilliant.

Sandra arrives to take over, and I depart for my first programme item, which is on at 2 PM. On the way I speak to Mark and Claire, who have a dealers' table; this will become a regular stopping point for me, and they prove invaluable with all their varied assistance. It becomes a place where I can get counsel or reassurance – just check I am all right about something – and where I know that there will be familiar faces.

I am aware I need to catch up with the participants for tonight's Pictionary game and thus to track down Teddy Harvia who is doing a slide show at 3 PM and Bob Eggleton who is doing a signing at the same time in a corridor in the Hynes.

Fandom... as a Way of Making Money. Thursday, 2 PM.

I depart for the green room where I meet Bill Roper, who is a filthy filker as I naturally point out to him. Bill actually is a dealer whose main area of business is filk CDs. He also produces and performs his own CDs. We head down to room H205, and settle in. We are shortly joined by Charles N Brown of *Locus* fame.

Charles Brown seemed sort of tired or jaded by it all. He did try to control the panel a bit, but my neck being of the texture of a jockey's bollix I interrupted and swung it around just as much. He was in no way unpleasant though, and when I made mention of the old Flying Pig bookshop in Dublin he remembered attending its opening in 1997 during his visit to Eurocon. I know he wasn't impressed when I brought up my good friend Jason Joiner's lucrative events business, as he muttered disapprovingly, 'Media cons.'

I just don't know; I suppose it's mostly to do with him being old now, and also I got the feeling he had been on similar panels before. Maybe committees rely



The Broken Drum

too much on him, I dunno. It's just a feeling that he's someone who is courteous, yet maybe feels taken for granted, or weary of repetition. Who knows; I doubt he'd admit it.

Norman Cates arrived a bit late, but his addition to the panel was good, since he met his employer at a convention; he had been working for Weta for five years and was going on to work on *King Kong*. I immediately took a liking to my DUFF comrade, and we shook hands warmly; he was not what I was expecting.

The internet raised its head during the panel and all agreed it was the future. Basic business points like having a Unique Selling Point and finding a niche and being prepared to take a little risk were all discussed.

I got a photo of us all, and I thought we had done a decent job of it. My first official panel, and it is not dull.

From there I ran down and introduced myself to Bob Eggleton and then went around and found Teddy Harvia. Interestingly he was talking about Simon Brett as Sherlock Holmes and was a bit surprised when I told him that the actor had gone round the bend, and only after considerable assistance from the TV company was brought back to the straight and narrow.

As I wait, pacing, for Teddy, I fix my ribbons for the weekend, a Comet (bright fluorescent yellow, remember), and my pink and gold TAFF. A girl (pretty) in a whispered voice asks me what TAFF is about, and I tell her.

Later I was to be a judge in a mock trial of Terry Pratchett. This was all Sparks's fault. He had suggested it, as he was at Inconsequential (in 1992 in the UK) where Terry was first put on trial. There were notes from that trial somewhere, but no one had them, although I assumed the moderator did. Meanwhile I went back to kids' and went through their fabrics and stole black and red cloth and some fake white fur for a wig, along with a large reel of sellotape; I deposited these with Mark and Claire, and agreed to meet them at 6.15 in the fanzine lounge.

I continued running.

Your Dream Convention. Thursday, 4 PM.

At 4 PM I was on another panel: my dream convention. I had spent some time working out exactly what I would do with the \$20 million I had been left.

As we entered, I met Harry Harrison and informed him that Mike Carroll sent his best wishes. I like Harry, although I don't know him at all; by which I mean that he is a great friend of a great friend, so I feel I know him well enough – although I reckon he recognises me but that's about it. He congratulates me on my TAFF win.

David Howell of *Foolscap* fame (a small Seattle convention) was the moderator. On this panel were Mike Glyer, who was affable and quite amusing, Roger Sims (who unfortunately despite being very pleasant had little to say), and Andrew Porter.

I started off with my plans, which had the con taking place in a large castle near Shannon airport in the west of Ireland. My ideas were as follows: rides in MIG29s; a huge Vomit Comet party; Ferrari's, Jordan F1, a tank. Amazing guests, such as Tim Burton and Harrison Ford. A PDA for a programme book; a trunk of cool stuff and



Norm, Charlie, James and Bill – Making cash

a batman to carry it; go-go girls; trips to EuroDisney; the finest beers and whiskeys on the planet and so on. I got a hard time for my sexist suggestions, and I said the women could have massage boys if they wished.

Although initially encouraging, Andrew Porter railed against my idea, saying that he would spend it on getting ill and infirm fans to a convention. This Red Cross Con sounded boring as hell. Eventually the guy who came up with the idea, who was lurking in the crowd, seemed to get a bit annoyed as this panel that was intended to be exuberant and fun wasn't. He pointed out to Andrew that he was missing the point.

Various trust funds and everlasting conventions came up, and Dave Howell's idea of a vast convention train, forever going from state to state, was also interesting.

It was OK. I enjoyed it, but wished that there had been more madness to the panel.

I ran some more. Down the stairs. I had less than 5 minutes.

Welcome to the SF Community: Making Connections. Thursday, 5 PM.

I got to this panel somewhat late as I had in fact stopped for a moment to speak to Dave Howell, who I had somewhat warmed to.

I sat down; already Grant Kruger, a very amiable South African, was laying out badges with a variety of sayings on them. Elaine Brennan, who was an assistant to Deb Geisler, the con Chair, espoused the getting involved track.

I concurred with this, and explained to people that I had met quite a few fans at this stage and all without wearing my TAFF badge.

Grant and Joel Zakem were much more gentle than my convert approach, and both went on to give loads of information about various aspects of conventions that would lead people to come into contact with others, and ultimately make new friends. The panel went well and we answered many questions.

At the end of the panel I led a posse of girls, all of whom were pretty,

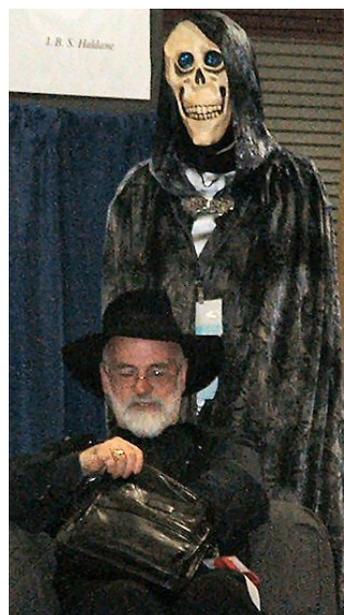
down to the Voodoo boards and more importantly the party lists, and told them all to show up at that evening's TAFF and DUFF reception, as I would be there and welcoming.

I then legged it into the Fanzine lounge, which was adjacent to the huge lobby that housed the lists.

Terry On Trial. Thursday, 7pm. Concourse.

I was very unsure of my role and task in the trial, and was a bit edgy about the situation. There was a stage set up in the concourse, open to all to view; I assumed, correctly as it turned out, that this was to be the venue for the trial.

Claire and Mark helped me dress and wrapped me



In the shadow of Death

WorldConNomicon

in sellotape, and soon enough I resembled an English or for that matter Irish Judge. There was talk of ermine, and stoats.

I noticed some activity at about ten to seven and went up, clad as I was. I there met Jay Caselberg, an English fan and writer who I didn't know and a charismatic fellow in the Withnail sense. I was later told he was Australian, but he look's way too slight and British for an Australian, well, maybe he is.

I asked him if he had the note. His blank look was concerning. I informed him he was the moderator, that this was based on a previous event, that he was prosecuting counsel and should have a case prepared. He looked somewhat ruffled. Terry Pratchett, the defendant, and Esther Friesner for the defence met us, as did Mary Kay Kare who was dressed as Nanny Ogg. I was a bit amused.

In fairness Jay winged it really well. He had an interesting prosecution, and I roared out 'Order', and the defence was excellent. What saved the day was that Terry knew he would be needed to be dramatic and he was, to great effect. He was very good at squirming and when I decided to pronounce him guilty it was fun to have him clutching my hand on his knees, as I pronounced a sentence of book signing.

Jay was lucky, although in fairness he improvised really, really well. Everyone thought it was a great laugh, and it went off very well. To my surprise many people heard how well it went, but I concurred with both Mark and Claire that it was nowhere as good as the original version. I vowed later I would get Sparks. I was also surprised that Jay was UK-based as I didn't have a clue who he was! Amazing: fandom is much bigger than anything I think. Good fun all the same.

DUFF/TAFF reception. Thursday, 8 PM. Fanzine lounge.

I walked literally across the concourse to the fanzine lounge where Mark and Claire helped me to undress. Here, once free of my judicial garb, I met many fanzine fans and previous TAFF and DUFF winners. I was pleasantly surprised at how many people were along for this. I did my best to be affable and friendly.

This party was thrown by Guy and Rose-Marie Lillian, and was quite good. I got a good chance to chat to Norman Cates. I didn't realise but it was billed as a 'DUFF and taff' thing, so John Hertz in the meantime arranged a 'TAFF and duff' reception for Saturday. These guys went out of their way to be pleasant. Guy is such a larger than life character, always smiling, and John was impeccable and terribly well-mannered. John is the sort of chap who adds gentle to man.



Judge and prosecutor



Kneel before Zod, er... I mean Gaspode!

Flick turned up at the con during the reception, which was nice, although she was a bit shell-shocked, as she doesn't like tunnels (surely a paradox. I always reckoned she'd have loved tunnels). Also having her luggage go astray was a balls-up. She was sharing my room, so I gave her a key.

I met the pretty girls I had met earlier; actually South African Grant, who was producing a 'first night' fanzine, told me that they were there. I was actually wary of being overly lecherous, but went over and we chatted and they were enjoying it all. I then met another girl who was unaware of the party info so, not wanting to leave the ladies unattended, I called over Peter Weston, introduced him to the girls and explained my motive. He took up the gauntlet; I could hear, as I took this lady arm-in-arm away to the voodoo boards, the words: 'Why aren't you a guest of honour?'

This girl had a twin sister, so I took my time showing them the party info; they promised to meet me at one of them no doubt. One of them was Kammy, which I know for sure. Personally I would have loved them both to be kammy. Back into the lounge and Peter was doing grand.

I took time now to prepare for my next panel, which was at 11 PM. I had already asked Claire for ideas earlier in the day for Pictionary and I decided upon a two-team format and prepared clues as required.

Mark was a great help; occasionally I would hear a call of 'James' and Mark would introduce me to someone else. Everyone was keen to meet me, which was of course very gratifying although somewhat embarrassing. Luckily I was in great form.

As I went to the loo, I passed by the wand-making Children's Services stall, and had a quick gander about. It seemed very successful; the concourse was full of people, and everyone was having a good time.

As the reception died down, I made my excuses and went off to find the stage and easels and my fellow programme participants.

Pictionary. Thursday, 11 PM. The corridor outside the Concourse.

The easels were there as promised, on a stage, and so were Mike Dashew, who I had failed to meet, and Teddy and Bob, both of whom I had met. There was no sign of Joseph De Vito. Now Claire and Mark had done an excellent job, and later Justin had added a few too, helping me with clues, and I had two sets of cards, for two teams. With no sign of Joe, I suggested that we just have the artists pit themselves against the time, with the audience trying to guess the answer. All agreed, and we set up an easel for times, and I looked through the cards. I pulled out three similar items, and introduced everyone

to the assembling crowd, and the game began.

It was bloody great fun.

Some of Claire's suggestions are tough, and they get the guys going. The literary ones are the hardest and as they struggle with the likes of 'The Nine Billion Names of God' and "'Repent, Harlequin!'" Said The Ticktockman' – not to mention Peter's fanzine *Zenith/Speculation* – there is a good laugh at their consternation. The longest one takes over three minutes, a long time in Pictionary terms. The shortest ones, though, were incredible. I said, 'A TV programme' and before Bob has even gone to the easel and I start the clock, 'Star Trek!' is shouted. And there is much laughter as it's correct. This sort of thing happens a couple of times, and therefore there is a good mix.

We continue on to just after 12. It gets a bit manic for me, as I start to write up answers on cards as we go, since we need many more due to this new format. By the end everyone is impressed, the area is well crowded and I thank the lads for a great job. I must admit it felt so like a convention item at home, at last. I note nodding committee members as the panel finishes, a good idea done well, I hope.

The parties are in full swing in the hotel, and I make my way into the Japanese party where I meet Billy, Julie Rigby and Paula. I tuck into more cheese and crackers, dinner number two of this ilk.

I enjoy soft drinks as the girls and lads enjoy sake, beer and lost of nibbles. I get a headscarf and various other bits. I am an odd sod, and must admit to some xenophobia; I just don't really know any Japanese people, I suppose. But at least this opportunity offers me the chance to conquer that wrong.

We have a good laugh, and I meet other fans. Stuff starts closing at 1.30 AM, though, which we found rather strange and odd – like it's early. We head downstairs to the Sheraton's bar and we drink more till about 2.20 AM when they close the bar. Am

I shocked, you bet I am. The three of us leave and Billy and I go back to the Marriott.

It was funny; I got into the room, and a pretty girl was in my bed, even worse wearing one of my worn shirts. Crikey. I gently slip into the sheets, She is occasionally restless, but she doesn't wake up. Warm too, nice and warm, and girly like.

I turned over and went to sleep.

3RD



After the judgement



Improving relations with my boss

SEPTEMBER. FRIDAY. NOREASCON.

I wake up. There is a girl lying next to me. Hurrah. It's not my girl. Damn.

At this stage I should mention that I had met my girl, Simone at Sproutlore's 'Brentcon' weekend, a mere four weeks previously. She had read more Robert Rankin books than I had; she was pretty, fit as fuck, tanned all over, and not interested in me. Or so I thought, but then before I travelled to Noreascon we went for dinner, she made the best lasagne ever, and it was great. I was a bit taken, and we hung out some more, and got on as you do. I had only known her three weeks, and going out a wet week, but even so, now, with my being away, I missed her quite a bit.

So now I wake up, and there is a girl lying next to me. She is pretty, warm, and wearing my shirt. It's Flick. I ponder: we have never got it together, and you'd expect we would have at some stage. The great unknown forever.

After my shower I head off. It's early enough, but it's all guns blazing at Children's Services. I have committed to working the morning, doing a few TAFF things during the afternoon and returning for close of business in the evening.

I take up my position on the front desk and start signing the kids in and out. We have a great system going and Bill helps, getting people to fill in their kids' information on stickers that go behind the badges. Each child gets given their own kids' programme booklet. It's awesome; I count over 150 programme items in five continuous streams. That's bigger than an Octocon and a Novacon put together. Jaysus.

Some of the more interesting panels in the kids' really pique my interest. The 'Liquid Nitrogen Ice Cream' and 'Care and Feeding of Mythical Creatures' were two that stuck in my mind from Thursday. Today it gets better. It starts at 9.30 AM, with dancing and fun with foam, a magician, a look at Mars, and a panel demystifying relativity – all examples of the diversity of today's programme for kids. Making your own rapier seems like the most popular panel today, and it's all hectic fun.

I get a chance to chat to Persis about the retro Hugos and she tells me about how her friend is actually running them. I explain I must go down in the afternoon to sort some things out, and she is cool.

I head off after lunch; and I check in with Mark and Claire, and give them a heads-up on my TAFF situation; it's good to chat. I then head off to try to sort out the Retro Hugo responsibilities that I have.

I wrote about this separately for Tommy Ferguson's fanzine *TommyWorld*. That's the second piece that follows, which aptly captures how I felt; more importantly, first is a piece by Mark and Claire. I asked them to write it on Saturday and handed them my (well, Stef's) laptop and they did so while I was working in kids'. It is a different and, I hope, amusing version of events.

James White Wins (by Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer)

James appeared in the dealers' room again, like an Irish version of Zebedee with frightening trousers. (BOING!) TAFF is partly about making connections, and at this Worldcon some of the connections were about Irish fandom. The nominations for the retro Hugo awards for 1953 included Walt Willis and James White as fanwriters and the fanzines *Slant* and *Hyphen*, and James was primed to accept on behalf of James – the Irish forename famine continues to this day – should the need arise, with Joe Siclari similarly lined up as a non-lookalike Willis.

James – the modern variant – was a little apprehensive about this role, since he felt it was very important that he shouldn't do anything wrong and ruin the situation for (classic) James's family. He tried to find the words to express the complex emotions in play: 'I'm shitting myself, he confided in a characteristically rather loud whisper. 'I've asked the family for something to say, but how could I stand up there for James White?' Then he brightened. 'Still, it's not going to happen, is it?' And off he went, happy again, to look after children. (BOING!)

A couple of hours later, he was back (BOING!) 'I want to make sure I say the right ting if James White wins. If I come back later, can you help?' We arranged to meet in the food court before the retro Hugo ceremony. 'I'll be wearing a cream linen suit,' James explained, 'with a checked shirt.' We assured James that we thought we would be able to spot him on the grounds that we already knew what he looked like. 'I'm shitting myself,' James reiterated by way of explanation. Then he remembered. 'But it's all right, because it won't happen.' Then he thought of something else that might count as *Doing the Wrong Ting*: 'Do you think I need a tie?' We encouraged him to go the *Vinç Clarke* way and not to worry. And then he was gone. (BOING!)

So later, in the food court, James appeared, fitting his description of himself and looking alarmingly smart and slightly subdued in the way he does when he's being official. (boing) 'The good news is that I've got a message from the family,' he announced; 'the bad news is that I can't possibly use it all.' James White's family wanted to make clear, should he win a retro Hugo, that they appreciated what James Bacon has done with the James White short fiction award in particular; and however much James respects them, he wanted at all costs to avoid standing on a stage talking about himself – although he remained convinced, despite his own belief that James White should win at least part of a retro Hugo award, that it wasn't going to happen. But, y'know, just in case, James didn't want to be caught having to talk a lot of old wank about himself; and he suspected that having to edit it while trying to say it would also end up as being less perfect than he thought the whole thing should be.



The Hugo

So we sat in the food court and James read the little speech a few times and tried out a few edits; and we suggested a couple of words he was searching for, and Tom Becker provided a few refinements so that the same speech would work for either award; and James decided that it would probably do, since it wasn't going to happen anyway. So he got up to go to meet Joe and checked that he looked OK. And Tom asked if James were going to



Thursday night with Peter

wear a tie, and James looked all unsettled again, and we all reassured him that everything was fine. And off he went, determined to do the right thing, if only it were going to happen (boing).

The fanzine and fanwriter awards were scheduled to come first in the ceremony, leaving James little time left in which to metaphorically shit himself. But still the theremin played and, as Peter Weston was led onto the stage by his seeing-eye fan with the expression of a man who'd had as much advance preparation time as for a Hicks and Siddall extravaganza, we discussed the nominees with Tom and with Lennart Uhlin and wondered whether the stellar quality of Redd Boggs's *Skyhook* would or should outweigh the many attractions of Irish Fandom. And then there was more theremin, and Peter and Bob Eggleton went through some scripted business which sadly didn't involve either of them trying to climb into the red pedalcar on the raised part of the stage, and then Bob Tucker was acclaimed as best fanwriter of 1953 and we thought we could sense the mood of the wider voting public.

But then *Slant* won best fanzine. And Joe and James climbed the steps to the podium without bouncing at all, and took it in turns to hold the Hugo and to speak solemnly and seriously and utterly appropriately about Walt Willis and James White; and James got to the part that was still a little about him, and on the big screen his mouth twisted a little and we knew he was embarrassed. But in every way it seemed like the Right Ting was happening.

After that James was really quite happy, despite the prospect of having to take a rocket-shaped thing from the US to Ireland in his luggage. We all went to the fanzine lounge with the Hugo and people took photographs and James, the Zebedee of Irish Fandom whose linen suit looked by now in need of a trouser press, got his bounce back. Literally.

BOING. BOING! BOING.

¹ There's a reason he wanted someone else to write this up.

When Irish Eyes are Smiling: My Retro Hugo experience on behalf of James White

It was a huge honour for me last July when I was asked by the family circle of James White to accept the Retro Hugo award at the Worldcon should James win.

James White was nominated in two categories in the retro Hugos for 1953. What are the retro Hugos, you may ask; well, here is the official bit from the WSFS Constitution:

Section 3.13: *Retrospective Hugos*. (<http://worldcon.org/bm/const-2002.html>)

A Worldcon held 50, 75, or 100 years after a Worldcon at which no Hugos were presented may conduct nominations and elections for Hugos which would have been presented at that previous Worldcon. Procedures shall be as for the current Hugos. Categories receiving insufficient numbers of nominations may be dropped.

WorldConNomicon

Once retrospective Hugos have been awarded for a Worldcon, no other Worldcon shall present retrospective Hugos for that Worldcon.

(“World Science Fiction Convention” “Worldcon” and “Hugo Award” are service marks of the World Science Fiction Society, an unincorporated literary society.)

Here were the nominations and categories that James was in contention for:

Best Fanzine of 1953:

- *Hyphen* – ed. Chuck Harris and Walt Willis
- *Quandry* – ed. Lee Hoffman
- *Science Fiction Newsletter* – ed. Bob Tucker
- *Sky Hook* – ed. Redd Boggs
- *Slant* – ed. Walt Willis, art ed. James White

Best Fanwriter of 1953:

- Redd Boggs
- Lee Hoffman
- Bob Tucker
- James White
- Walt Willis

So fellow Belfast man, Walt Willis, was also in for fanwriter. Willis had a good chance of picking up a Hugo, as his other fanzine *Hyphen* was also nominated for best fanzine.

The field was tough. I thought it best and proper to be relaxed and stoic about the situation, treating it somewhat academically, lest I get over-excited.

James White and Walter Willis met in August 1947, after James had sent a letter to a British SF prozine. James and Walt with their common interest became firm friends and in 1948 they started *Slant*, the first Irish fanzine.

James White was art editor on *Slant*, and it ran for seven issues from 1948 until 1953. Walt Willis was the editor. James was very good at lino artwork and the covers and interior artwork were stunning for the time. This took tremendous practice and patience. James also typeset the zine.

James began his writing career by adding a comment to a piece by Clive Jackson, in *Slant* issue 4:

[These views on the great Smith are not those of the typesetter, J. White.]

In 1952 James had a con report published in Vince Clarke’s *SFN* and was also writing articles for *Hyphen*. By 1953 he had his first piece of paid fiction published in *New Worlds* 19.

Nevertheless, *Slant* marked the beginning of a Golden Age of fanzine fandom, and the beginning of what would always be known as Irish Fandom.

Nothing is ever easy, and the preparation that goes into a Hugo presentation is huge. I contacted the organisers informing them of my good luck, that I would be the TAFF delegate at a convention where James White was nominated for an award.

Unfortunately, what with the retro Hugo organisers receiving about 500 emails a day, somehow my mail got a bit lost. I sent a few more follow-ups adding that I had been asked to accept, should the academic question arise, but having been involved in conventions myself and knowing how crappy my own email is, let alone anyone else’s, I was not at all surprised when I found out that they had not reached their destination.

I have always said that the James White Award is



With James’s award in the fanzine lounge

easy to run, because everyone is so prepared to help to honour the memory of someone so nice and wonderful as James White. Many share my personal admiration for James, and one such person, Geri Sullivan, was well known to me.

Geri is James White’s biggest fan. She corresponded with James frequently. She collected his Lensman award on his behalf, and hosted him when he was a GOH at the convention she ran. Geri also came to Ireland to meet Walt Willis and Chuck Harris and other Irish fans including, of course, James White. I had corresponded with her quite a bit, as she is an immeasurable source of information that predates my fecking birth, let alone my coming to this subject.

Geri was there for me too. When I arrived at Worldcon, the last thing I wanted to do was to be a pain in the arse. I wanted to get involved, help out, be part of the solutions, not one of the problems.

In saying that, I was tasked with a duty, honoured and pleasurable as it was; all the same, I had to make sure all was set.

I met Geri, and we immediately got on in person as in words, birds of a feather and all that. I explained that I had a lack of confirmation, but she was all grins and confidence.

Apparently, when I won TAFF, Geri had suggested that I would be a suitable person to receive the award on James’s behalf, if the committee had problems contacting the family.

This is not unusual. Worldcon committees who decide to present retro Hugos have an unenviable task of tracking down people – often the families of potential winners. Sometimes they fail to do so, between the nomination and presentation, and on such occasions individuals can spend considerable time and money getting the Hugo to the winner.

I explained that James’s family had asked me, and she nodded approvingly; my connection with the James White Award and the information pages and, of course, my regular contact apparently made me the obvious choice. I dunno; I was so honoured to be asked I was surprised at that.

Geri had things all set up for me. She had my special

invite to the ceremony, and introduced me to Joe Siclari who was accepting on behalf of Walt Willis. He was really friendly, and another host of James White at a convention he ran.

Geri then introduced me to Jill Eastlake who was running the retro Hugos, a mammoth task. Jill was so pleased to see me, and obviously remembered Geri’s correspondence, as she knew what I was about. Apparently she had problems with email, and was very apologetic about the lack of a reply; I was nonchalant about this, since like everything else, all was set for me. No, I should say all was set for James White.

Thanking Geri, I went back to work and agreed to meet Joe at a given time before the ceremony. I have to admit, I so wanted James to win. The Hugo was the one award that eluded James, and I knew that he would have loved to win it.

At the same time, I did not set my hopes too high. The competition was fierce and a loss would be depressing enough for me personally, so I remained stoic about it, and decided that it was all academic.

I had received a very nice and complimentary speech from Pat Larkin, and he had given me permission to adjust it as I felt needed.

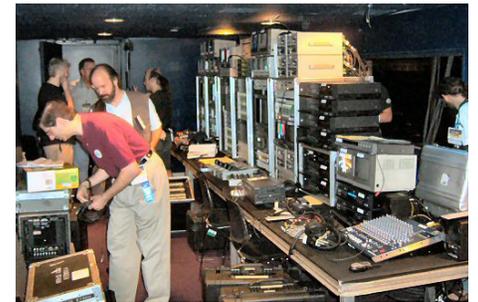
I did so, just a little bit, essentially taking bits out about ‘me’ and adding more in way of mentioning his fanac and links to fans. I reckoned James would have been tremendously grateful, were he to win.

I received assistance from Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, who I had talked to on numerous occasions during the day, along with some last minute suggestions from Tom Becker.

I was truly shitting myself. As the night approached, I left Children’s Services to go to get ready. I had bought a linen suit especially for this, something I thought was quintessentially ‘50s and, well, Irish of course. I made sure I looked well; it’s important, representing friends, I reckoned and worth the effort, even if academic.

I met Mark and Claire one more time, for the once-over, and then met Joe at the large auditorium where the presentations were taking place. It could house about 3,500 people and the committee reckoned a good 2,500 were present.

A special area, with huge leg-room, was available



Mission Control

for presenters and receivers. Bob Eggleton was the MC and Peter Weston interviewed the Guests of Honour as we went back to 1953 thanks to the sound of theremins. (Not dead animals, music tings.)

As the time for the awards approached, I was really nervous, but that was academic.

Best Fanwriter and Fanzine were the first two awards to be presented. My heart sank when I heard Bob Tucker win best fan writer, but then this is what I had convinced myself to expect, so I was not too visibly down.

As I heard the acceptance speech, I adjusted my own, well, I mean James’s family’s acceptance speech a little more.

Then when the Best Fanzine winner was read out, my heart and stomach leapt as ‘*Slant*’ was called out, to tumultuous applause. I paused for a moment, and Joe turned and said, ‘This is us,’ and I stood with him and walked up to the stage and up the steps.

I was studying the floor, keen not to miss my footing. We got there and Joe was handed the Hugo; there was only one, you see. Joe passed the Hugo to me and stepped



Me, Geri and Joe

up to the podium and said his speech, quoting Walt Willis and thanking everyone.

I then stepped forward and read out the speech, occasionally looking up out at the vast darkness that held the audience. There were some words and phrases, especially of thanks, that I wanted to emphasise.

There was quite a bit of applause afterwards and we stepped to the side of the stage and down to the back stage area. We should have walked back out and around but, in the silence and privacy of the rear area, I asked Joe for a moment to catch my breath; I was a bit uneasy on my feet.

The rest of the retro Hugos flew by, and afterwards Joe and I made our way to the fanzine lounge, an appropriate place to gather, since this was a fanzine Hugo.

There many UK fans met us and many photos were taken; everyone revered the Hugo with great respect. We spoke to Deb Geisler, and she was very apologetic about not having a second Hugo ready; we were of course nonchalant about this, as another was promised. And most importantly – selfishly, I must admit – from my point of view was that it had been agreed that I would take the one we had back with me so that I could present it to Peggy White and Pat and Patricia Larkin upon my return.

At this stage Geri Sullivan caught up with us, and she was moved with joy; such emotion triggered considerable upset, as we all remembered one who is now longer with us. To be expected, no doubt, under the circumstances.

From here, Joe and Geri went for dinner, but I knew I should go to the Interaction party, which I did, to catch up with many UK fans that were preparing it.

On my way, I met fellow Irish fans James Peart and Rod O'Hanlon. As soon as Pearto saw the Hugo, he pointed and called out, 'James White!' He could see from my broad grin that it was so. Pearto roared out, 'HUGO! HUGO!' and was soon joined by the booming voices of Rod and others in their company, as the corridor filled with their cheers.

Vince Doherty, Worldcon chair and no stranger to Ireland's shores, looked tremendously pleased, and somewhat proud, as he held the Hugo in the Interaction party. He too knew James White well, having visited him in Belfast on occasion. All present were well impressed with the deserved win.

At this stage, I was worried that something untoward might occur to the award, so I went back to my hotel room, and gently stored the Hugo secretly in a drawer with my shirts.

I then went back to the parties, which had an added fervour about them. It was at this stage that I met a bunch of new fans, and we hung out quite a bit; I had intended to meet up with Joe and Geri, but missed them. The night continued well, with much celebration.



The fanzine panel

I walked, sober enough back to my hotel room, and it was about 4 AM, Boston time. I phoned Pat and Patricia to tell them the good news; I had tried earlier, when I had secured the award, but it was 5 AM in Belfast then and they slept through the ringing.

I went through the whole evening with Patricia, and she was so pleased, as any daughter would be. Later I phoned Peggy White. We spoke at length, and it is true to say that she was very happy, although understandably



the green room, for guests, Not as good as room 608

moved by the award.

Of course, somewhere beyond this mortal coil, I imagine a gentle, softly-spoken man is smiling. I hope he is smiling at this well-deserved recognition from his fans and fandom, but more than likely his warm eyes are aglow at the thoughts of so much happiness over something he would no doubt make little of.

It appears that authors don't just bring joy through their words.

The speech:

The family circle of the late James White are delighted that James should be honoured in this way. James was as much a fan as an author and always enjoyed conven-



With Geri Sullivan at the pre Hugo party

tions, and made many friends around the world. It is wonderful to know so many people appreciate and love James's fan activity.

We believe it is truly a fitting tribute that an Irish fan, a guest of fans, and one of James's youngest friends, who continues to honour James's memory with the James White short story award, is here to accept the greatest honour fans can award: a Hugo.

Many thanks to you all. **End Speech**

Back to the convention: it's still Friday night and I had left the Hugo safely back in my room. But I had left out a programme item!

Beyond the Con: Connecting with Worldwide Fandom. Friday, 4 PM.

This was a very international panel. Jim Young, who proved very friendly, was in charge and we were joined by Norman from New Zealand, Anna Feruglio Dal Dan from Italy, and John-Henri Holmberg from Sweden.

We talked about our own countries, and I talked also about the UK, mentioning fanzines such as *Zoo Nation*, which got some heads in the audience nodding in agreement. I also spoke a little about Irish Fandom of the '50s and about Interaction, with great fervour. I found Anna most interesting, as there is not a huge fandom in Italy, and John-Henri seemed to have the best anecdotes; a good panel.

That night, after I had secured the retro Hugo, I went

to the Japan in 2007 party and again feasted on cheese and free stuff. I contributed quite a bit to the fund. I picked up Julie, Billy, and Paula again; it seemed like these guys were always where I was just about to walk into which was great, as I hate being on my own.

I also met Colin Harris and we had a big pow-wow. This went very well, and he talked me through what would be required of Stef and I for YAFA at Interaction. He also made a number of requests, in regard to what we had undertaken, and the brief doubled as we undertook (well, Stef didn't know this, of course) to run all aspects of Young Adult programming: talks, literature, science, the Gaylaxians; you name it, we were to have it, as well as the mad stuff. It's funny watching Vince and Colin wince as I mention my ideas. Anyhow, we got on tremendously well, which culminated for me in one of the best moments of the con.

Colin: 'I'd like you to get in touch with science people. Look at the NASA display here; we need to think along those lines.'

James: 'NASA! Yeah, that would be deadly. Can they bring a centrifuge?'

Colin: 'No, they can't... but you can make one.'

And so the Harris Centrifuge was born, and at around 30 MPH or about 16 revolutions a minute, we may just get to feel one G-force. That's if it doesn't fall apart...

I had missed Geri and Joe, through lack of time-keeping, but decided that I should party; the guys were all there.

Earlier I met some Irish guys in a corridor; as I wrote, there was a huge cheer as James Peart greeted me following James White's win, and Pearto gave me the heads up on the parties to go to. This was a trend that continued over the weekend: Pearto would report the best places for free booze, and I would tell anyone I met where to go.

I met one such group of lads and ladies, all much more my junior, and suggested that they try out James's recommendations; they were amazed to see I knew where the booze was.

Shortly after Billy, Paula and I went to Xerps in 2010, where Millie and Frank had a wonderful punch; it was all decorated in a mad fashion. Then from here we went to the Tron party which was a bit odd, then over to the



The Higgins Armoury Sword Guild - well one of them



Good reception from Guy Lillian and co.

Marriott to the end of Caroline Mullan's 25-years-a-fan celebration, which had some excellent booze. We got in just in time to fill up on grub and booze, and then shortly after we all got thrown out, which was fair enough.

From there we went back to the Sheraton, holding our freshly acquired drinks to the Brotherhood without Banners party; after having found the bar closed, and most parties dying, here the booze was excellent and the serving girls better. These guys are fans of George R R Martin, and were great craic; I met an Irish fan of GRRM, who was sound, and settled here for the rest of the night. Various people who I had advised to go here turned up and greeted me warmly, like some booze guru.

George then arrived announcing this was the last party going, which received a resounding cheer. Billy and himself hugged; Billy knows George really well and I think his fans were surprised, but we were 'in there'. I decided to drink some vodka and be sociable. It was after 3 AM when I headed back to the Marriott; an amazing day, not yet over, as I then made contact with James White's family.

My bed was warm, what with a girl clutching her bear. Quite.

4TH SEPTEMBER. SATURDAY. NOREASCON

I woke up early and made contact with Peggy White. It was a very moving affair altogether, and I managed not to wake Flick.

I went straight over to Children's Services and took up my position on the desk.

I was on a bit of a buzz to be honest, and was ecstatic about the result from the previous night. During the morning, a number of people whom I had met the night previous came down to say hello. Also a number of UK fans came down to take a picture of me working in Children's Services, and they did so with much glee.

On Saturday morning an incident occurred which really showed me the 'other' side of parenting. There had been isolated incidents of kids going a bit haywire, but that was generally OK. It was mid-morning and Bill was registering in people. It's tough sometimes as the parents don't want to know; they just want to dump their kids somewhere.

So I am dealing with a pair of kids as Bill explains to a couple who have two children what the deal is with comets and satellites; both their kids are comets, so this meant that a parent would have to be present. I calmly watched from the corner of my eye as I dealt with a pressing situation. The parents were not impressed, and were very dismissive of Bill. In the meantime, their children were wandering about. The Mom was not happy and called the Dad to discuss this unpalatable situation of having to miss some programming for the sake of the children. They were unhappy.

Meanwhile, they had neglected both children. The little fella was wandering up the hall, and the daughter was at the lifts, which were adjacent to the children's section; and then she shouted at her mother that her brother was in the lift.

The mother jumped and jammed her arm in the lift

and panicked and screamed and then, once she and her husband had frantically heaved open the lift, found that it was empty. She then freaked, thinking her son was now on one of a couple of dozen floors. I pointed out her son was behind her. Her daughter had imagined the incident. It took five seconds. The parents, now in pain, embarrassed and angry, turned on Bill, and said, 'That's your fault.' I was diplomatic as I stood up, and dealt with them.

Such is the way with parents who want to have a good time; no matter how hard Persis and Inger and Sandra worked, one or two parents were never happy. The Noreascon children's programme was hailed as a huge achievement, an improvement over all previous programmes and a great success. But sure, there's always one or two. Leave at Gran's, that's all they need to do.

Meanwhile Bill was introducing me to Jewish ways, he being Jewish, and I learned to register kids whose parents couldn't do it because it was the Sabbath. I also asked other questions. Meanwhile, Bridget and Bill were, well, friendly enough occasionally, and also sneering at one another occasionally.

Saturday was a peak for kids. I went down and found the Higgins armoury sword guild, who were doing a



With Julie at Xerps party on Friday

display next to registration, and brought them en masse up to Children's; they were great. Again, the mention of Children's Services opened many doors to me; these lads, all armoured and brandishing serious weapons, were impressed that I was working with kids.

I had insisted others take breaks, including Persis and Inger as well as Bill and Bridget. So I too took lunch today and went up and feasted in Room 608. This was a volunteer suite: a complex of rooms, laid out for gophers and staff alike. Now, there was a consuite, which I had walked or run by often, but this was one level up again.

There were three rooms. One room had a huge selection of food, meats, salads, breads, bars, cans, coffee, everything. It was great; I made a couple of huge sandwiches, with all types of pastrami and suchlike, and took ten minutes to munch it down. I met Zara and Pat again

here, and turned down the offer of a shoulder massage, although not from Zara; she didn't offer mind, but that was OK as she was not my type.

This was amazing, the way a con *should* look after its gophers and staff. It's a tiny cost out of the hundreds of thousands that are spent, but it's a great investment in people, who then work their holes off for the convention.

Afterwards I did another spell in the children's area, and then went over to the auditorium for the Hugo presentation rehearsal. I met Dalroy Ward who, along with Edie Stern, was running the Hugos – another gentleman. I told him I would not let him down on the dress front, and thanked him for the honour bestowed upon me.

It was rather clear what was to be done, and I met Neil Gaiman for the first time who was the MC for the night, norm introduced me to him. He was really friendly, and I liked him; he has a natural way about himself.

Anyhow, that went well. Norman and myself were chatting much as this went on; getting to know one another better, but also sharing experiences, commenting on what was what, that sort of thing. I headed off soon after, called by Mark and Claire and ran away back to Children's.

TAFF/duff reception. Saturday, 4 PM. Fan Lounge.

Later in the day, John Hertz hosted a TAFF reception. It was good and I met loads of people, including Mike Resnick; not that he chatted long, but long enough for him to tell me that he was always prepared to be a judge on the James White Award (hurrah).

John had laid on afternoon tea, and cakes. I met loads of fans, whom I didn't know but should have known and again Mark was in hand to introduce me to them. I met Rusty Hevelin, Mike Glycer, Janice Murray, Richard Lynch, Spike Parsons, Saul Jaffe, the very affable Steve Stiles, Frank Lunney, Milt Stevens, and that chap Victor Gonzalez – some of whom I think I had met before! – and Rose-Marie and Guy Lillian were also present again.

Mark took some time out to advise me on purchasing some fanzines, and I listened as older TAFF winners explained that they had broken the TAFF mould by not being huge fanzine people. And there was me thinking that I was the one breaking the mould!

I had been informed that Naomi Fisher was looking for me as Terry Pratchett was seeking me out. Naomi is a beautiful woman as opposed to pretty girl, mostly because she was pregnant, which always adds beauty to a girl I reckon and she had an elegance about herself, anyhow. Sheila Perry, who was this very pretty girl who was running the information section, had let me know that I was being sought out.

Sheila was brilliant, although a bit catholic when I attempted flirting; she helped me out loads, despite her obvious disapproval of my flirtatious manoeuvres. We got on well.

Terry was signing at 5 PM, so I went and sought Naomi and myself out. At the head of a queue there was the man signing hard, and I walked up and introduced myself. Terry interrupted the signing and greeted me. He then handed over \$280 for TAFF. I was astonished,



Banner Border Broads

although very grateful; he explained that he raised it at the UK Discworld convention in August, at the auction. I took note and thanked him; later I ensured that this reached a wider audience by letting Dave Langford know for *Ansible*.

I called back into the fanzine lounge, and wary that time was going by, made my thanks and bid adieu. I then ran over to Children's Services, and spent a bit of time there. All was going well, so I went back to the hotel room to change.

I had been asked to present a Hugo award, at the Hugo ceremony, for Best Fanwriter. The venue for this was back in the main auditorium, again; it was becoming a second home. After I had showered, Flick came back to



Irish Folk: Diane Duane and Peter Morwood – pre-Hugo party

change and shower too; strangely, both of us wandered about in our smalls, and I don't think either of us had the time to notice. Flick did show me a wonderful dress, which I think she bought for three pounds or some such. I assaulted Tedward bear, and held him aloft without any hands.

I had made arrangements to hire a suit for the duration of my trip. I wore a black finger-length morning coat, with a high-collared shirt. I wore a black cravat-style tie, all ruffled, black trousers, brown shoes and a wonderful silver waistcoat with tiny bits of emerald green. When I write it, it sounds odd, but as I strode powerfully and purposefully through the shopping mall to get to the convention centre, having left a fairly naked Flick back at the hotel room, the people moved out of my way and heads turned as I went.

I had spoken to Dalroy about what was to be worn, and he had suggested that the committee were trying for a formal look. I was not going to let the side down. Norman (who, although not mentioned much, had been in much conversation with me about various things at various times), was going for the white tux, with traditional waistcoat below.

We met up in the designated pre-Hugo reception. There was excellent food being distributed by staff and volunteers alike. Most people had made a real effort, which was brilliant. There are two purposes to this pre-award gathering: to gather the people who should be at the Hugos in one place; and to take 'em to the auditorium on time.

I took the opportunity to get a photo with Neil and Norman and then Deb who was all be-frocked. There was a good contingent of Brits here too: Flick, Pat, Farah, Vince and Colin, and they all looked very good, mostly in tuxes or dresses.

I spoke to Vince about the centrifuge for Interaction, and he looked genuinely worried, as opposed to his knowing smile and slight tilt of the head, which indicates that he isn't too concerned and knows we won't break anything.

We went over to the seats, and Norm and I sat together, and I think I was next to Flick and Pat. There were a number of other awards to present before the Hugos so we were chilled. I enjoyed the Japanese contingent; I must say that they are so formal and proper, I started to like them lads a bit, although Billy never stopped about

Japan in '07 so maybe that enthusiasm was infectious.

As the evening went by, someone came out and called Norm and myself behind the side curtain; we reckoned we were way too early and we were, but we waited. We had been allocated escorts, ladies in gowns. I wandered off and took a piss, which sort of concerned my escort, but it was OK; I was back with ages to spare.

I had earlier elicited the help of Mark and Claire to help me write a speech. They pointed out, and it was news to me, that I could use the opportunity to thank people, and my speech reflected that. I had informed Norman of this, and we bashed heads on it, so both of us could say thank you and not repeat one another's bits.

Norman was on first for best fan artist something he was very happy about, he himself being a prosthetics man. I was up next.

Neil introduced me as a man after a bit of craic, and that it wasn't what the audience thought it was, as I walked on stage, a little nervous, my sphincter well clenched.

I was handed the envelope and read my speech:

'The great fan writer Walter Willis attended the 1952 Worldcon after fans on both sides of the Atlantic raised a special fund to support him.

'I may not be a great fan writer like Walt Willis, or James White, or Peter Weston, but I am honoured to follow in Walter's footsteps as this year's TAFF delegate, the first TAFF winner from Ireland – especially here in Boston. (I paused and smiled for the cheer)

'I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for a truly wonderful welcome. I'm very pleased and honoured to present this Hugo award for the best fanwriter of 2003, and the nominees are...'

And so eventually, Martin Hoare came up and accepted the Hugo on behalf of Dave Langford. I had met Martin in the reception and told him I looked forward to seeing him on the stage; he quizzed if I knew the answers. I didn't. But I play the roulette wheel and know a good chance when I see it.

It got better, though. Norman, who had worked as a prosthetics man on *The Lord of the Rings*, was present to collect the Hugo on behalf of Peter Jackson should he win; and guess what, *LOTR* won. Hurrah. Norman is a terrific speaker and he was good in his acceptance; it was great. After last night, it felt right.

Afterwards, there was much to-ing and fro-ing. I agreed to meet Norman later in the Hugo losers' party. I had by this stage accrued three invites, and all by fair means; they had been given to me, as I had many roles apparently. Vince had asked that we hold back a while to let proper people – the real losers – get up to the party. He had asked most of the interaction bunch to hang back a while. This was fair enough in my opinion. It's a hard old job. So I checked out some of the parties, and of course got greeted warmly everywhere I went.



Xerps ceiling stuff on Friday



Flick at the pre-Hugo party, all frocked

The suit made an incredible impression; as real Hugo guests crammed into the lifts, stuffed and uncomfortable, rushing to their exclusive domain, I was feted as I walked into fan parties with a welcome I couldn't fathom.

After an hour or so and many excellent parties, I went upstairs; it was still rather busy. I asked Vince was that an OK while, and if the rush had gone, and he was grateful. I got through security OK, and went in.

I suppose part of me dislikes this exclusivity; I would much prefer a larger room, for everyone to come into, all members, but it's sort of a tradition for the next year's Worldcon to hold a Hugo losers' party, and in fact the winners, presenters and losers are all welcome. I just love inviting everyone to the party.

And what a party.



Did someone leave this lying about?

Alice Lawson and Sparks were working hard behind the bar doling out the booze, but it was the food that took me aback. It was fantastic: smoked salmon, cheeses, breads, meats, fruit, an incredible spread. I tucked in; I was fecking ravenous. It was good craic. There was a bloke with a leather pair of pants on, serving, which was nice in a Gaylaxian sort of way. I got Colin to pose with him.

I moved about, chatting. Andrew Adams was looking after the soft drinks. I like Andrew, which most people find odd; I think I shouldn't, but I always find him OK, and I still think that his Eastercon, 2Kon, was a great convention, but what would I know about fun.

I realised that I was missing someone: Billy. So I went off and tracked him down. I met Pearto, but he gave me the party details and was off to watch some bloody anime; a slash thing in 70mm, a serious deal apparently. I found Billy with Paula, and tugged them upstairs. I told them I had a sort of plan, and to relax.



Farah Mendelsohn and Flick both in Frocks

We used the service lifts, which I had found somehow, and which were never as busy as the round-the-front lifts. I told them to wait, hidden in a corridor, and I walked down to check point Vincent. I smiled and he knew I was up to no good.

‘Er, Vince, you know the way I am invited into the party.’

‘Yesssss,’ said Vince slowly as he narrowed his eyes.

‘Well, am I allowed a lady friend guest?’

‘I suppose so,’ he said in a very slow and tight-lipped manner.

‘Ah, that’s good. Now I was invited a few times; is there any chance I could give my invite to a friend?’

Vince cocked his head. He wasn’t sure.

‘We’ll behave, I promise,’ I said.

He looked to the side, where Janice Gelb was doing a fine job as door-blocker. She wasn’t smiling, but obviously was enjoying the situation, while leaving Vince to this difficult task. I pleaded some more; he looked back at me slowly, considering it.

Eventually, ‘Well, if it’s a correct invite, I don’t think we cannot allow the bearer in.’

I was chuffed. I skipped away, cheering. It was a bold move and cheeky, but I had to try.

Out came Paula and Billy, and in we went. Vince was shaking his head, either at my elaborate efforts or at his own weakness, although in retrospect that was much harder than it seems written down.

The party was quietening now, with the rush of the professionals, who had to be seen, now heading off to no doubt private and exhilaratingly boring parties. Shortly thereafter Norm appeared; he had been doing loads of photo calls, but now there he was, Hugo in hand. He placed it carefully on the windowsill and tucked into food.



Scot Billy Stirling with a whooper

After a good while, as I had been waiting, he went to get some beer, and as he did so I swiped it.

I did a quick run and was behind the bar, but Norm could see me so I kept the Hugo behind my back and talked to Alice Lawson, who immediately knew I was up to evil but carried on casually. Alice can read me like a book. Actually it was great to have Alice there; we are on the 2005 Eastercon committee together and I really like Steve and herself, and having her there – well, it’s another comfort zone; I can always call on her. Its an odd thing with Alice, more like an older sister casting her eye over me, slightly disapprovingly, but with that wry grin she has, watching over me as well.

So after a few minutes, as Norm went from one room to another, I deposited the Hugo discreetly with Alice, and returned to the room with the table of food. The conversation continued. After a while, the conversation turned to the Hugo, as Claire masterfully steered the conversation that way; she eventually asked what it looks like.

Norm turned to retrieve it, and it was gone. I know that I usually laugh at such a time, so to hide this, I took a drink and studied the bottom of my glass; this sort of tricked Norm as I wasn’t paying attention. He looked around and, again, when he looked in my direction I was drinking.



Colin Harris scores at the Losers’ Party

He was looking about, and now announcing that it appeared to be missing. I couldn’t hold it any more and broke up. After some abuse from Norm I returned it. Well, you sort of have to don’t you; not every day I can steal a Hugo.

We were there a good while, and I got chatting with Norman. I suggested that we use the Hugo to its best advantage; I am not sure he realised what I meant but, with Billy and Paula in tow, we bid adieu to those who were left. I profusely thanked Vince, and we made our way first to the Cincinnati party and thence onwards.

Now, I cannot tell you the impact that walking into a party with a Hugo can have. More so, if you are wearing a white tux, with a large Irish man also looking tremendously formal. If I were running a party, I would like, what looked like Hugo winners to come in too. And so as we went to various parties, we were greeted following my announcement of the approach of the Hugo for *The Lord of the Rings*, and a fine reception was received.

We went from party to party, seeing what was on offer, and they were all very good; but I was being drawn to the party of red and black, to the Banners without Border Troubles party.

The Hugo entrance was used to its most dramatic effect at the Borders without Banners Party. Now, most of these guys remembered us from the previous night and when we strode in all resplendent in our dignitary

garb the welcome was, to say the least, wonderful.

Norm took centre stage, as I sorted the booze. Then, once Norm was in full flow with his group, I would borrow said Hugo and offer it to all the pretty girls to hold; and by Jesus did they clutch it to their bosoms, by Jesus they did. Who needs a cock when you have a Hugo? Well, actually I do, but anyhow.

I met a girl whose hobby is to wear school uniforms. I chatted and enquired what styles she possessed. She didn’t have as much as you might expect, but she was learning. Gymslips, I say, you can’t beat ’em – much. It was a real test to my mettle, this plaid-skirted beauty, all glasses and eyes. But you can buy school uniforms.

There was great craic, and when the booze was running out rescue came with an extra supply of vodka. I had made it my practice to hand over a dollar or two each time I got some drink. Now this is great value, as the booze downstairs was costly, and a dollar for double vodka is nothing. This was appreciated, as not everyone was contributing to the tip jar. I made it clear it was from Norm and I and the ‘gang’. This seemed to earn us further respect, if it was needed. Hey, he had the Hugo!

I was advised to go to the SFWA party, and I headed off with a couple of girls. Now, Jim Young had told me I would be welcomed and John-Henri had given me the room number. But embarrassingly I was refused, along with the pretty girls; they were unsure what to make of me, I think, and I wasn’t really a writer, even if I was wearing a suit. Ah well, they won’t be welcome at any of my parties in future; any SFWA member at any party, I will make sure of it. The exception would be John-Henri and Jim Young, both decent gents. Dopey door men.

Sure, who needs authors at a science fiction convention anyhow? I started laughing and the girls joined in and as we howled down the corridor back to the Banners party, I wouldn’t give the steam of my piss to the fuckers if they were on fire.

It was a class night, the party lasted till about 3 AM, and those good people we had met from the night previously joined us. And why wouldn’t they; sure we had the currency of the convention in our hands, a bloody Hugo. There was a great gang forming: Zara, Wendy, a couple of Israeli lads, a gang from New York, Paula, Billy, Norman and myself.

Norm was wrecked so I say good night and he heads off, happy as a pig in poo. Clutching the old Hugo; what a fanny magnet.

We went down stairs to see what was left when this closed down; not much was the answer, but Arisia was having an all-nighter, so we went in, took over some space down the back of the room, and continued drinking and chatting.

Next thing you know they are playing weird sort of soft core Sixties movies. I decide that enough is enough and as a woman uses a ladder to masturbate, I exclaim: ‘That’s a ladder love, not a cock.’ The heckling then continues. It was odd as fuck, but



Gripping the Hugo tight Banner Party Style

anyhow, it was fun.

Then there was atrocious filk music, so we moved out into the corridor and formed a great big circle of sofas and chairs, and I realised we had a good gang here, and we passed the time chatting and laughing and generally continuing the drinking.

Arisia had an ice cream session at about 5.30 AM so we all tucked into ice cream, and on it went. At about 6.35 we decided on masse to head to bed, and off we all departed; I went with Zara and a chap she knew. As we walked out into the daylight, I asked someone to take a picture of us, staggering back to the hotel in daylight; the last again, not for the first time this weekend, to be hitting the hay.

I wrote a bit online and put away my suit. Then I realised Flick had already gone; she was off home, and I had missed her. I was a bit saddened by this; very, actually, she was a good bed companion.

My alarm went off. It was 7.30 AM, time to get up. So I set it for 8.30 and went to sleep.

5TH SEPTEMBER. SUNDAY. NOREASCON.

I slept through the alarm, but woke at 9.30 AM, had a furious shower and rushed across to the Sheraton. I was late.

I got over and Inger was there to greet me. I told her of the previous night's activities, and she promised me some action tonight as she was going to be wearing some raunchy gear at the Kansas party, her 'nookie' dress apparently. We chatted.

Actually, over the weekend, there was ample time to chat at kids', and I did so, with loads of Moms I'd like to fraternise with, and with the staff working there. There were Sandra and Amy Sue who were always up for a bit of gossip, and then moms like Debra who were just brilliant.

Although we worked like bastards, I wasn't really



Some of the party gang

allowed to curse, so I didn't although the odd 'feck' and 'wank' got missed as no one knew what I meant anyhow. I did my utmost to behave in front of the kids. It was odd, though; one or two women were nearly squeamish when I referred to someone as a 'bastard', yet at the same time, in private these women had no sexual inhibitions and discussed everything, which was enlightening and good fun.

Persis and Inger were always correct but they were also great fun, and they just had this all-knowing glint in their eyes. I dunno, I suppose I found them both very attractive, what with working with them over the weekend – even though both were happily married and I had met their respective husbands, who were both very nice to me.



I was proud: Wendy displaying the hugo!!!

It was fun. I met a lot of women, but occasionally their meaning was lost on me. Now, one lady said to me that she would love to have a coffee with me; I said that I would have hoped for dinner or a beer, and she went: 'No, I'd bring you coffee in the morning,' as she walked away, 'only that I am married though!'

I suppose because I felt so secure with Simoné, flirting was truly casual; there is an extra edge when I am actually really interested in a girl and they would know that (although it has been mentioned to me that sometimes girls just don't know). Well, no one hit me at least.

By Sunday most parents had seen me on stage and commented that they were rather surprised to see me on the table in Children's Services; I would proudly explain my commitment to YAFA at Interaction and promote Interaction as much as possible. People were also asking me more about TAFF, although that had started on Friday; I think on Saturday alone about a dozen girls asked me what TAFF was about.

This aspect, the wonderment from con attendees about how someone who would be presenting a Hugo could be on a normal volunteer job, is an interesting example of the unseen hierarchy that exists, I imagine in fandom. I think I smashed that to bits, to be honest, Thursday I was nobody.

Sunday was not as relaxed as I had hoped. The Diet Red Bulls were coming in very handy, and I had two by midday. The programming continues apace; there was a LOTR live-action role playing (LARP) and a Harry Potter LARP, both series that were attracting a cult status. Terry Pratchett had been along. This was another key point: no one seemed to *not* want to do something with the kids.

I headed off to do some more panels.

America's Best Comics. Sunday, 12.00.

This was a panel about Alan Moore's line of comics. On board were Terence Chua, Daniel P Dern, Pam Fremon and Barry Short. I am a fan of Alan Moore, and absolutely adore *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, so I didn't feel out of my depth. The general knowledge of his works for ABC was excellent, but when it came to other Moore work, I was in my element. My knowledge of *Warrior* comic and work by Moore such as *Marvelman* (what little it is) *The Bo*

Jeffries Saga, *Halo Jones*, *Time Twisters*, and other work by Moore that was obviously not that well known stood me in good stead. I was pleased at least that everyone was referring to *Miracleman* as *Marvelman* at least. The room was jammed.

I had a chance to dine and check up on kids', call by Mark and Claire, and then it was go go go again.

TAFF/DUFF/GUFF auction. Sunday, 2 PM.

For the first time over the weekend, I felt fairly wrong-footed at a panel. I had heard that there was heaps of stuff for auction. I had brought *some* stuff myself, and Norm had no shortage of LOTR stuff, which was brilliant. I had thought it would be a united thing where we split the proceeds between all the funds, but I was wrong, and due to my ill-preparedness TAFF lost out. Were it not for Peter Weston and Mark Plummer, we would have been shagged. Mark saved the day by offering me some books which got three times the amount he was selling them for, and then Peter sold a scrap Hugo, which got a good amount of cash. Norm and Guy did very, very well. It continued into the fan lounge, and once I had nothing left, Mary Kay Kare undertook to collect the money for me and to take it to Randy Byers, the US administrator.

I should have been more prepared for this one. Norman raised nearly \$800 for DUFF; Guy raised over \$2,000 for DUFF; in the end Peter Weston and myself did a good \$500 for TAFF.

Back over to Children's and then:

Dead Fans Don't Pub Their Ish. Sunday, 4pm.

This was a good panel, partly because all on it had become known to one another and, more so, they were a bloody good bunch. There was Geri Sullivan, Joe Siclari, John-Henri Holmberg and myself. The headline of this panel was 'Who is the Walt Willis of Today?' I said Pete Young; that was easy. The discussion went through what people thought others should read, and then about what is being produced, specifically for me in the UK and Ireland. I talked a bit and was enthusiastic, and think I mentioned as many fanzines as I could.

I went back over to Children's, which was still open, and since it was masquerade night would be until about 8 PM: just one room, mind, and it had been allocated already. Persis's wonderful daughter Thallis was entered, so she was busy enough. I headed off down to the bar at some later stage and bumped into Farah.

She was preparing a posse to go to dinner across the road; there was Zara and Pat and others, including Ian Stockdale. I went over, looking forward to the chance to eat outside of Room 608 – not that the food was anything but wonderful, but I was also looking forward to some cooked dinner.

Anyhow, as soon as I got there I felt odd, a strange feeling. I enjoyed some of the conversation, but occasionally zoned out; frightful bad manners of course, but I was not concentrating. Pat advised me that I should take more breaks, and eat more, but that wasn't the problem; yes, I was using a lot of energy, but this was something



Norm and Billy - the volume on 11

WorldConNomicon

altogether different. The food was good. I had fish and chicken; it was nice, but I was still odd. The previous two nights at this time I was hyped up for the various Hugo ceremonies.

I realise now that it is hard to slow and stop a locomotive once it gets going. I was on day six of my trip and it was really the first time I was doing nothing; even when I am talking to people I am on the move, flitting from one place to another, and here I was sitting stationary. A good fuck would have solved my problem, I reckon. Anyhow, dinner was lovely and the company better; I was a bit of an arse. I apologised for my poor company.

We went back to the hotel, and I decided to have a shower which it made me feel good, updated the online



Paula Crock – one of the party gang

journal – actually this is another thing I had been doing constantly, whenever I got to the room – and felt much better, hyped for an evening of parties. I had a Diet Red Bull, and jumped about the room.

As I went back over to the Sheraton I was reinvigorated; something was pumping again. This was better. I was back on form.

Parties. Sunday night.

The next night many people would be on their way home, so even though it wasn't exactly the last night it was obvious that people were on a bender. There were loads of parties downstairs in the Sheraton as opposed to upstairs in the bedrooms, and I went from one to another: Kansas, Japan I think, and others. I met James Peart, who asked me to recount a couple of Intersection stories. I was surprised, as I went on with these infamous tales, that slowly a crowd gathered around; and at the end, everyone laughed, which was good.

I met up with Inger and her shockingly short dress that was wonderfully lurid, in the design of a cookie jar. I was impressed; she bent over, and me eye nearly got poked out. It was fun. The usual suspects had gathered: Billy, Paula, Zara, the lads from New York, and we cavorted around the parties. I was making sure anyone who knew about Interaction, knew it would be good.

I was invited to a few normal bedrooms, and we went into one room, where the New Yorkers drank a whole bottle of Aftershock with me, which was good. Then we went to

another room which was Wendy's parents' room.

One of the people I had met was a cute chick called Wendy from New York. She was cool, and 24. Now, as I mentioned she had been to over a dozen Worldcons with her Dad, but she really was getting into this one; she admitted that it was a bit different, more fun. She, along with Yhuda and Rick and the other guys, were the ones I had directed to the free booze.

And now she directed us to her folks' room, to more free booze, and I topped up with cans, in pockets and, being Irish, into a plastic bag. Her step mom was astonished as I walked in, perhaps recognising me, from the Hugo's or something, but she knew who I was. I was silently amused, I was now impressing more Mom's. From here we walked down the stairs, getting off at each floor calling into various parties. We eventually got back down to Kansas.

Persis then arrived – I think the kids' part of the masquerade was over, but I know the masquerade went on till 1.30 AM, so it may have been after that. Anyhow, she had a few jars and was looking gorgeous in a dress that showed her to great advantage and was getting well into the parties, which was good. Later Inger headed off as she was jaded. Persis told me we were welcome in the tech party. I was unsure; I thought that she might be, but what of the Irishman and his mates?

We went up to the room and knocked. Persis asked if she could come in, and we went into the room which was packed with people: all tech guys – dark clothes, long hair – and it went quiet as everyone looked at me and my comrades. I shouted out, 'We're from Children's Services. Where's the booze? Hope we're welcome,' and it got a lot of nodding heads and back-clapping and positive sounds and a cheer. We were in.

I met Z and Seph and they were impressed with Children's Services and stuff in general; they were also surprised that they had seen me on stage a couple of times.

'Why didn't you say?'

'Ah sure, what's the point; I am a conrunner.'

They had a great big metal tech box, and inside were over a dozen whiskeys, every type, so I had some Jameson's which was mighty fine. Paul made a very emotive speech, and we applauded him; he came over and complimented Children's Services, and I think recognised me for the guy who he saw on Thursday. Anyhow, I directed him to Persis, and he spoke to her. It was her and Inger who had done it, along with Sandra; I was just a bystander.

The night wore on. After a while we again went downstairs to other parties; it was very late and we congregated again in the Sheraton, and chatted and laughed and enjoyed good company and good whiskey. I was told to 'top up' before I left.

We drank, and I realised I had made some good friends, but also realised that it would be hard to meet them again. I went to



Wendy DeMarco an absolute Star

bed at 7 AM, which was a definite improvement.

6TH SEPTEMBER. MONDAY. NOREASCON.

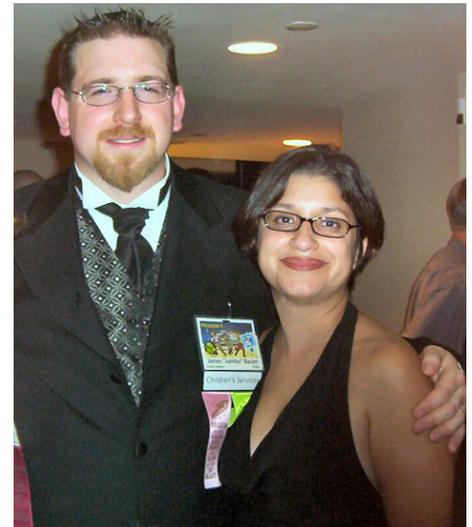
I woke up on time, and knew that today would be busy. At some stage the night before Sparks had asked me to redo my Judge impression, which was fine; so I prepped that gear, and went over to Children's.

It was very quiet, what with the masquerade going on till 1.30 AM and the kids at this stage being rather exhausted after four days of ongoing fun; it was a respite. Bill and Bridget were now in charge of the front desk; I had promoted them, and they had been doing a great job. They had gone from being standoffish to one another, to

slightly pleasant, through confrontational and sulky, to rowy, to shovey, and now they were chatty and happy. Another day, I reckoned, and they would have been holding hands. I was silently chuffed, although I don't know whether that is improper.

We started to tidy some things away, but the crucial part was after the closing ceremony; I had promised, as did a few Dads and other volunteers, to be there to help move the stuff. That would be a crucial time and one when hands would be least found.

The day went by fast enough, as I had been given a bit of time to sort out a few personal things. I had purchased a 'Death on Binky' from Paul Rood and had



Sci-Fi but not as we know it

to pay and stash it. I also had to arrange to get copies of the convention's Terry Pratchett book and Peter Weston book. Peter was easy; I found him at the NESFA table and surprised him, I think, when I bought one. It's not that bad, now.

Sheila Perry, in Info, helped me for the umpteenth time. She arranged to get Terry to sign a book for Simoné, which was a save. Apparently she was doing this for a few volunteers who it was obvious had no time to do it themselves. I ran onwards, found Sparks and Alice, found out his manic plan of a con in a minute – where's Simo when you need him – and ran back to kids'.

Sparks's Mad Idea



GRRM would be proud: Kim displaying the HUGO



Early Morning Boston; its after 6am

I have a lot of time for Sparks. I met him at Lazlar Lyricon 2 in 1998, I think, and he was good fun; although I think his wife isn't as appreciative of me, for some sort of transgression no doubt. Anyhow, he allegedly had another plan which, after the Trial, was going to be a laugh one way or another.

Interestingly Sparks was in charge of 'Fun' programming, as well as involved in other aspects of Noreason as so many other Brit fans were, as they learned their craft on the Worldcon scale.

Essentially the closing ceremony is a farewell from Deb Geisler, with thanks to those who helped, where she passes on the gavel to the new Worldcon Chairmen. Sparks's idea was to show the highlights of the convention to Deb, since she'd have been too busy to have seen it all.

So I started to get ready to redo the judge bit; Terry Pratchett and others were on hand, as were a host of props and bits and pieces. Meanwhile, Norman was showing a video from New Zealand of New Zealand fans; now, wasn't that a good idea? He had loads of good ideas; he brought cool New Zealand stuff and everything. He said he was going to thank everyone for the welcome and, since I was busy being strapped into a judge's costume, he would thank everyone on my behalf as well. Anyhow, this was all preceding the official closing ceremony, which was timed to start at 3 PM, so I expected there would not be many people there.

When Norm started thanking people and stuff he



Early Morning Boston, after 9am

mentioned I was busy as usual and I realised I could run on, as I was mostly clothed. So I did: I ran on stage, at speed; he looked up, and I gave him a huge hug which resembled a rugby tackle, shouted stuff at the mike, and ran off. As I did I realised there were a lot more people there than I expected, but it got a cheer.

Later, the closing ceremony proper began. Deb said her thanks and everyone was cheering and the hall was full of applause. And then she had a band, all drum and flute – you know, the Independence Day types, with flag and all – and it sounded great. Onwards it went; Sparks did a great job and all the Americans laughed loads as he almost single-handedly retold most of the convention's highlights. Deb thanked him.

She then passed everything over to Colin and Vince. Vince was in a kilt, which was interesting. And they spoke about Interaction. There was a video of the Viceroy of



Inger with an attentive crowd

Scotland or some sort of other pseudo-colonial home rule type person. Then a pipe band boomed into the hall!

With great majesty and presence, the hall was filled with the rousing sound of pipes, as the pipers went at full tilt. Various airs and reels were played and the drummers drummed; there was electricity to the performance as they marched in a synchronised pattern. At that moment I was proud, I tell you, to be a volunteer for Interaction. Then the pipe band led off and those who wanted to join the next Worldcon followed the pied pipers of Boston.

Then it was over, incredibly, all over. The end. A moment for pause.

Then I went out and found Norman, and suggested that we thank Deb for her efforts on our behalf. In fairness to the committee they looked after us so well. It may appear that I was on a lot of panels, but I had insisted that I wanted to be involved as much as possible; I had pleaded to be on more panels, to be used rather than to be an ornament, and with their acquiescence it was brilliant for me. The hospitality was just brilliant, as were the courtesy and the helpfulness. Ben Yalow, TR Smith, Deb Geisler, Elaine Brennan, Priscilla Olsen, Janice Gelb: these people made things happen – sometimes small, sometimes personally big – but it allowed me the opportunity to be the TAFF delegate that I hope reflected the fan I am, a conrunner.

We went up and thanked Deb; Norman was a bit upset, I was sort of happy and pleased. It had gone well. I had already heard on the inside track, from quite a few people who were in attendance at the daily committee meetings, both that Children's was being hailed as a huge success, and that the TAFF and DUFF guys were making a bit of an impression and getting involved. So my day was made, to be somehow involved in something that was making people happy.

I was worried I would be a shite TAFF delegate;

it was a real concern. So after our thanks, dinner was arranged; and of course concerns don't move boxes, people do, so I headed back to Children's Services.

We had everything packed down and we had clearly marked them for Arisia or Boskone or Persis. These boxes had to go to the same places all the Arisia and Boskone stuff was going, and then it would be loaded onto a truck and taken henceforth. There was also a truck going to Pennsylvania and further – incredible logistics.

I had said goodbye to Sandra and Amy Sue, the girls from the child-minding services. I then said good bye to Bill – someone who, although 15, I would gladly have on a committee of a convention – and Bridget who, although 14, I would have asked out for dinner if I were 15; and I was sad to see them both go, such hard workers. Bridget was there 'just because' her Mom was at the convention; that was Thursday, but now she was sad to be going home. Bill had volunteered – my god, the man was a dynamo – and hadn't stopped volunteering all weekend; he, like Bridget and I, had found a niche down here in kids'. It was good, and they liked it, and we did good.

My only disappointment was that I didn't have a beer with these two. Fuck the law; it would have been nice, and just the one.

Onwards went the juggernaut. Other cons would need the stuff we had boxed and, mostly, it was theirs; it was a loan, co-operation on a vast scale.

We went to Rick who was in charge of logistics, and as usual we stood around until someone came to help us; a presence means you can't forget. It was busy; the whole of the concourse was coming down, as was the entire tech in the auditorium, at such a pace that it was vital everything went in the correct direction. After a while Rick decided on where the stuff should go, and myself and a couple of Dads and a photographer were there to make it happen; I was keen to not allow the girls to do any of this work.

The boxes were mostly packed, and I lugged them out of our office and onto trolleys. So we loaded up trolleys, big flat-bed ones with stock, and we left the Arisia stuff in Gardner, and then brought the Boskone stuff through into the concourse.

I started hauling the totes from kids' through the Shereton up a slope, which was hairy – shouting 'Coming through, COMING THROUGH, GET THE FECK OUT OF THE WAY!' – and around a corner into the Concourse. Then, knowing what was in the boxes, I literally tossed them into a neat position: they were heavy, loaded with cloth, craft stuff, you name it, but we got it done, and with gusto.

I was sweating.



Checkpoint Charlie Children's, with Bridget and Bill

We closed up kids'. People were heading home; flights, hours in length, had to be caught. As I said goodbye to the lovely Inger I was more than a bit upset, although I didn't show much of it; she was so wonderful to me from the outset, always there, chatting, advising when something seemed odd, pointing out things to look for in kids like what they might have as an ailment. She was a great laugh, and a hard worker. I held her tight. She had to go.

I said goodbye to Persis then, and again I was rather sad to be saying goodbye; she was so wonderful to me. I had emailed her before the convention and asked if it was



Talis Thorndike makes good use of Interaction things

OK to work two or three hours in kids' to familiarise myself with the area, as I would be doing the same with all areas. We laughed about that: two hours. She was very happy that Children's was deemed a success; many people had been feeding back positive stuff, and Deb had thanked her. It looked like Noreascon 4's ground-breaking aspect might just be the excellent children's programme.

Many people commented that Noreascon always does something new, something outstanding and unique, but what was it this time? So much about the con was bloody good, what stood out? Kids', I would say, and there would be knowing nods, or fervoured agreement – depending on nationality!

I said goodbye to Persis. It took a while. It was evening. Children's was now closed.

I then had a shower and met up with Norman, and with Janice Gelb and a group of other excellent fans, and we went to dinner. Again I was in odd form. This time, though, my stomach was actually churning; I felt ill. I was physically demonstrating my upset at sitting down, at relaxing; I wanted it to go on. After the main course, I made my apologies and left early. I wasn't happy about it, but Norm was an excellent dinner guest, and could do it for both of us. I just needed to, I dunno, not relax yet or something. I should have had the sense to turn down Janice's offer after the previous night, but I thought manners would prevail over mere feelings. It was a low moment for me, personally.

I went for a vigorous walk. I walked around the block, I stopped at a bar and had a shot of bourbon, and I walked again. In the dimming and balmy Boston air, I walked. I felt better. It all felt better; I would apologise again to Janice for such a poor show. My stomach settled and I felt invigorated; I called into my hotel room, and had two Diet Red Bulls. My supply was also drawing to an end. I went over to the Sheraton. I felt better; as I went I skipped and bounced and punched things, you know, getting the energy flowing.

I could hear the noise as I entered the Sheraton.



I went up to the con suite, my first proper time in there, and I got a soft drink and scanned the room; there were many people about whom I knew and I went about.

Norm was there; I questioned him like the sounding board he had become for me – as I for him – about my departure from dinner. He looked at me as if I was being an idiot.

Geri arrived, and not only that, but she had all her correspondence from James White. I sat down and spent an hour or so looking reading about it all, and a fact came to light. The Sector General logo for LACON III, where James was Guest of Honour, had been the logo he had conceived himself for Sector General, and he had described it to the people who were going to use it.

This was important news, as it had been alluded that this Sector General logo was a Worldcon concept and image. Therefore, because of the shape of it, and the issues revolving around the image copyright of the Hugo, and a renewed effort to curb anyone using something that looked like Worldcon imagery in awards, it had been put to me earlier that the James White Award



James White design, in quite a robust manner. They were actually OK, and we came to an acceptable solution. I had informed them that I am usually a much more volatile character, but as administrator of the award we would have to proceed with a 'James White' attitude, of conciliatory and gentle tones. It was good to sort that out; although later, when I chatted with Dave Stewart, he reminded me that the MPC had given me permission for the logo in 2000. I had forgotten, but he remembered that at the time it was important to me not to tread on anyone's toes. Anyhow, we talked things through and it went well. Kevin and

Cheryl had just taken over, so the previous discussions with a predecessor that had upset me, slightly, as anyone could imagine, were quickly forgotten.

The night wore on. It was good; we were fooling about, our crowd of degenerates. I mixed and chatted with loads of people, and then there was some horseplay, as I had sorted something else out for Norm and myself.

You see, everyone who gets nominated for a Hugo receives a pin badge as a memento; so to speak, a mini Hugo. Now Norm and I had presented Hugos, and by dint of deputation had also been there to receive a Hugo. But we would both soon be Hugoless; they were after all other people's. I wanted a memento, something more than a memory, if possible. I found it, somehow, by means variously fair and frowned upon; two pins were given to me, in knowledge of their purpose, and so Norm and I had our token memory.

I showed Norman's to him, and would have let him have it; and we lepped about up and over chairs, and then we broke a table. As we did, Deb came in and asked me outside. I was apologising for the damage and she seemed non-plussed.

She spoke to me outside in quiet tones, gently. She was thanking me. Me, a fan of dubious heritage and honour, being thanked by the Chair of the convention for my efforts, both with Children's Services and as a TAFF delegate and in general. It was an awesome and humbling experience; I was shocked, stunned and chuffed.

She then told me about a hero medal. This was something Noreascon 4 was not taking lightly; they had fifteen made and were only handing out eleven, to people who went above and beyond, as you might say, who added to the convention. These people would normally be committee members, or high echelon staff, and the odd individual, like... me.

She put this 'unattached lensman' medal on me, and invited me to the 'Old Farts' party for ex-Worldcon Chairs. I asked if Norm could come along too, and she was very agreeable. I was told I should wear the medal tonight, despite my misgivings.

I walked back in, and people noticed; Sheila Perry had one too, as did other stalwarts. And me: an Irishman, off the boat just a mere six days previous, the ultimate neo.

Geri congratulated me – she had known! – as did



Insanity Check!

logo might have to change.

Now it seemed that was wrong, and I was in a position to defend the logo of the JWA; I had solid proof that this was a concept and design imagined by James White himself.

When no one was looking I punched something, really hard, and my hand sank through it. I was jubilant; I explained so to Geri, who was bemused about my inner concern about what had been brought to my attention.

I read the other letters and wondered at how things I remembered so well myself got mentioned; it was heartening. Geri and I had become very good friends, and I was surprised when she told me her age!

I popped up to see what parties were on; Tom in room 708 treated me and my compadres to a great selection of booze. I visited the rowdy room, where I was rowdy, and I brought some booze discreetly down to the dead dog party.

After this I flitted about the room, meeting and greeting, and got some illicit booze here and there. I had a good chat with Paul Treadaway, and we spoke about the James White Award at Interaction. He then kindly introduced me to Kevin Standlee and Cheryl Morgan who were looking after that aspect, and I networked more.

It also came to pass that they were looking for me, as they were now on the Mark Protection Committee (MPC) of the WSFS and were charged with the issue about logos and awards. Things had changed in two days.

I told them first of my news that the logo was a



Teds House: East Falls Church, Virginia

others, and I proudly went to Vince and Alice and they were impressed and pleased. I did feel proud that my mentors were happy; it was in a weird way important. Vince took a picture of Geri and myself. He had an amazing look, a proudness too, like when James White had won a Hugo. It was deadly.

I didn't think at the time that I could write about the medal myself so first I asked Claire Brialey to describe it for this report, and that piece follows.

The night went on and we partied hard and late; there were still parties going on. I got to bed at about 6 AM, which wasn't too bad.

'I want to travel and work with children...' (by Claire Brialey)

James Bacon is a man of many talents. Many of them involve a degree of... boisterous behaviour. James can rather be intense about fun, and why everyone should be having more of it; he's usually more than willing to help with that. (He's been known to convey similar messages about sex, and we'd consequently had certain expectations of James's TAFF trip. But that wasn't going to go according to plan, since several weeks before his trip he had found himself not single again.) Anyway, James does things at conventions: he appears on programme items and he helps organise events and he presents awards and enters fancy dress parades and performs in plays and he sings loudly and dances like a bastard and parties a lot and... well, he does things. Or at least things happen, and James is there. Sometimes right in the middle of it, and sometimes just sauntering away smirking.

So he was very well qualified to be a TAFF delegate really; he'd done pretty much everything before that he'd need to do at the Worldcon. We just weren't sure the Worldcon was really ready for this.

But every day during Noreascon James appeared on programme items, and every night he partied, and every morning he got up and reported for duty in children's services at 9 AM.



The Brilliant Ben Yellow and Wonderful TR Smith relaxing after dinner

No, we didn't believe it at first either. Not so much the 9 AM stuff, because James doesn't seem to need much sleep at conventions, but... well. The children. Just think of the children.

James did show us some ribbons that came from Children's Services on the first evening before the convention, but we unfairly suspected that he'd done something disreputable to get them. And, well, it may be Worldcon heresy to say it, but ribbons don't prove anything, do they? (James had a ribbon for being the TAFF delegate as well, but he didn't want to wear that at first because it looked as though he wanted everyone to know. And it was pink. When the Worldcon asked nicely, he put it on. It was very pink.) But apparently it was true.

James is running the Young Adult Fun Activities at the Worldcon in Glasgow in 2005, along with his fannish partner in crime² Stefan Lancaster, and someone had suggested that being at this year's Worldcon would give him an opportunity to observe how they did it there, and James just isn't the observing type if he's got the

opportunity to actually do something, so he volunteered to help. Every day. Including first thing in the morning. And so they gave him some ribbons.

That wasn't the end of it, though. In his copious free time James presented the Hugo for Best Dave Langford, and he accepted half the retro Hugo for Slant as we may



Marvelous Guys – John and Sven in an Irish Bar in New York

have mentioned, and on the first day he was there he helped with all the stuff that had been brought in on the NESFA van. And he talked to people. A lot. He introduced himself. He shook hands. He told them about TAFF. He showed them what a trouser press was. He taught them how to shout 'Mi-Hinge!' He entertained people. And he was an Irish fan in Boston, which didn't do any harm.

Basically, James divided the Worldcon portion of his TAFF trip into half working for the con, half promoting TAFF, half supporting Interaction, half partying, occasionally explaining to people that he wasn't single and phoning his girlfriend in London, and pretty much entirely meeting people and having a good time. Yes, obviously that's more than three halves. At least.

But it was the bit with the children that anyone who knew James in Europe found just too much. In theory there shouldn't be any reason why James couldn't show children how to have fun as much as he does adults. Except that theory leads to practice, and practice leads to... boisterousness. And possibly breakages. I mean, they must have insurance and stuff, and disclaimers for parents and everything. But they also have litigation. Martin Easterbrook kept looking at Children's Services James in wonderment and wondering when the other James was going to break out; I had a vision of a room full of children shouting 'Mi-Hinge!' Or possibly much more.

The children loved him. They made him a cape and gave him presents. The parents loved him too. And the Worldcon staff. And everyone, really. Although not that way, because he wasn't single.

And so, having given him some ribbons, and a cape, and half a Hugo, eventually the Worldcon had to give him a medal. About a dozen people working on the convention were awarded an 'Unattached Lensman' medal for all the efforts they'd made, and James was one of them. It wasn't pink. But he probably wouldn't have minded by that stage, even though he clearly suspected Stef was going to kick his arse for it when he got back.

On the Tuesday after the Worldcon we met Margaret Austin and Martin for breakfast. We saw James. We said hello. We asked how he was. James released a stream of invective that made the Osbournes look polite and unimaginative in their cursing, explaining in passing that he was having one or two problems with the US telephone system and US hotel booking arrangements. Martin looked relieved: 'I knew the real James was in there somewhere.'

Children and anyone else who think they can stand that much excitement should check out the Young Adult Fun Activities at Interaction. Don't worry about the colour of the ribbon. And don't expect James to be wearing

his medal. He'll probably just be demonstrating how and why he got it.

² They've never actually been arrested for any of it. But there have been near misses.

7TH SEPTEMBER. TUESDAY. BOSTON.

I had arranged to meet Norman at 11ish and on my way to him met Margaret Austin, Martin Easterbrook, and Mark and Claire having breakfast. I had been having problems with the phones.

AMERICAN PHONES ARE SHIT!

Everyone has a moby, so no one cares that most of the pay phones don't work. I was also having difficulty with hotels – not that it was anyone's fault, but they had charged me with parking? When asked did I not have a car, I really snapped: 'What do you think, I flew it over?' I apologised, like an ejit.

I met others: Billy, Paula, all leaving, many many people leaving. I wished, well, half of me did, that I too was going home, or at least to a Notting Hill flat and a warm bed, to see Simon.

Anyway, after a chat with these guys, I met Norm. We had arranged dinner that night, and we had planned to 'do' the comic shops in Boston. First we went to the laundry, which was a godsend, although hotter than hell and just like it should be; we left bags of filthy clothes.

Then we wandered off to find some comic shops. Norman was well into his artwork, as this is an area of interest, being a prosthetics guys and all. It was great; I should have bought some DVDs that I found, but dithered. Actually, I had spent very little over the weekend; I had brought a lot of money, but I hadn't spent much at all. How could you when vodkas were 80¢ (about 50p).

On Newbury Avenue there was an excellent shop that Billy had mentioned, and from there we walked up Commonwealth Avenue to Kenmore Square, where we found a couple of bookshops and another comic shop. It was good to get to see a small bit of Boston. Back towards the Prudential Center we went; we could see it even from this distance.

Boston is quiet. The weather was like a nice Dublin day, but a bit more humid. The buildings were mostly low, except in the city centre where they were towers. Boston had the feel of a European city, I felt. We went



Stolen scooter fun

to Walgreen's and other shops for bits and bobs, and generally gaddad about.

Norman was going to do the city tour, in a DUKW (an ex-military vehicle), but as I had limited time in Boston and he had a few days, he put it off to hang out, which was good of him.

I found myself looking at the Hynes centre. Christ it was quiet; it was lonely quiet, doors closed. It felt odd, but I went up to the door, and all was dark, dismal, a lone guard pacing, the fantastic life force gone.

After a day wandering the city, we chilled out in the



The Hynes Centre from outside, once I saw daylight on Tuesday

small Sheraton bar and started to swap notes and photographs; we also got some pictures from Colette Reap who joined us. It was nice to sit and relax over a couple of beers and the Sheraton bar, never really tremendously busy over the course of the weekend, was now back to being deserted.

That evening, Norman and I went with TR and Ben for dinner, both of whom were in charge of facilities at Noreascon, and who had looked after that aspect of our trip arrangements. We went to a superb restaurant that was part of a hotel. Fortunately for me, it was third time lucky; I found myself having to catch up on my meal, as I was eating slowly due to talking too much. I felt so back on form, it was incredible; I was in great spirits. I tried a variety of ciders, and had a superb dinner followed by a magnificent cheesecake.

After this, I at last ended a dinner properly by leaving with everyone else, and I felt very relaxed although the apprehension of the next step in my journey was beginning to come to the fore.

We relaxed then in the bar of the Marriott; on my seventh day in Boston the hotel was now seeming rather like a home to me. I had taken the time to pack before dinner, and was ready for the off. We sat and talked late into the night; it was a good session. Vince, who had joined us with Andrew Adams, was very talkative.

At one stage I offended Andrew as apparently I was rather derogatory about Mary Gentle and he took umbrage. Which he is entitled to do, but I let it go; not worth a good row, a proper row I reckoned. Although ten years has not tempered my rage and anger. Tears flowing are never cheap, and repayment is expensive. We all make decisions, hurt me all you like, but hurt my fellow conrunners, and I will not forget. Ever.

The evening passed pleasantly by TR was wonderfully witty and impressed me a lot, and soon enough it was time to go to bed. I said my farewells to Norm, as I had an early flight; a big hug was the order of the day, and then the bestest DUFF candidate I have ever known was gone.

8TH SEPTEMBER. WEDNESDAY. BOSTON TO NEW YORK.

I woke up and headed out to Logan airport. Thanks to Jason Joiner, a travel agent in his employ was able to get me some fantastic deals on internal flights. This

seemed like the way to go, if I was to visit and get as much into my trip as possible. The night previously Ben had informed me about the one good railway in the US, which would also have sufficed and been a bit cheaper maybe, but the die was cast.

I got out to the airport with loads of time, and wandered down to the gate. There was confusion. Flights had not been taking off, and I noticed that the runway was a bit hazy. Fog. After a pleasant chat with the lady from US Air, I was put onto a flight. Mine was the 10 AM. I boarded the 7.30 AM flight instead, which was still there and which now also had passengers from the 8 and 8.30 AM flights on board.

I was told to sit where I wanted, and not to worry about my baggage. I sat next to a pretty lady and she told me that as time went by, people would ring the office, and tell them it was a work from home day, or go and get a cab to the train. These were commuter flights, purely for work. Hence how, now, four flights were on one plane.

Shortly enough we took off. No one was allowed to get out of his or her seat for fear of being a hijacker. I had surreptitiously done a check, and anyone who looked like they came from Cabra, I was keeping me eye on. But there weren't many; everyone was in suits, even the ladies.

At New York airport, my baggage didn't arrive. Of course. Then it did. And it was mostly intact. I got a taxi to my hotel, the Hotel Pennsylvania. My dad had booked it; it looked reasonable, and at about \$150 a night I hoped so. It reminded me of a B&B near Kings Cross in London – no idea why – except with thousands of rooms, and roaches.

I couldn't care less. I was in *New York*. At last. I went wandering. Hotel Penn is on 7th Avenue and 33rd Street. Which means to most of you exactly what it meant to me. In the middle is the best way to describe it. I walked about, down 7th Avenue, marvelling at the cars and shops and people; but to integrate, I carry my trusty journal in my hand, and walk with purpose. People get out of my way, and I don't get hassled.

From here I walked, loads, and started to make my way towards the Tor offices, which are in the Flatiron building – somewhere else roughly in the middle bit. I had thought I had arranged to go for lunch with Patricia and Teresa Nielsen Hayden. I was keen to chat to these two well-known and well-versed fans, who were also James White's editors and friends, and who had produced a sort of 'how to' for TAFF winners. Unfortunately I had made an error about the day; and they were not there anyhow, because of flooding.

Jim Frankel, Moshe Feder, Seth Lenner and others greeted me anyhow, and we chatted and they advised me of the New York places to visit. Then

Jim took me for lunch at Eisenberg's, which wasn't a deli but was excellent all the same and about as old as New York. I had a pastrami sandwich and pickles, and somewhere in the meat was some bread. Jim was kind to go for lunch and it made up for my blunder. We chatted about James's last book, which he edited.

From here, I went to the Strand Bookshop, which

was quite good although not the Fantasy Centre, and then a number of comic shops.

My first night in New York, I had planned to meet some of the guys I met at Worldcon: Rick, Wendy, Jo and others. I had also planned on meeting comic artist John Higgins who works for Marvel. So I went that evening to Mulligans, which was on Madison and 40th and met John and the gang. Then other Marvel guys turned up:

Garth Ennis, his wife Ruth, and a Penguin publisher called Sten. As you can imagine, I was a bit of a hero, as everyone has heard of *The Punisher*, and here was its current writer sitting supping Guinness with the rest of us. It was class, and I think the new fans I had met and made friends with were rather taken with how a fan from Dublin could meet such interesting guys in the middle of New York.

Later we went to Times Square, which was incredible, and very bright, but not Piccadilly Circus I'm afraid. Then we went to the best BBQ restaurant I have ever been to; I have forgotten the name, but it was near Broadway as there were loads of theatres about, with shows; but it wasn't Shaftesbury Avenue, that's for sure.

We go to another Irish bar. It's fairly late. They serve

cider, and have a British red telephone box, which is interesting. Some slappers from home get up on some tables. My friends are surprised by this exuberance; I explain that they are from Blanchardstown. They look at me.

An excellent night. I bid everyone adieu, and walked back to Hotel Penn.

9TH SEPTEMBER. THURSDAY. NEW YORK.

In Boston I had an internet connection in my hotel room; it was cheap, \$10 a day, and worth it as I wanted to update the website regular like. Here in Hotel Kings Cross the internet is something that they use to catch the roaches with.

So I have no internet connection, and no wi-fi, so many options are lost to me to get online. Internet cafés are not that frequent, but I eventually find one. Even in a café, it seems that I cannot get my email as I normally do; now this is not a major problem, but it has interfered with communication with Nic Farey about TrouserCon, my next TAFF stop, in Washington.

I also seem to be having tremendous difficulty with phones; today I was meant to meet John in a particular bar, and neither for love nor money could I get his moby on a pay phone. Fortunately the bar lady offered her moby, so I got in touch.

But yes-



Time Sq



The Empire State at night



Science Fiction everywhere – 100 ft Transformer poster

terday I had tried the UK seven times, and I can tell you where: The Hotel Pennsylvania; in Swifts bar, East Village; Pig and Whistle Bar, Times Square; Mulligans bar, Madison Avenue; outside Barnes and Noble near NYU; outside the K-mart across the road from that; and outside a post office near St. Mark's church.

What am I doing wrong? Nothing. The phones are shit.

Today, though, the lobby phone is working. I checked



Ted White at his Friday gathering

with the concierge that I was doing everything right, and it appears I was. Initially I thought I must be at fault.

Today I arranged to meet John Higgins again, over in Boxers pub, which is in West Village. This pub is brilliant, mostly because it isn't Irish, but the staff were great. One gave me her moby; not the only thing I'd get off her, I reckoned.

After the pub, I wandered around a few shops on Bleaker Street, including a cool comic shop. From there I went back to the hotel and met Wendy, one of the fans from last night who was the only one also free tonight. So we went to perhaps the best comic shop I have ever been into, Jim Hanley's; this is directly across the road from the Empire State Building, which is as close as I got to it:

James's Mum: 'Did you see the Empire State Building?'

James: 'Yes, through the window of a comic shop.'

Now, Jim Hanley's has to be the best comic shop I have ever been in. It had an amazing selection of comics, and shirts and T-shirts and comics related paraphernalia, and loads of things, and I spent a couple of hours just browsing. I bought a couple of things, and thanked the lads; I told them it was definitely the best shop I had been in. They wondered if I had been in many, and I told them I have been in most comic shops in Glasgow, London, Dublin, Belfast, Paris, Amsterdam, Liverpool, Manchester, Brussels, Munich and Boston. They were impressed. 'So it's your favourite then?' the guys asked, and I said no, and I told them:

'My favourite comic shop is in Amsterdam, one of the oldest comic shops in Europe: Lambiek. Opened in 1968, it is a gallery, a comic shop and much, much more. I have been there many times, about a dozen, and I always have a good time. Anyhow, the last time I was there, I was chatting with the shopkeeper, an older man; he helped me get some comics, and at about 5 PM a younger fella came in with two friends and took over. The older fella said goodbye, and as he went told the younger fella that I was into his sorta comics.

'We got chatting as you do, like I am here, and he points out some comics he likes, and I have them: Ennis, Moore, that sorta stuff. So meanwhile, I hadn't noticed, but he had rolled a huge joint. He had handed it to his friends and then, taking me by surprise as I was dug into some shelves, he offered it to me. A joint, in a comic shop, well, what would any man do?'

The lads were listening enthralled, and nodding heads.

'So I had a smoke, and Jesus, it was grass and resin all in the one, heaps: the best joint I have ever had. I was encouraged to have a good few drags, and was chilling

out. After a while, I had some more, and I was starting to feel the effects of the first draws; then I looked up. On the ceiling, about 9 feet square, was a huge mural of a Spitfire shooting down a Messerschmidt 109. And it was awesome, beautiful, and new to me, despite all my visits. And it took a joint to see it.'

That's my favourite comic shop. The lads couldn't argue.

From there we went down to Tor Books to meet Moshe Feder, who was taking me out for a few beers over Brooklyn way, and to see a view of the bridge. I met Teresa and Patrick Nielsen Hayden, which was brilliant since I missed them the day previous.

Moshe allowed me to steal some books! So I stole *Underland* by Mick Farren, which was excellent. In fairness it did have Nazi flying saucers from an Antarctic underground base, so maybe I am biased.

From here we went over to Brooklyn and Moshe suggested going to a pizza place, which sounded really good and now, since the conversation was turning good, an excellent idea.

Moshe took me to a real American bar and I enjoyed very engaging conversation about fandom, most of which is interesting to me because it is a very different viewpoint.

The conversation turned to Interaction and I swung into salesmanship mode; at this stage I had a drill, what to mention. I told everyone about the Tolkien and Potter cons straddling Intersection.

Andrew Porter piped up: 'Harry Potter? Who cares?'

'I do,' I said, 'and so do loads of younger fans, who like those books, and those are the people I need to get involved in my young adult programme, and who we



Ted Checking out Nic Farey's cooking

need to run conventions soon enough.' The tone was serious. Andrew was good about it, but I could see that there were definite differing views at play here, and also different attitudes.

I imagine that some US fans would find the likes of 'Aliens Stole My Handbag' and some of the other conventions I've been involved with horrendous and an enema to science fiction fandom.

Anyhow, we were on our way to see the view, and Wendy got one of those 'You need to get home' calls. Well, you can imagine, this was a bit of a bad turn for the evening; but like true fans, we were all cool. I went back into Manhattan, and made sure all was good, and found myself at the Port Authority bus station. It's an amazing place: a multi floor bus station, like Busrus but much taller.

It was still early; I was a bit alone, now, and not through anyone's fault. So, my good friend and confidant Stefan Lancaster told me that if I am in New York I should defiantly go to the Jekyll and Hyde club. I contemplated going back out to Brooklyn, then thought about going to Jekyll and Hyde's on my fecking own, which would have been exciting; but then wandered around Toys R Us instead. As I walked about from here towards the hotel I found a decent restaurant and took some solace in a full platter of food: chicken and ribs.

From here, I strolled back to my hotel, and had an early night, nicely interrupted by a phone call from across

the pond; just what I needed, really. In fairness this is the TAFF ting.

**10TH SEPTEMBER. FRIDAY.
NEW YORK TO WASHINGTON:
TROUSERCON.**

So, I get up today on time, and everything is OK. I get a taxi to the airport; it's another commuter flight, and I give myself loads of time. I get there and find a phone that works, so chat with Stef, Simoné and Mark, failing to get through to my folks or my brother.

So all seems good; Simoné kindly enough had a reservation made for me for a car. My intention was to hire a car, pick up Nic Farey and head to Ted White's; all seems good. This was to be TrouserCon.

So I get to Washington and transfer out to the hire car place, and attempt to collect a car. At this stage I hit upon another idiosyncrasy of America that pisses me off. Despite the fact that the car is booked and paid for and I have my passport for ID, I cannot hire a car without a credit card. Which is, of course, the American way.

A credit card is not a credit card; it is really a debt card. When you use one you are in debt; you now owe that money to a company, and if you don't pay it off immediately you pay a huge interest. I don't have one. Well, I do, or rather I did, but I gave it to my Dad.

So now I can't have a car.

The phones don't work, and I can't get through to my Dad; no US phone company does collect calls to Ireland. Next stop, England. I get Simoné.

I am in a desolate place, a concrete building, and I am getting nowhere. These guys are amazed I don't have a credit card, like it's natural to be in debt. Fuck that.

So I open up the laptop and set up a base camp of sorts. Using reverse charging, since the phones don't work, my girlfriend does some running around phone-wise. The guys from Hertz look at me across the hall, as I type and receive phone calls. I pull out a few favours, and people in LA are ringing head offices in all sorts of places, but it's a no go: policy is policy.

Then my girlfriend finds that Dollar will hire one to me. But when I go to Dollar, which happens to be miles away, I am told no again. This is generally bad stuff. I am screwed. Simoné rings Ted and Nick and relays that there are problems. I decide that getting to Nic's to drive him to Ted's will never happen now; it's 4pm. I opt for the straight to Ted's option. Simoné agrees to relay this to Ted. I try Nic again.

Eventually I get through to Nic, and he gives me some sort of number that then allows me to make phone calls, which is an advantage. He understands the situation and, despite the obvious let-down, is fairly cool.

I am shattered and Simoné has a huge phone bill. So everything gets communicated via London to Nic and Ted and I get the train. I take the blue line train north to Rosslyn and then change for a westbound train on the orange line to East Falls Church.

I head to Falls Church. We pass through the Pentagon's station; many uniformed men and women board.



Ted and Nic

WorldConNomicon

I immediately start talking to a lady marine. I am impressed; she looks about Simoné's size but the little circular badge tells me she is a major, so she could probably kick my arse. I am friendly, and so is she and her colleagues.

I get off at Falls Church, and it was a quick journey. I was expecting some sort of Amtrak type journey, but it was a metro job. I come out of the station, and there is a road. I see a line of taxis. I go up and ask the chap to take me to the nearest bar. A mile or two up the road, we pull into a retail park, and I enter a restaurant-cum-bar called Branigan's: a bit like TGI Fridays, but in America. It's also about 500 yards from Ted's.

I dump the bags, one of which I have broken – my Mum's to add worse luck – and I then sit at the bar and buy a beer. I make some phone calls, and all seems better. Ted is already aware of my situation, and then I speak to Ted myself and agree to meet him here later.

I sit alone. Soon, oh maybe about 30 seconds later, the barman introduces me to two local schoolteachers, who are having their Friday afternoon beer, as they seem to want to know about 'English' beers, allegedly. I chat, and the two are joined by two more, and then most of the rest abandon their table and come over and join our circle. They are impressed with my knowledge of almost everything, which is concerning as I know fuck all. As the evening goes by, some depart to their homes.

After a while Ted arrives, and I greet him. We decide to head back to his place, and I say goodbye to the teachers. They ask about my friend and I tell them, while Ted is struggling with my bag, that he is a renowned SF author and editor of both books and, more importantly, magazines like *Heavy Metal*. They look on in awe. Of course in France heavy metal is known as *metal hurrlant*. They are in wonderment. I leave with Ted, who appears to be concerned about 'breaking up the party'.

We head back to Ted's and he shows me around his house. It's very American looking. Ted has a spacious home; as you enter, there is a kitchen to the right and a sitting room with a huge pile of fanzines on the table, and awards on the mantle; I spy the Hugo. To the back of this is a serious office with PC and magazines and many other things. Then adjacent to the sitting room is another larger lounge, with the walls covered in shelves, all holding CDs; Ted has a massive collection, sort of HMV style.

Upstairs, even the guest room has shelves and books all about; some crime, some SF, all sorted. An amazing abode. We settle in the first sitting room, which is where the meeting (the second Friday gathering of fans) come and chat.



A close-up view of the Haircut

that I Discuss Ted White with Ted White, which is pretty cool. We then go to Anita's, a great Mexican, and we eat well. It's blurry, though.

Ted has a gathering of a grizzly bunch of science fiction fans – a meaner and more sinister crowd you would not find anywhere else – every second Friday at his home. People arrive from about 8.30 PM onwards and they are a mixture of music buffs and SF heads. I am pretty the worse for wear, what with the ongoing Ted White Discussions, and shortly pass out. I snore, on the coach; meanwhile, the evening wears on and there is much discussion – some of it About Ted White.

I awake to find everyone leaving, and go to bed. I feel relaxed, somewhat at home with Ted. He is a gent, but also reminds me of a cross between Mick O'Connor and my Granddad – which is an odd cross, but means we get on very well. After my day's tribulations and generally the coming down from Noreascon, it's sort of what the doctor ordered to get banged off me brain.

Present that evening were Steve and Elaine Stiles, Dan and Lynn, rich brown, Walter Mills and Michael Dobson. I think. I wrote it down but it's slurred.

11TH SEPTEMBER. SATURDAY. VIRGINIA TO MARYLAND: TROUSERCON

I get up and have some coffee. I feel better for the rest and shortly afterwards Ted is surprised to see me up; I make good use of my time, and browse his fanzines and type up a few words.

We chat further, about music, and about Ted's garden, which is well tended and large. One of the noticeable things is the noise; there is a continual crickety-type noise, and I am sure there are critters about. It's warm and balmy, and I confirm that we are south of the Mason-Dixon line: in the South.

Shortly thereafter we head off: first east from Virginia, heading towards Washington. As we cross the Potomac on the Woodrow Wilson bridge, I can see Washington DC. Then we turn south into Maryland.

This was my planned journey to pick up Nic. The drive is uneventful, which is good because as well as Discussing Ted White we chat about all sorts of things.

We head down Route 4 through Prince Frederick; we then pull off and turn towards Port Republic, and the roads narrow as we come to a back road. It swings around facing a beautiful bay with a long beach and a couple of small wooden boat piers, rather like Twin Peaks; and then we turn and the road is steep, and to the left, on a mountain which Nic later claims is a hill, there is Nic's house.

This is Calvert County. They eat squirrel here and that's not a euphosimposium.

Nic has arranged a cook-out in my honour. Now, I know it's a strange old thing, but I tell you all now (all three of you who have read this far anyhow) that whoever wins TAFF next and jets off to LACon, I will be encouraging them to do the Ted and Nic ting.

Nic is very welcoming; he has had a bit of a hair cut. I am introduced to his wife Bobbie who is very pleasant, and her daughters. I meet Chris and Mike (Nic's boss, who is in construction) and I do the TAFF ting.

Nic has a big pot out back, over a gas Bunsen burner type affair. He fills it with peanut oil and then when it's

really hot, he chucks in some chickens, which cook in minutes. It delicious. Real fried chicken in Maryland: nothing like it have I had.

I get a lift from Chris into the nearest town, which is small, and I pick up some beers.

Everyone brings food. Nic obviously has the chickens going, but Bobbie also has a spread of food out including some good potatoes. Mike brings more southern fried chicken, in bread crumbs; there are devilled eggs; more grilled chicken that Nic has been marinating or basting, I cannot tell; and perhaps my favourite, after the fried chicken: a red bean and smoked sausage stew type thing. It's gorgeous. Ted does the honours with the chicken, and there is no shortage. Nic and himself have a rapport. They are real friends; I recognise the type of chat they have. After that there is cheesecake and dump cake.

We relax with beers, and we chill the afternoon and evening away. Ted heads off to a gig, and others depart. Nic is obviously surprised at my calmness, and the lack of exuberance. The food is just perfect. I feel relaxed with Nic, and I just chill on the sofa. It's not yet the post-con blues; it's something new to me, exhaustion and the easing off of adrenaline. But I have had an easy landing here and at Ted's. It's somewhat restorative, and probably what I need. I explain this to Nic who, it has to be admitted, has suffered from my previous horseplay.

The chat turns to many things. Nic is a tough fellow. He is a hard worker, on building sites, what with a lack of PC work thereabouts. He is improving his own home, and has a fantastic selection of books, filling a whole wall; I recognise so many excellent titles. Nic, like Ted, has an office, and there is a grand stash of fanzines.

I use Nic's PC to connect to the world, and he kindly lets me call my Dad, who is a conduit to my brother, my next stop.

We chat about loads of things, and at one stage the conversation turns to the Hugos and what it is to be deserving of a TAFF win. It's strange, for me, that being deserving of a Hugo is linked to being deserving of TAFF. If you invalidate one, you do the same to the other. I of course have someone else's Hugo in my bag, so deep down I know that 'deserving' is an irrelevant term. Yes, Redd Boggs probably deserved a Hugo,

but I know for sure that James White deserved one too, because I am arrogant like that.

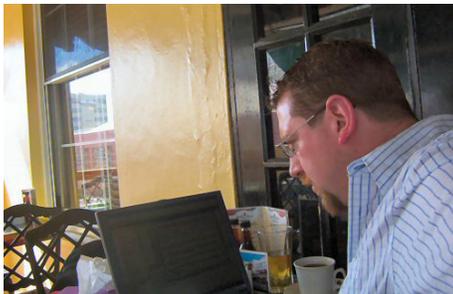
I feel inwardly that if a disservice or disrespect is done to any Hugo, then it reflects on James's win; not very rational, I know, but that's a deep-down feeling. Many authors *deserve* a Hugo; only so many can 'win' one. It's a gift, so why treat it as anything else?

The night wears on. I enjoy it so much. I get Nic to hand over a great stack of fanzines, which I read on later flights; they are good.

Just as I am about to go to bed at about 2 AM I think I am to be up at 9 AM, but then realise that's my flight time, so I have to be up at about 5.30 AM. Worse, I need a lift. Worse, Nic cannot drive – well, not legally. It's a bit hairy for a moment, but Nic is grand; he does his thing and assures me that he will take me to the airport. I sleep well, if shortly.

12TH SEPTEMBER. SUNDAY. MARYLAND TO BERMUDA.

We head off early. Everything is terribly American. Here in the little bit of the South that I visit, it's exactly what I



Hamilton, Bermuda, where all Taff reports should be written

Ted took time to chat, and I asked many questions and he told me about himself; he asked about Noreascon, and I reported in full. I gushed about Interaction as is my duty, and we chatted about James White's Hugo, and loads of things; it all came along naturally.

It's early, though, so first, we decide to eat, but before



Out on the open blue sea

expected. White picket fences, large detached one-floor homes, a taxidermist's called 'Headmasters' in Prince Frederick. It's very Twin Peaks-y but not exactly. The noise of crickety things, the balminess, it's America. It's all right like.

On the way we travel into Washington and ask a cop for directions; although my Oirish twang is wearing off and I am picking up an alarming American twist to my accent, some people still see me as foreign, and the cops seem to like foreigners. Actually that's a horrendous lie; I always accentuate the Gael when I am chatting with cops, and they love it. Anyhow, we get directions.

Nic and I chat; much is discussed on the journey. He is intrinsically a very decent person, and we talk about all sorts. This year, for the first time in a good while, he will miss Novacon. Not so good. I ask him to consider running for TAFF US to UK, but he dismisses it totally out of hand. It would be interesting.

We pull into Washington airport and Nic kindly drops me off.

My brother works and lives in Bermuda, and he offered to fly me to visit him for a couple of days. I took him up on the offer, what with never having been to Bermuda before.

The flight to Bermuda is 2 hours long. Bermuda is a small place, sort of directly 550 miles east of Charleston, Carolina; it's a small selection of islands in a chain. It's about 20 miles long and nowhere more than two miles wide. The Gulf Stream keeps it fairly warm. I arrive and, again, the heat assaults me; it is *warm*.

My brother welcomes me, and introduces me to his girlfriend: a blonde beauty with a soft Alabama accent.

We first eat, a good lunch; the brother is still trying to recover from the night previous. I myself am fairly knackered out. We enjoy what turns into a long lunch and head towards my brother's place. It's a whitewashed building, and he has the top floor apartment with his friend and fellow Islander Doug. We relax a while and take it easy, and then later head into town and have a few beers.

13TH SEPTEMBER. MONDAY. BERMUDA.

I get up; my brother looks like an ejit. I can't stop laughing as he wears shorts and knee socks and a jacket, shirt and tie. It's his work clothes. He heads off. Shortly thereafter I too head off, with the laptop and all. I walk into Hamilton, the capital; it's about the size of Blackrock. Not very big at all. I find the bookshop: grand, make some purchases, and then find an internet café. After updating my TAFF page, I browse photographs and answer Noreascon mails.

I then head for the Pickled Onion; it's on Front Street, which faces the dock. Last night there were some frigates, German and Dutch and an American one out on its own. Today the frigates are three deep as they have made space for a cruise ship; it dwarfs the light grey sleek shark-shape ships, but from their hatches, arrows could strike the behemoth with frightful incisiveness. My imagination wanders...

Front Street is a long continuous row of shops, with bars and restaurants on the first floor. I go up to the

Pickled Onion and out onto the veranda, and choose a seat that is comfortable. I order Pimm's, Gin Slings and ciders. I have lunch, and as I eat I am typing, as I have done at any time I have been free to do so. I arrived at about 12.30 and I leave after lunch to meet my brother at 5.30 PM. It's a long lunch.

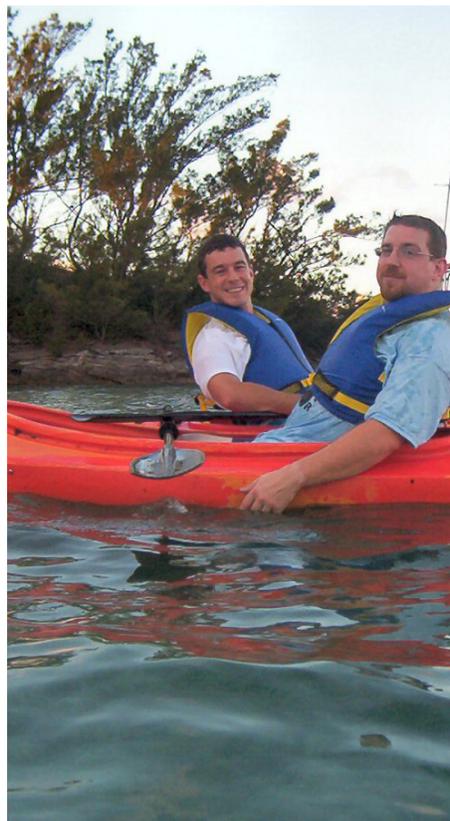
I feel somewhat like I am in a Graham Greene novel. That evening, we head out to Rebecca's, my brother's girlfriend's. We get there for about 6. I had mentioned I would like to do some sort of water sports, and Rebecca lets Andrew and myself borrow her Kayaks. She lives halfway up the island, and at her front drive is the most beautiful little bay you can imagine, with a little beach. We head into the sea, which is warm, like bath water. It takes me by surprise. There is an island, only a few hundred metres long, so Andrew and I agree to canoe around it and meet Rebecca at the island, which she is going to swim out to.

The canoe is fun. The further we go the deeper the swell; it's never more than a foot or so, but to me in a canoe, in this beautiful island, on the sea, I now feel like I am in a Patrick O'Brian novel. It's great. We make great pace and take some pictures; both of us canoed during our ten years in Scouts, and it's great to have fun with the brother.

We turn and head around a reef, and then turn again and make for the island, which we take for our own. We meet Rebecca and it's idyllic; I am reluctant to use that word, but I cannot describe the beauty and warmth of the setting sun over the sea.

We head back to Rebecca's house, and the brother gets the BBQ going; we are to have steaks for dinner. Now let me describe Rebecca's house. It's a large one-floor building, very colonial. There is a decent swimming pool and garden; then there is a large sitting area, with couches, a very well equipped kitchen that any cook would work in, an exquisite bathroom, and a couple of well-apportioned bedrooms.

In the open area between the kitchen and the lounge is a pool table; the whole wall is glass windows and doors, facing the swimming pool. My brother introduces me to nine-ball pool, which he claims he is the master of and goes on to lose about half a dozen matches, to his chagrin. He goes back and cooks the meat, and Rebecca



With the brother - the water warm, like a bath

beats me, which we decide by default means he is the worst player; there is much good-humoured shouting and derisory comments made all round. It's great craic.

After a good feed, and more pool, and a few drinks, we head to bed. Rebecca informs me that I will be in the 'main house'. I am flummoxed. She explains that this is just the 'pool house', and we walk to another building, which I thought was next door. It's not; that's the main house, a bit of a mini-mansion affair, with a huge dining



A perfect end to a brilliant trip: Robin Hood Bar

area and a bedroom about the size of one whole floor of my house back in Cabra.

14TH SEPTEMBER. TUESDAY. BERMUDA.

I advise my brother to marry Rebecca immediately, by means fair or foul. He is horrified; they are going out a good few months, and he only tells her he loves her when he is drunk, and coaxable I reckon. Fool.

Bermuda's an odd place in the sense that they are very British but use the dollar. They are tied to the US dollar, but have their own 'Queen' money. The cops look like they fell out of the Met and they drive Panda cars: Vauxhall Astras with a yellow stripe and all. They have very British pubs and customs, but the shops seem also to cater for American tastes, food-wise anyhow.

Everyone has a moped; it's the way to travel. No one has large cars. Rebecca has a Suzuki Jeep and this is the largest the cars seem to get; it's the law.

So I head back into Hamilton, visit the Internet café, where the guy and I now chat, and back to the Pickled Onion for more lunch and typing. I meet up with the brother, and we go to the Robin Hood bar that evening, from one pub to another. There we meet Doug and we have a good laugh at doing very badly in a table quiz. We depart early enough, but have drinks and my brother hires *Hellboy*, which I had yet to see, so the evening continues as we watch the movie. I love it.

14TH SEPTEMBER. WEDNESDAY. BERMUDA TO BOSTON TO SHANNON TO DUBLIN.

I depart on Wednesday. I say my goodbyes and get a taxi to the airport. I am sorry to leave my brother; I had a great couple of days. It was nothing to do with TAFF, but no one seemed to think that such a two-day break was inappropriate. I needed it to be honest, and I used my time wisely; in the bar.

I get a flight to Boston: uneventful. And then I waited there, and typed more, and boarded an Airbus destined for Ireland. It took about six hours and I was home.

WorldConono

WorldCon is a beast, a huge beast, for five days, running from about 9am until, well for me, 8am, in a vast conference centre and hotel. It's a non-stop rampaging, all encompassing, exhilarating and fun animal of a thing. I was fortunate enough to be here, at the gift of Fans, who voted for me for the Trans Atlantic Fan Fund. It was my first time in the American form of this creature, and I was way excited. But enough of me, this is a con report, so lets dissect this animal.

It's a monster and where better to start my look at this gargantuan of a creature, than in its belly.

All animals need feeding, and Jesus, a beast the size of this needs some amount of sustenance. In the loading dock, below ground level, huge juggernauts, American eighteen-wheeler freightliners pirouette in order to disgorge their loads. Its Wednesday and the con will only begin tomorrow afternoon, yet here it is organized bedlam as every type of thing, food, drink, books, dealers stuff, paper, machinery, you name it, the beast devours it, and up it goes in elevators that can hold fork lift trucks. No morsel is too small, as battered and well-worn pickup trucks; spill well travelled stock out onto the dock and dealers, eager to make some money, help the parasitic minuscule creatures, known as Teamsters.

This is the WorldCon.

Every beast needs its brain, and this beast's brain is broken down into many parts. The most amazing must be those that run the electrics, the tech ops. These guys and the tech support leg that keeps part of the beast moving only help out because they are into tech, no payment or perk will suffice, these guys and girls just wanna play with leads and wires. As structures to hold lights and sound are put into place, I get an opportunity to visit one brain centre, the TECH room at the rear of the auditorium. I steal a glance as I search for a cable to connect a TV to a video. Here it's like entering some hybrid mission control, where everything is possible. As I enter, I am truly alien, yes; it feels and smells strange, like I have been licking a scalectrix track again. There are humming sounds and enough flashing lights to spark fit. I leave.

Another brain is the office, situated in the Sheraton, where newsletters, secretarial stuff and stationery and lots of officey type things get done and sorted quickly. This brain appears to be the domain of many Brits, Pat McMurry and Tim Illington seem at home here,



and their team works hard.

Upstairs in the Hynes convention centre, next to the green room, is the Programme Ops brain, organised by Janice Gelb and planned by Priscilla Olsen. It's a WorldCon and the beast is like a chameleon, forever changing its colour, and as people drop out, or problems arise, these mortar women strive to plaster any crack and do so eloquently. I am amazed as they juggle what is over 1,000 programme items.

Are there changes, of course there are, over 1,000 individual programme items, sure even my last convention with a mere 24 programme items had 2 changes? This is con running my friends, but not on the wombat scale. No change interferes in my enjoyment, that's for sure.

Of course at there is the treasury room, where money is given out only after a considerable grilling and the Filk Office, which I avoided, I am afraid. Then there is the childrens services office, the Gimming, the movies and many other places like offices, or seats of power, which are like little brains, as little conventions work away under the greater umbrella of the beast, odd off spring, with their own little staff and organisation, all coming together, like organs in a torso, pumping and living.

Then there is the Chairman's office. Although I often see the Chair, Deb Geisler, in nearly every corner of the con at some stage, she is always clam, as is her deputy, Elaine Brennen. From

what I see of Deb she is a striking woman, strong and well-spoken, decisive yet considerate and very warm. She is always busy, but purposely so, never ruffled. She reminds me of other women chairs, Maura McHugh of Octocon for instance, with a firm and positive hold on the leash of this beast.

The body of the convention are vast halls. The dealer's room is very big, and has a great selection of products. I am surprised at how much is there. There is a somewhat predictable amount of Terry Pratchett product visible, but also below that surface veneer there is no shortage of books and graphic novels. Costumes and gaming make it colourful and bright while T-Shirts are also plenty. I myself never got to buy very much, although I did purchase two of the beautifully produce NESFA press books, one by Peter Weston and Terry Pratchett.

Next to this hall, is another, the Concourse. This area is a lounging area, and when I first saw it, empty and dormant, I was not expecting such a grand area to awake and end up looking quite so comfortable and welcoming. The convention built a pub in one corner, The Mended Drum, where live er, music, if you want to call it that emanated. Fortunately the construction was such, it mostly emanated only a little.

The rest of the hall was filled with eating area's, various exhibitions such as past Hugo's, a Nasa one, stuff on the

Lensman award and Doc Smith, then there is sales of con merchandise, GOH displays, a real Rocket, information and internet access, the fanzine lounge and areas for future WorldCon's to feed and a selection of sofas and chairs, gathered here and there, grouped perfectly for small chats.

This was also the main venue for 'First Night' a selection of mini extravaganzas, such as Terry Pratchett on Trial, where once again he was found guilty, although perhaps not with the panache or expertise of the one true prosecutor, Jim De Liscard. Outside in the hall way, everything from juggling, wand making and belly dancing was taking place. The idea seemed to be to get people along and involved, it worked.

So two halls next to one another, but then next to these two was the auditorium, where the main extravaganzas were held. I attended the Retro and Real Time Hugos. Both were well done, and despite the odd technical glitch, I was impressed. It was good to see fans from the UK and Ireland awarded Hugo's. Neil Gaiman and Bob Eggleton were both excellent MC's.

Many UK fans and Professionals turned up looking very well, Farah Mandelson and Flick were particularly eye catching.

A personal proud moment for me was collecting the Hugo on Behalf of James Whites' family circle, for the best Fanzine of 1953. I was astonished, but

saurus Rex

pleased to be of assistance, as was Joe Sicilari who collected on behalf of Walt Willis when Slant won the Category. James was Art Editor on issue 7 which was published in 1953.

These large halls were in the Hynes convention centre, all on one floor and below them was the registration and all around, many smaller rooms, about 24, where films and programming took place. Above the concourse, upstairs was the artshow. I saw this as it was being put together, but never got a chance to get up there again, but everyone I spoke to said that it was excellent.

Peter Weston proved to be an excellent choice as fan GOH. He added a little flair and charisma to everything he was involved with, and his interviews with the other Guest of Honours were excellent. Terry Pratchett also proved to be an excellent choice, and sparred very well with Peter. His dry sense of humour, and quick wit was not wasted on all present. I did not get to see much of William Tenn and Jack Speer, but what

I did see of both gentlemen, they were popular.

The beast had another body, or rather the hind quarters, which were situated in the Sherteton hotel. The join between hotel and convention centre was invisible. The hotel was connected directly into the concourse and also the Dealers room.

More programming was going on in the Sheraton. A 70mm movie theatre had been set up in the grand ballroom, which also hosted dances and Terry Pratchett's GOH speech. A large gaming room, con suite, where free food and minerals were a plenty along with childrens services and a few more programme rooms including the filk, were all in this nice hotel.

So that's the beast, but what of the fodder, well, there were some 5,500 people there, so I was told, and all went very well. It was my first American Worldcon and I didn't find it overwhelming, rather very welcoming.

The parties were good. Japan threw a good one, with sake, beer and wine flowing freely, along with no end of good food. These guys were keen to impress, yet kind to what must seem like a savage bunch of fans. The best party for me, were the Borders without Banners party. This one was run by fans of George R.R. Martin and was excellent, no shortage of free booze, and pretty girls here. On average there were about 20 parties each night, open to the public, although in fairness, when Norman Cates, the DUFF delegate, and



comrade in Fan Funds had the HUGO for best movie, we crashed mostly any party we wanted. Got told 'no entry' from SFWA, which isn't surprising, as we weren't really writers.

The interaction Hugo losers party was excellent, I didn't lose one, but, I got in anyhow, Norman nearly lost the Hugo he was minding though. Anyhow the food was wonderful and it was very popular.

There were many other great parties. The key to this, lay in knowing the way the beast works. Every evening I collared James Peart, Rod O'Hanlon and the party Tribe, and quizzed them on the location of free Booze. This proved invaluable as it was an easy way to meet people, who would refuse directions to free Booze, and I rapidly met many new people, who I now consider friends. A Taff Thing I reckon.

But what of programming, well I heard no complaints, and managed to go to the items I was programmed onto, which were all attended fairly well. My Knowledge of UK comics stood me great stead, in a discussion about Alan Moore, I was shocked to hear Alan Moore fans not having heard of the Bo

Jeffries saga, which is being re-released by A1, and urged them all to refer to Miricleman (ughh) as Marvelman.

If there was one comment about the programming, it was that maybe there was too much good stuff going on, and I find that a paradoxical statement. There were not as many, manic or mad programme items as one would expect at a UK or Irish Convention, but then I was told that if we tried the cruxification of Tobes at a US con, we would be in real trouble, as opposed to having a laugh.

I am afraid I didn't get to much more, being a con runner, I was keen to help out and ended spending some terrific time with children's services, which had eight rooms, and an amazing programme. This will not be the case at Interaction, such areas are now covered by UK Law, so it will be much different. I will be running along with Stefan Lancaster The YAFA programme, (young adult mad dangerous crazy stuff) which got some interest, and Colin Harris Co-Chair of Interaction even suggested we try to build a centrifuge. I can't wait.

There were no shortage of good people to meet, many authors were present, such as Mike Resnick and

George R.R. Martin who all proved very friendly.

But what of scandal. Wear the beast's ears burning at any time. Well the fact that Dragoncon was on the same weekend was mentioned, a couple of times, not in reference to attendance figures, more in reference to the so called greying of fandom. I dunno, I met various gangs of people younger than me and hung with them a good bit, and later met some of them in New York.

So no real scandal I am afraid.

I enjoyed myself, but then how couldn't I. I was the TAFF delegate, so everyone was fairly nice to begin with. I was also elevated to Staff within Children's services, and despite many UK fans coming down to photograph this obvious travesty, I enjoyed it and it helped me meet many more fans. Getting involved was the motto at the 'how to meet other fans' panel, and I take my own medicine seriously.

The accommodation was excellent, both hotels minutes from the activity with a shopping mall at the feet of the beast, which also included a great food court, which offered a fantastic variety of food at reasonable prices. In fairness I was rarely there, for the beast suckles its own, in the con suite, and for those who volunteer, the magnificent spread in room 608 needed to be seen to be believed.

I can only compliment the committee on a tremendous job well down, this beast pounced on me and defiantly left its mark. I truly didn't hope to have such a wonderful time, and although some things were once in a lifetime moments, it was a more of a cuddly beebie bear than a monster to me.

- James Bacon



Fan Contributions

Nic Farey

Terra incognita gafia, imprisoned by the walls that others may not see.

Nevertheless, a few words.. The old drunk we discovered lurking by the septic tank had actually witnessed the tragedy. Recorded for posterity, he said: 'Oy seen im put is legs over they gurls. Oy put moy coat over em. Oy never got it back.'

- Nic Farey

A hand is poised about 3 cm from my breast

The owner of the hand asks if he can have a feel. I manage to stammer something like 'Uh, no,' and Flick simultaneously mouths something to him silently, over my shoulder. I wonder what she said. The hand withdraws.

This, then, is my introduction to James Bacon.

As first impressions go, it makes an impact. I'm impossible to offend, and I like him already. I'm not alone.

I'm at a panel on the international nature of fandom. A friend I know from various online forums, Anna Feruglio Dal Dan, is there, and I want to hear her speak. Norman Cates – the DUFF delegate – and James are also there. I take a lot of notes, determined to find out more about NZ fandom as well, as it's apparent that Norman and I know very little about each other's fanac.

James surprises me. His enthusiasm for fandom, especially for Irish fandom, is infectious. I find myself thinking about the similarities of Sydney and Dublin, and wondering if perhaps James's style of fandom would work here. I make another note to myself: find out about Irish fandom, ask James about Irish conventions.

James as mentor? The idea is a little too wild, even for a mistress of enthusiasm like me. I make a note to myself to not underestimate him. He's a fearless dynamo.

It's 5 am on Sunday morning, and James is holding court in a little space with comfortable chairs on the second floor of the Sheraton. Arisia 4.5 has wound up, and there is ice cream. James has been holding court since around midnight. His courtiers are a merry band of international fans – Israeli, Australian, American – youngish, tipsy, and enjoying the phenomenon that is James Bacon.

He gained his status as King of the Noreascon Court when he and Norman turned up in stylish duds after the Hugo award ceremony and Hugo Losers' party. They've come to mingle with fandom's proletariat, and they brought Peter Jackson's Hugo with them. James notes down ratings of all the parties of the evening on his dance card. The Brotherhood without Banners party is rating highest – an 8 – mainly for its relatively high quality alcohol and quotient of attractive young women. Not surprisingly, that's where we're currently gathered.

In between greeting people and taking party reports, James takes photographs of young attractive women clutching the Hugo seductively. Sometimes without the Hugo.

The hours between midnight and dawn pass quickly: introductions, discussions of chicken-fisting, chicken-fights and beer. We head to the Arisia 4.5 party when BwB is closed down for rowdiness.

Arisia runs a micro video programme including some '50s style stag films. We heckle.

No one wants to leave the court, because James is such fun. He entertains us for hours. I might miss out if I left now, I think, and I persuade myself I'm not yet tired so that I can hear just one more anecdote. And another.



Zara – Look that's my hand on her shoulder!

Finally, James staggers off back to the Marriott at around 6 am with the other Mariotteers: myself and Alexander, who joined the court at Arisia. 'I've got to be at children's programming at 9 am,' he tells us. He asks a passer-by to take a photo of the three of us looking very seedy in the Boston dawn.

It's no surprise to me to find that he made it to children's programming on time. James Bacon, I've realised, is a force of nature.

Sunday evening, his bright exterior seems a little diminished. A long night and hard day at children's programming has exhausted him.

A group of us are having dinner at a nearby seafood restaurant. I try my very first oyster. James is drooping, but we talk about him when we can't talk to him. There have been muttered whispers around the convention. People rave about the marvelous job James is doing in children's activities. The phrase 'best ever' is banded about, and it's apparent that James cares about what he's doing. I'm fortunate enough to hear some of his thoughts about all the palaver as we eat dinner. He's erudite, and thoughtful, and polite, while managing to somehow be also offensive and self-deprecating, bigoted and charming.

James Bacon has layers, I realise. Layers and depths. And I won't have time at this con to map them or explore them. Shame.

I say farewell at the Dead Dog. Or rather, James farewells me. I'm grabbed from behind: one arm slides over my shoulder, the other wraps around my waist. I feel the brush of a goatee against my neck. Touch is obviously important to James, but I can't help feeling he's trying to look down my top. He manages to make it an inoffensive and friendly gesture. I wish I had a few extra days of con to get to know him better; sink a few beers with him and spin some bullshit and fairyfloss. He butterflies around the Dead Dog, shaking hands, greeting people, making everyone feel at home with him.

I realise I'm envious. I want to be James Bacon. Only without the ginger goatee; that looks much better on him.

– Zara Baxter

PO Box 616, Marrickville, NSW 2204, Australia

TrouserCon

Well, it's come and gone now. But Nic Farey's Trouser-

con was well up to the standards set by Nic in previous years, and a good time was had by all.

This year TAFFman James Bacon was on hand.

We'd been bouncing schedules and directions and whatnot around by email for several days, Nic, James and I hashing out who was going where and when. James was flying into Washington National Airport in early Friday afternoon, and had his head set on renting a car, driving down to Nic's, and bringing Nic back up to my place for that evening's Second Friday, although Nic tried to talk him out of it. It's just under two hours' drive from Nic's to my place (Nic lives in southern Calvert County in Maryland; I live in Northern Virginia, on the opposite side of DC) – and that's when you know the way and miss no turns. I figured James had the *time* in which to do it, but it might be a hairy experience for him.

It didn't happen. I got a call from James's girlfriend – in *London!* – telling me that James had been having a miserable afternoon. He hadn't been able to rent a car, and phones were misbehaving. He'd decided to just take the Metro out to my place. 'Oh, jeeze, I said. 'I was just heading out to do some errands.' In fact I'd almost missed her call; I was at the door. 'Just leave a note for James on your door,' she said, with confidence. 'He can handle it.'

I did, but when I got back maybe three-quarters of an hour later, the note was still on my door and James was nowhere about. So I unloaded the ice into the coolers and started the monthly chore of housecleaning which precedes (and is the justification for) every Second Friday. I'd only started when the phone rang again. It was James. Upon exiting the East Falls Church Metro station he'd made a beeline for the taxi ranks, gotten into one and asked to be taken to the nearest bar – from which he was calling me. Once I knew where he was (Benegan's, a local restaurant-cum-watering hole located in the fringes of Seven Corners), I asked if he could wait there for about an hour while I got my cleaning done, and he assured me this would be no problem.

Indeed, I needn't have worried. When I got there, about twenty minutes later than I'd expected to, I was greeted at the door by an employee and I said that I was meeting a friend: 'An Irishman.'

'Oh,' she said, her face lighting up with a wide smile, 'yes – he's right over there.'

I looked and a bearded young man in the middle of a knot of women turned towards me and shouted, convivially, 'Ted!'

'Jeeze, James,' I said, shaking his hand (for indeed it was he), 'I hate to break up your party.' Three attractive women surrounded him. He had a nearly full glass of beer in his other hand. He looked unworried about my lateness.

'Let me just finish this,' he said, with a nod to the beer. There was a huge mound of black luggage near him. I separated out a piece of it – not the largest – and told him I'd take it to my car. When I hefted it I literally staggered under its weight. Incredibly heavy. (Only later, when we were bringing his stuff into my house, did he show me that this soft-luggage bag had *wheels* under one end. Had I but known!)

When I came back, the beer was finished and James was shaking men's hands and hugging and kissing the women goodbye. This is a man who can easily make friends. 'They're very conservative,' he told me about the women. After we'd loaded the rest of his gear, James started around the car and I had to remind him that he was heading for the driver's side. I had a sudden flash of all the times I'd made the same mistake in England.

We went out for dinner at Anita's, a New Mexico Mexican restaurant (as opposed to Tex-Mex), where we both lit into large platters of good food, and James said

this was just exactly what he'd needed. After a frustrating early afternoon in which nothing was going right, he was finally unwinding and enjoying himself.

We got back to my house about an hour before things were to start, so we relaxed and continued our conversation. James told me that in the UK they call getting sercon 'having a chat with Ted White'. I was touched. We chatted.

It wasn't a large Second Friday – maybe a dozen people. Dan and Lynn Steffan didn't make it (Lynn had to work late, as it turned out), but Steve and Elaine Stiles, Walter Miles and rich brown did, as well as several of my non-fan friends. James seemed to be enjoying himself, but by late in the evening he was gently snoring on the small couch.

The next afternoon, a bit after 2.00 pm, we set out for Nic's. This involves taking the Beltway (I-495) into Maryland and exiting on Pennsylvania Avenue, which



Ted at home, with his pipe and fanzines

is also Maryland Route 4. One drives south for around an hour on Route 4, eventually passing through Prince Frederick and then, five miles further south, turning off onto local roads. Once I'd found and made the turn, I pretty much knew where I was (having been there before, at yearly intervals): within a couple of miles of Nic's. We drove down a narrow road with trees arching overhead, swung out and around and suddenly the Chesapeake Bay was right there, on our left. We followed the road around back inland, into Chestnut Street and, as Nic reminded me in his directions, 'The burned out house next door is still burned out.'

Nic's house sits up on the side of a hill which continues above it as his back yard. It's an 'upside down' house with the main floor up on top (although Nic pointed out there *is* an attic above it), and both internal stairs and outdoor steps that climb the right side of the house up to the kitchen door. It was once a 'beach house' (you can see the Bay from the back of the house) in which Nic and Bobbie now live year round, and have done for the past ten years. Gradually, incrementally, Nic is remodelling the house and starting to add on decks outside which will turn his rather steep yard into much more usable space.

Nic was out in the 'back yard', working a cooker-smoker, and waved to us when we pulled up. We trudged up the steps to greet him. Nic was barechested and looking a bit skinny, but well. He has a new 'hair do', the sides of his head shaved close and the top growing freely. He seemed unhappy when I compared the look to that of Lyle Lovett and suggested he tease up a pompadour in front. He was cooking chicken pieces slathered with a sauce of his own making in the smoker-cooker. It had smelled good from down by the car, and better in close proximity.

I returned to him a couple of borrowed books. One was a book he'd loaned Walter Miles the year before; Walter, newly a father, had made it briefly to Second Friday, but had to miss TrouserCon. The other was Joe

Haldeman's *Tool of the Trade*, a rather dumb thriller (it had Huge Holes) for which I'd had better expectations.

At some point we wrestled all James's luggage out of my car and into the house. At another James went out with Chris to get more beer. Chris is a friend of Nic's, a local whom he met on the internet. Chris is a care-provider for the dying, often Alzheimer's patients. He's lived an interesting life and at another point we had a long conversation about it. Mike showed up later. He's Nic's construction boss, and a solid guy.

While Nic watched the cooking chicken (turning it and basting it with more sauce) we talked about the house and his plans for it. He's thought it all out, but it goes slowly for want of funds. He's mowed the weeds on the side slope of the yard, and made starting preparations for the decking, the first small piece of which is already there now.

I chatted (in the mundane sense) with Bobbie and made myself useful where I could. Eventually the chicken in the smoker was done and Nic poured what had to be a gallon or more of peanut oil into a tall pot sitting in a rig over a propane burner, and turned the burner on. A cooking thermometer told him when the oil was hot enough (around 325° F) and in went two whole chickens, onions loosely stuffed in their cavities and injected with a marinade. *This is the key to Nic's 'cons' at his place: deep-fat-fried birds. One year a turkey, and more recently chickens. They come out with crispy delicious skin, the meat moist and tender. It's hard to stop eating them. (And 'by tradition', I carve the birds. My pleasure: I cop the best pieces of skin for myself.)*

It was a fine feast. In addition to the chicken there was red (kidney) beans cooked with turkey sausage (Chris doesn't eat pork), potato salad, coleslaw (made by Chris from a couple of cabbages he'd grown in his garden), deviled eggs, and Much More – including desserts (which, since I don't eat sugar, I skipped). Everything was tasty and delicious. It was hard to stop eating and the conversation flowed easily. A neighbour woman whose name I missed, but whom I think I met at Nic's a couple of years ago, came in just as we were starting to eat and joined us. Later, Bobbie told me how she'd met Nic – a delightful story.

I had to leave around 7.30, although I didn't want to. I needed to get to Baltimore for a concert by the Spanish band Amarok before 9.00 pm. Somehow I did it, getting there at about 8.45. But that's another story.

I left James in good hands. Nic had put him online and he was checking his email when I left. We shook, and I told him how delighted I'd been to meet him. Just like with so many other fans I've met over the years, it seemed we became instant friends. This is very reassuring for me: James is relatively young (for present day fandom) at 30 – and he's been a fan since he was 15, something else I could relate to. He was a fine TAFF delegate, and I'm glad I had the opportunity to meet him.

And with TrouserCon we've cemented into place another Fannish Tradition which began with Tobes's TAFF trip: the appearance here at the first Second Friday after Labor Day of the TAFFperson, followed by the Saturday afternoon/evening 'con' at Nic's. Works for me, works for Nic.

– Ted White

What a difference a year makes

Last year was the first time my Worldcon report-back started with a negative twist. This year I came away from Noreason Four believing that this was probably, pound for pound, the best Worldcon of the six I've been to so far. Programming was massive (but still high quality), organisation was very sound, innovations were

everywhere and complaints were few. At last count there were around 5,600 members, and the vast majority had a wonderful time.

Things I liked – my favourite part of the review

Hooray, I get to the part of the review I love most. Firstly, like Toronto and Philadelphia, Boston was an incredible host city. My city-sense had me feeling happy as soon as we arrived in Boston, and that always gets me off on the right foot (my city-sense is always spot-on). This was a city well worth spending a couple of weeks in.

Most importantly, Boston has a massively powerful fan base with two very large local cons and several other notables in the region. This was the fourth Boston Worldcon, which led me to the obvious question: why only four? With a horde of local fans that regularly help run Worldcons everywhere and anywhere, they are steeped in Worldcon-pedigree and could easily be hosting a Worldcon at least every ten years or so. Some of these fans (smofs) are amongst the most respected and accomplished fans anywhere, and it showed. This was the most organised of the six Worldcons I've been to, and many who have been to more Worldcons than I feel the same way. Anyone competing a future bid against Boston will have to do an awful lot to convince me not to vote for NS.

The convention centre was well situated and appended to a nice mall, as were the two con hotels. It was perhaps too spread out and a little confusing, but there was ample space. The selection of restaurants and stores nearby was awesome, and I visited my first Trader Joe's (imagine a health food chain with excellent food and decent prices). One of the Marriott concierge staff was outstanding and Fiona found herself using the restaurant guide merely for confirmations, or not at all.

Programming was led by a talented organiser with a powerful support staff. Few knew that Thriscilla had some serious health problems right in the thick of things, the kind that leave you a pile of nerves hovering by the phone. It did not seem to make a whit of difference, and the back-end process powered on relentlessly.

My final comment on programming was the consistent compliment that the panellists were almost always entertaining. Using big function space rooms for the large parties worked out wonderfully well. Parties could literally have hundreds of guests present at any time. There was far more space for chairs and couches, making for a far more hospitable environment.

The con suite was located in a massive hall and was the biggest I've seen. It was well stocked in all areas – consumables, couches, chairs and tables – and also with a small library (including magazines and newspapers) and some fun games. It all made for an outstanding venue for socialising and these were the biggest con suite crowds I can recall, except maybe ConJosé.

The Green Room is a prep and relaxation area for program participants, where you can (should) hook up with fellow panellists before your panel and chat a little about the subject and any guidelines (but not enough to spoil the discussion), while also relaxing in a quiet area. This year I found myself using the Green Room regularly for the first time. Maybe it was the windows and the sunlight, or the peaceful feel of the room, or the welcoming volunteers manning a table right at the door, or the well-tended snack table; I cannot be sure. Perhaps as a side effect of this, for the first time I even met fellow panellists there, twice! Congratulations to the GR staff for this helpful island of tranquility.

The dealers' room was extensive and also quite fun. I wandered through it a couple of enjoyable times and bought fabulous T-shirts. It was one of the biggest I've seen and it was yet another sign of the overall healthiness of the con. I understand that business was not as good as hoped, and the dealers blamed this in part on the quality of the programming keeping fans away.

Registration was also about the best I've ever seen. Most people were in and out without any problems and

WorldConNomicon

there were no lines. The layout was simple and spacious, and everything was well organised. So many cons screw this up, mostly cramming it into too little space. It was good to see, if not perfection then close to it.

My fun favourite Hugo was in the category of Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form, won by Gollum's LOTR Acceptance Speech at the 2003 MTV Movie Awards (see <http://www.theonering.net/static-news/1054890864.html>). This foul-mouthed humorous tirade by Gollum 'the actor' was just the right tone for fans, i.e. irreverent. Also fun was when the sweet Frank Wu won the Best Fan Artist Hugo, and was totally speechless. All he could manage was to yell, 'I love you all!'

For most, I suspect that the two awards to Filthy Pierre (Erwin Strauss) were the most special. He won the Big Heart award, which is like a lifetime achievement award for fans who give back to the community, and also a N4 committee award. I'm sure he must have been dumbfounded, not only that he was being thanked for his contributions to Worldcons and fandom, but that it happened twice in one night. Worldcon regulars have seen his work, from the little party lists he gives out through the flyer racks and voodoo boards (message boards for fans to leave messages for each other) that he invented. I was privy to and a part of some of the discussions around this award and found out more about him there. I understood why he'd not been nominated before, given that he simply does what he does without seeking recognition or status and takes on no senior roles. Well deserved.

I don't know which insane fool came up with the 'First Night' idea – but I loved it! This concept seemed a little odd at first, but it really took off. The idea was to have fan groups from around the world each host a booth and collectively host a fannish fair on the first night of Worldcon (Thursday), generally also the quietest night of Worldcon. Each booth was allocated tickets to give away as prizes and the tickets could be exchanged for cheap fun toys (1 to 5 ticket variations). The concept was a wonderful success and huge numbers of fans attended.

All the restaurants in the food court were told about Worldcon and the expected number of attendees. They were warned that volume was likely to go up more than with most cons, but few listened. This has to do with many conventions having only a minimal effect on business, what with per-diems and business dinners. Worldcons are different and run the full spectrum, from the best restaurants through to the cheapest, depending on budgets and convenience – both major factors at Worldcons. As a result several stores ran out of food over the weekend (in the evenings) and many locals and store owners said it was as full as they had ever seen it. If only they had listened to us.

Closing ceremonies were very emotional for Deb Geisler, the outgoing chair of Noreason Four. It was sad for all of us, as the end of Worldcon always is, but sadder for her because it was such an awesome Worldcon. Many Chairs are only too glad that Worldcon is over because they are so overworked and overburdened. May all future Worldcon Chairs have a chance to duplicate Deb's nostalgia.

Interaction stole the show at closing ceremonies though, but not through their spiffy presentation from the mayor-equivalent of Glasgow (the combination of a muffled sound system and her Scottish brogue). Rather it was with a small bagpipe band (drums and kilts and all) that led everyone, like the pied piper, to the Interaction fan table, where a few more memberships were sold. It was fun too – especially since it was an American band.

I took about 3,000 buttons to Worldcon. Over 600 were for Interaction, the Worldcon for which I'm North American Promotions Co-ordinator. About 800 were variations of 'I love Worldcons' and 'Ask me about Worldcons', for a project I'm involved in to promote the overall concept of Worldcons, rather than a particular Worldcon.

It was nice to see these buttons here and there

throughout the con and hear stories about how they had worked. Oddly, many people asked me for 'Single X seeks Single Y' type buttons so I'll make some for next year I guess.

My panels – discussing, evangelising and moderating

This year I was on four panels, and over and above everything else that really kept me busy.

My first panel was a fandom ra-ra panel late on Thursday, entitled 'Welcome to the SF Community'. Fellow panelists were James Bacon, Elaine Brennan (moderator) and Joel Zakem. Basically it was an opportunity to offer advice to neo-fans and Worldcon neos. This is how you can make friends, these are places to socialise, we really love having you here, feel free to chat to anyone, etc. I was amazed at how much I had to say and how much I now know. I really feel ideally suited to these kinds of panels, since I have no trouble waxing lyrical about any of it because I have learned a lot about it through my own neo-friendly and Worldcon PR approaches. I also knew that what we'd said had had an impact because neos who had attended the panel later came up to me repeatedly, to say hi or ask advice. Several of them even came to 'First Night Times' and contributed an article.

Random points of light and shadow

At First Night GOH Terry Pratchett wore a T-shirt with the following:

'Tolkien's dead.

J K Rowling said 'No'.

Philip Pullman couldn't make it.

Hi, I'm Terry Pratchett.'

See <http://www.future-classics.org/noreason/thur-spics.html> for a photo of him (just page down a few).

James Bacon, a somewhat crazy Irishman, was this year's TAFF delegate to Noreason Four (The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, fandom's oldest charity, sends a European fan to the US or a US fan to Europe, on alternating years). We first met at the Wednesday night Interaction party and chatted without knowing who the other was. Thursday we were on a welcome to fandom panel together and my FNT and his TAFF duties saw us both in the fan lounge much of the time. He was a sweet guy who disguised his shyness behind loud gregarious behaviour. He did as he was supposed to, getting involved wherever he could, even helping on children's programming – and loved every minute of it. He was a wonderful choice for the fund and did Europe proud.

There was a strong presence from NASA, both officially and indirectly. The former was a big-ass impressive stand with plenty of give-aways, and the latter was a nice stand highlighting some of the shots taken by Hubble (with free samples).

To close

Worldcon needed to bounce back after last year, and it could hardly have done so with more style or impact. Keep your eyes open for the next Boston Worldcon; save for it if you need to, but go. Call it an investment in your own happiness.

– Grant Kruger

Post-Con Email

It was a great pleasure to meet Norman and you and spend some time with you at Noreason Four. You and Norman embodied the very best in the fan funds: eager, interested, friendly people looking to make connections with foreign fandoms.

– Deb Geisler

Tedward's Distraught Mommy



Deb Geisler – The Main Lady herself

I love James to bits, even if he is a mad bastard. No, actually: *because* he's a mad bastard.

He's a funny person to get to know, though. I sometimes think that people in England have got to know him very strangely. (Not in Ireland, naturally: he's been running cons over there since he was knee high to a grasshopper. Or something.)

Then again, I can only speak from my own experience.

In my experience, meeting James is something that happens after you've heard, at length, about what a mad bastard he is. The stories are always amusing, and always deeply improbable. A case in point would be chicken fisting; if you don't know what that is, just imagine the worst thing that it could be. Yes, the chickens were raw: I said to imagine the worst. So he's a bit of a larger than life, down-the-pub-story kinda guy. Obviously the real thing wouldn't be quite so... intense.

After a while, he turns up in the same pub as you. He's probably publicising something that, well, sounds every bit as mad as the stories that you already heard. But surely most of that won't actually happen, hey? And then he wanders up and – casual as you like – asks if you fancy letting him take you outside. You point out your other half. You point out his other half. 'Ah, sure they won't mind...' he answers with a grin. You turn him down.

Then you see him again. Maybe he's running a con, maybe he's running a one-day event. Obviously we're using the term 'run' in its loosest sense. Obviously someone whose idea of a good theme is grannies having their handbags stolen by aliens isn't actually going to be running a proper convention. Except, actually, it's bloody good fun, and nothing seems to go terribly wrong. Well, except for the police getting worried about the Irish guy in a military vehicle letting off rockets, but that was easily cleared up. After that's been sorted, you're hanging around telling the people who weren't there about it. Suddenly, a hand grabs you and James whispers something unrepeatable in your ear. You turn him down.

Maybe, at the next con, things are looking a bit stressed, so you ask if there's anything you can do to help out. You get handed an easy to remember list of three things to do and know perfectly well that he's kept everything complex, everything hard, everything tricky to do himself, because he doesn't want to bother anyone. But things seem to be going well, and you see him in the bar later; and he knows exactly how many drinks the under-18s have had, and which people might cause trouble, and he knows the name of every damn person in that room, and you realise that everything's actually all worked out exactly how he planned. After a while, people drift off to bed and you're left chatting in the bar. He asks you to marry him. You turn him down.

And, then, maybe, you need somewhere to crash when you're accidentally at a Worldcon on a different continent. And he's the first person to volunteer. So you arrive and you're sitting on the floor in the fan lounge chatting, and someone jumps on you and starts shouting. You say hello back to him and take a room key.

And that's the last you see of him. Seems that, even though he's there on a freebie, even though

he'll probably never see these people again, he's spending all day, every day running around helping them out. Everyone that I spoke to confidently informed me that they'd been seeing lots of James, that he seemed almost to be hanging around at the same things as they were. The folks running childcare reported that he was there, bright and early at 9 am every day. The guys in the dealers' room reported regular chats around lunch. He was on two or three panel items every afternoon. There was something to be presented, or received, at each evening's ceremony. There were the parties, and the bars, and the parties again all through the night. And, somehow, in all that, you hardly manage to see him. You suppose that there must be at least two or three hours every night when he's asleep next to you, but they don't ever register in your mind.



Making Tedward MINE!!!!

Actually, I lie. You can tell James is there, because every single person you speak to has met him. Every single person you speak to has, in many cases over the time it took him to win TAFF and get to the Worldcon, or even just over the course of the weekend, gone through that process of getting to know him. Maybe not exactly the same, but they've all gone through the same basic stages.

And, in a way, I feel cheated, because I didn't get to see him. So maybe I should have followed past form and turned him down when he offered me a room: I might have got to see him, that way, instead of just hearing about him.

– Flick

Noreascon 4 Children's Programming Report

20 October 2004

Persis L Thorndike: Children's Programming Team Leader

Overall, Children's Programming was a huge success. I heard complements from parents *and* adults who wanted to participate because it sounded more interesting than the adult panels.

I have received emails from parents thanking me for giving their children a variety of good things to keep them interested while the parents went off and enjoyed themselves.

Donations made up a lot of the available materials, along with the stock from Arisia's Fast Track and Boskone's Dragon's Lair.

Volunteers really made my day; most of them I had lined up or at least talked to before the con began, but the residual ones who came during the con were just what we needed. And the teenaged volunteers, Bill and Bridget, were stellar!

Having all the children's programming, activities and services in one area worked very well. Families with more than one child, or children of varying ages didn't have to run all over creation trying to get kids settled and get to programme items on time. Inger Myers, Sandra Childress and I worked together quite nicely and James Bacon was a *fantastic* addition to our team. The ladies from Kiddie Corp integrated well, and were able to bring their charges into the activities when the kids wanted to participate there.

I got many complements on the separate Children's Programme schedule booklet. It gave the kids their own schedule, and was much easier for them (and me) to read and find things than the very nicely done, but lengthy, Convention Guide.

It is important to keep children interested and occupied during a con, especially a Worldcon. From the many comments I got from parents who were not able to tear their offspring away, or who *had* to bring them back first thing the next morning, I think this was accomplished.

The Terry Pratchett kids' discussion was very well attended, as was Norman Cates's *LOTR* slide show, the Higgins Armoury demo, Liquid Nitrogen Ice Cream, Instant Costuming, Sword Making and Sword Play (following the making session), Harry Potter LARP, Time Travel Dance, and the astronomy sessions by Steve Hammond. Monday was sparsely attended, but Thursday had more participants than I expected, maybe because I had scheduled some interesting things.

I will have a much more detailed report to give to the Interaction people, including numbers of attendees for each panel, things that were very successful and those that weren't, either not at all or more likely because of being scheduled against a *much more* interesting item.

– Persis Thorndike

The Hugo Awards

I had a *great* time. I don't remember enjoying either of the other two Hugo Ceremonies I attended, because I was so nervous about being a nominee. I had no idea if I'd be



Walking with Giants

a good MC or not, but wanted to see, and I loved doing it, and trying to make it work and be as comfortable as possible an experience for everyone involved. (When it came to the category I was a nominee in, I declined to hold the award, because I didn't want to glance down at the little plaque on the Hugo which says who won, before it was announced. It seemed the right way to do it.)

– Neil Gaiman

Rat Fanz TNG

For some reason I hadn't met James Bacon previously. Why, I don't know, and it's bothered me; you miss a couple of Novacons, fail to pay attention at an Eastercon, and suddenly you're a past number, a dinosaur on the way to extinction. So I wondered about being able to relate to this new *wunderkind* that has come amongst us.

I needn't have worried. Eileen and I bumped into James on Thursday afternoon, just after the Opening Ceremony: a Mephistopholean figure with his little goatee and hair in two tufts at each side of his head. He didn't mess around, simply lunged at Eileen, took her in his arms and kissed her with a considerable amount of passion and a large dose of Irish blarney. She was instantly enraptured – science fiction fans simply don't *do* that sort of thing. Not that I minded, not until James made a similar lunge at me. God, he's strong! It was all

I could do to hold him at bay. 'No tongues,' I insisted, 'not in front of the men.' (See picture on page 10.)

Next time we met was in the fan lounge on Friday evening, just after the retro Hugo presentations. We'd all scrubbed up for the occasion – me in my tuxedo, James in his Wonderful Ice Cream suit – and when Joe Siclari asked us to pose for a photo with one of the Awards we duly lined up with me in the middle. Just as the flash went off I felt a hand creep round the back, grip my buttocks, and squeeze firmly. (See picture below.)

Yes, I think you can say we have bonded!

– Peter Weston



James, Peter and Joe with James White's Hugo

The Incredible Eastcoast Artshow

The Incredible Traveling Artshow was just that. I arrived with the intention of just volunteering a few hours, talking to the Director Gay Ellen Dennett, and spending time going round the convention. What I ended up doing was Volunteering myself for every area of the artshow possible, and being Gay Ellen's apprentice for the week. You must all think I am mad.

When I first walked into the artshow I realized I was in for a very busy six days. The aircraft sized room was full of steel poles and wooden boards waiting patiently to be erected. We had a 2 days to set up the artshow which consisted of Printshop, registration and of course the exhibits area. This artshow was 5 times the size of a uk national convention twice the size of a uk worldcon. Enough to make you go wow when you walked in.

I was treated so well by everyone. I told them I was going to be running next years artshow and they all went out of their way to offer lots and lots and lots of advice which I noted in countless note books. They showed me how to run everything from setup to tear down. Nothing was missed. I did not leave the convention feeling exhausted but full of hope and knowledge from what I felt was one of the greatest artshow teams I had ever met.

While I working with Gay Ellen Dennett I felt nothing but respect for her and realized she was a guru of Artshow Directors, and a lady with lots of enthusiasm and passion for her job. Even with the large team of people who could have run the artshow while she was not there she stayed for most of the time to make sure everything went smoothly. And smoothly it went. Like all events things don't always go to plan, as long as no one notices and all is fixed quickly then you don't have to worry.

I have to say I really met some wonderful people while doing the artshow and it made the convention one of the best I had been to in years.

If I can do it over again I would. I hope an opportunity comes along to work with the Incredible Eastcoast Artshow Team again.

Smiles

– Julie Rigby

Describing Norm

It's not easy now that I try to sit down and describe my DUFF counterpart. I expected someone older, from the picture that I had seen; but Norm would be about my own age, if slightly heavier and stockier and shorter than I am. Nevertheless, ladies described him as handsome, so he was more than I am in that department; and he has blonde curly hair, which is allegedly 'cute'.

Norm had worked on *The Lord of the Rings* after meeting the guy in charge of Weta at a convention in New Zealand, all the time remaining a fan, and a well-read one at that; Norm is a regular con-goer. I found him very easy to hang out with, although I must admit I think he found my sense of humour a little odd. In turn, he would laugh at stuff I thought was interesting rather than funny, so it just shows you that we had different mind-sets on the laughter front.

He is intrinsically a very good person, always helpful and attentive; and he could do an excellent Kermit voice. While we were off buying comics and relaxing on the Tuesday after the convention, Norm bought a copy of *Watchmen*, and that in its own right elevates him to hero status; anyone giving *Watchmen* a shot has to be of good taste.

I first met Norm on the Thursday afternoon, on a panel we were both on; he was rushing from one panel to another. He was on a fair few panels as well; in fairness to the programming team it would have been easy to select him for panels, as his work on *LOTR* was a subject much talked about and also very topical. So, as panels go, we didn't get to cross paths much; I should have gone to one of his on *LOTR*, but just didn't manage to find the time. He was a good speaker too.

Norm cleverly had a selection of mementos from New Zealand – pin badges and the like, stuff I never thought of at the time, but which were great and well appreciated.

Norm ran through everything for me at the Hugo rehearsals, explaining what was going on: he introduced me to Neil Gaiman, as he had already met him, which was good. We agreed to sit together, and stick together, although that seemed to be happening anyhow.

When we met up at the Hugo reception, we took many pictures with people such as Neil Gaiman, who was presenting the ceremony, and Deb Geisler who was the con Chairwoman. Norm's presentation speech was excellent and he presented the fan artist Hugo with style. He also accepted the *Lord of The Rings* Hugo on



With the LoTR Hugo

behalf of those guys from New Line, and again his words were easy on the ear. He was erudite, to say the least. It was good we both had the opportunity to say a few kind words about our various funds while presenting the awards.

The Hugo Losers' party was amazing. The food was so good – salmon and cheeses and everything – it was good that I had not eaten very much, and this was luxurious.

Norm arrived at the party after the official photographs; he deposited the Hugo safely near himself on a windowsill. While he was getting wine, I stole it, and then shot around to the kitchen/bar and chatted to him with the award behind my back; he then went back into the room, and I left the Hugo in the kitchen with Alice Lawson smiling on. Norm continued to eat

and drink and then Claire Brialey, to her credit, started to chat to him and gently, as subtly as possible, to ask about the award. Norm, of course, offered to show it to her, but it wasn't there. I immediately took a drink, to conceal my smile and also to show a lack of concern and knowledge. A couple of moments went by; I drank again, but could barely hold it in, and shortly after broke out in a smile. Norm was relieved and laughed a good bit as we returned the Hugo from the kitchen, although I think he gave me 'death stare looks'. It was good-spirited, but for a few minutes there was definitely panic.

I convinced Norm that he, and therefore 'we', were on a winner with this Hugo lark: we looked amazing – he all white tux, me all high collar and long coat – so we decided to do a tour of the parties. Well, as the Hugo was in his hands, I suggested and he went along with it.

So that night we used the Hugo to great effect and gained entry and notoriety at all parties. Norm would enter and a crowd would gather. After a bit he would be engaged in conversation; then my hand would sneak in, his would sneak out, the Hugo would be passed and I would then show it to everyone else in the room. It was bloody good fun.

The best party definitely was the Brotherhood without Banners party, which was run by the George R R Martin fan club. We were welcomed

as Giants; I couldn't believe it. If I ever meet a real Hugo winner (as opposed to acceptors like us), I must advise them that – if single – this is the best night and the bestest way to meet chicks. Norm, in fairness, didn't abuse the situation as I might have; in the suits, and being foreign men in a foreign place, well, it offers one a bit of an edge.

Norm went to bed always at a reasonable time.

He had brought some really cool stuff to the auction – like incredibly cool. I knew immediately that I was going to be shown up; again the New Zealander had thought well ahead. He had arranged 'crew' clothing and paraphernalia from *The Lord of the Rings*, and even I was tempted; it was stunning stuff, and it raised a good few bob.

I suppose there were a few times I pissed Norm off – only to be expected; we spent a lot of time together – but I wouldn't have known it, and he never bothered me at all, which was great. It was as if we were at two separate conventions, but met up for dinner or parties. And of course we hung out on the come-down, on Tuesday, which probably was why I consider him such a great bloke; we chilled.

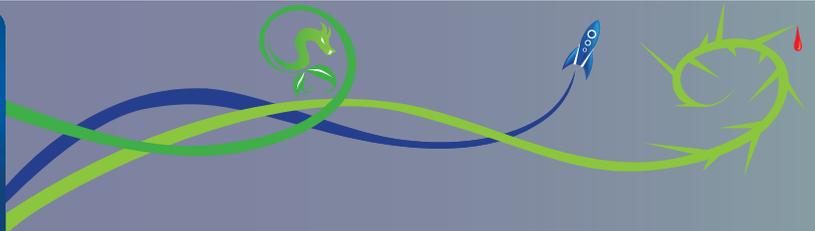
I may have offended him since, well, he is fairly Christian in the same way I am fairly not, so my opinionated big mouth probably shot off a bit too much; but he never said anything, really. He was a decent bloke about my opinions, loud and offensive as they occasionally can be. Maybe I worry too much, but that's the sort of way we got on; I wouldn't have wanted to irk him, if you get my meaning.

I liked the way that we seemed to get on. It was terribly lucky. I was worried he would be an arse, and it was so pleasing and brilliant that he turned out to be really sound and cool, and also into so much excellent stuff. A better DUFF candidate I would like to meet!

I would love to see Norm over for Interaction but I don't think he'll make it, which is a bloody shame. Some day, I want to get to New Zealand and hang out on his own turf. He was brilliant.



Pair of blue suave shoes



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The Shiny Veneer Scratched Off

As I pondered on all that was written here and elsewhere about my TAFF trip, I noticed that there wasn't anything negative said about it all. Obviously I should bow my head and be relieved that all went well; but, in saying that, too much spin is a bad thing. So I thought about all the aspects of my trip that might make people realise that I can be a nasty piece of work as well.

So what about it then? Well, to be honest I was shitting myself about volunteering, even getting into the Hynes Center, on the Tuesday; I spent a lot of time lacking confidence. Eventually of course I walked in and volunteered, but I was afraid I would be turned away.

I was sometimes very brusque with people. On the first night for instance, I nearly snapped poor old Grant Kruger's head right off, when I replied 'I know that' to a helpful tip he gave me. I was tired, I suppose, but such intolerance is very unfair – especially to someone like Grant.

I was a bit derogatory about filkers.

I wonder whether my flirtatious and boisterous ways are really that OK. I thought I was received with good manners, but no doubt some people found me offensive and even rude. Although I wasn't actually slapped in the face, one can get away with only so much, and I was as bold as brass.

And those girls I chatted up and cavorted with: how would I be if it was my girl or wife? OK, that's a bad question, 'cause I would be proud; but anyhow, the point here is that I am sure some blokes felt a bit intimidated or irritated when I casually held their girl.

So did I flirt too much? You bet. Was that fair to everyone concerned? No, not at all. It's hard not to be so taken with so many wonderful women, but maybe I need to control my urge to lunge for their jugular. Or whatever. It's probably inappropriate at best and, especially with a girl at home, it's just not the best behaviour.

In discussions I was at times quite strong and didactic about my opinions. I always consider myself DOAB: Difficult Opinionated Arrogant Bastard. But do other people appreciate it? Although in fairness I probably got as good as I gave, I have strong opinions on things and let it be known; I am sure sometimes these were considered offensive. Especially when it comes to religion.

I was a bit harsh on the Japanese; I suppose I am a bit xenophobic, or should that read racist? (Brits OUT.) Probably it should, if I were honest. A lot of my opinions are changing, as I found anyone from Japan to be pleasant and courteous; no doubt if I go to Nippon in 2007 I will be a fervent believer in all things Japanese. Even so, not so perfect there, I am afraid; but getting there, perhaps.

Although I didn't use my TAFF status to get me any favours, I surely put the arm on many people, from shouting down the phone at James Shields about no having email contact to pressurising Vince Docherty to let people into the Hugo Losers' party. My poor girlfriend had a huge phone bill after I got home, because she did so much for me; maybe I should have just made a better effort and sorted a US phone? I leaned on people at the convention, too; sure, many were happy to help out, but I still coerced, cajoled and maybe even twisted arms.

I was nasty to AAA about an author; not his fault, but what sort of person holds a grudge for ten years? That would be me!

I had an unpleasant time with Nic Farey about his excellent contribution to this report, which I decided not to print. It was well-written, it was captivating, it was fast, it was purposeful – but with vengeance in mind; it was vitriolic and harsh.

I am a conrunner; I run cons. It's hard: we get slagged off when it goes wrong, or even when it goes right. It's tough, and it sometimes feels like certain people are out to stop you having fun. We deal with crap when it hits the fan; we work really hard to make something happen. Anyhow, it creates a fraternity. Anyone who is or has been on a committee with me will know how I get: you don't dis 'em, you don't hurt em, and the last thing you do is upset 'em, 'cause I get really fucked off and nasty. I may hate my fellow committee members for a bit, if they stomp on my ideas for instance; but nonetheless, don't you dare even think about speaking badly of them. I may not talk to them for years afterwards, but I would have a good word for everyone I have ever worked with (except for one); although I may have offended or trodden on toes on the way, so the same may not be said back of me. But I am passionate.

Nic knows this, and unfortunately is as pig-headed as I am about his friends – in this case, those in fanzines in North East America. And here is where we bang heads. I can't work with someone and then watch him or her get slated unfairly. Actually, I am loath to see it even if it's fair. Nic was in a similar situation; he couldn't allow something to pass where he felt a friend of his was disrespected and maligned. We do agree on what is important

to us.

But I can be a Bollix: you see Nic's piece isn't here, is it? Not after all his effort, which was a lot, and it was a good piece. Too harsh though, for me. Of course, I am encouraging anyone who goes for Taff in '06 to stop off at Nic's (and Ted's), so we haven't fallen out; it's just editorial differences. But not fluffy, is it?

I am far from perfect. I can be aggressive and mean, and although I didn't hit anyone at Noreascon there were a few times when I felt like it. Think how many people could say the same about me?

I did my best, I suppose, but should do better. Yet no one is perfect. And please remember, as you read this, that it's not all true: it's mostly lies, or just how I remember it.

– James

CONTACT Details

If you want to get in touch with me that's really easy: just include a cheque made out to TAFF for a few bob, or something, and post it off to Love Green Farm, Love Green lane, Iver, SL0 9RA, England.

Otherwise you could email me: jamesbacon74@gmail.com.

I help with the following:

Sproulore: www.sproulore.com

The James White Award: www.thejameswhiteaward.com

Worldcon 2005: www.interaction.worldcon.org.uk

Actually, I am running the young adult programme at Interaction, which is all Persis's and Inger's fault. Maybe I'll see you there; if you read this please come and say hello.

I will also be running Paragon II – well, helping to run a small aspect of it – with the rest of the committee, and since I hope to make this available there, come seek me out.

You can also ring me: +44 7960 763686.

However, I work as a driving instructor. I enjoy teaching people with learning disabilities, older folks – the oldest in my car being 84 – and people who have been in accidents and suffered various trauma. I also do some advanced driver assessment and training for risk and safety, which is really easy in comparison. But my hours are odd, so if you ring I may not be at home.

I go to loads of conventions. Octocon in Ireland is so well worth getting to; it's just great fun and always a laugh. Sproulore run events: about two a year, usually in the UK. And in Dublin we have the Sci-Fi Club, every first Tuesday of the month, so if you are foreign don't be shy. Especially if you read all this, you will be part of an elite, some sort of paratrooper fanzinerist or Special Patrol Group in the fanzine world. Since I expect most people to get to about page 4, then glance at the photos.

So there are loads of ways to make contact.

If you read this and wonder where to go next to find more mayhem, drop me a line; I'll find something or someone near to you.

Please think of sending a few bob into the next TAFF (and for that matter DUFF and GUFF) races or fundraisers. There are auctions all the time and donations are welcome. And vote Joe Siclari for DUFF, 'cause he is a nice bloke.

Thanks for reading.

– James

Typesetter's Note

It is, perhaps, not normal for the typesetter to add his own comments, but I recently learned that such a comment was how the great James White started his writing career, so I'm in good company.

"Normal" is not how James Bacon does anything, as I have learned over the years. He always has a good reason why it's imperative that each publication absolutely has to go to the printers yesterday morning. A typical conversation follows.

James: You know that fanzine I want to do for Octocon?

Me: I thought you'd dropped that idea. Octocon is in three days. When were you going to get it printed?

James: If I get it to them in the morning, they should have it ready just in time.

Me: But you know I only got three hours sleep last night because the #!#!% committee had me working on the programme book.

James: Please?

Me: Email me the stuff and I'll see what I can do.

Something about submissions

I should really write something about all the people who submitted something to this TAFF report, but am unsure what I should say.

Well, I have thanked Mark Plummer and Claire Braley, as they not only submitted but (especially Claire) also helped re-edit the report. They were really helpful at many stages, so I am greatly indebted for their support.

I should thank Flick, who was going to cheque the spelling and arithmick. But I got way laid.

Persis Thorndike kindly allowed me to use the report she submitted to the Noreascon committee – hence the formality there, but it's good to have a look at what needs to be formal; it's not all fun and games. Deb Geisler sent me a cool email; she is really sound.

Zara Baxter sent me a piece which is brilliant, as did Flick; and I think they lie well, which is the norm for girls, even if they aren't my type.

I pestered Julie Rigby until eventually she gave me something about the art show, as I never got to visit it after I helped during set-up. I appreciate her doing this; and she also looks good in tartan.

Nic Farey sent me a huge piece which I decided I didn't want to print, and of course that was a bit of an upset, so his lack of wordage here is my fault. He was kind enough to send me something else, after all, and that's really cool of him. Thanks Nic.

Ted White was brilliant to me, and his piece – along with Peter Weston's who was also good to me – was destined with some others for a shadow report in the fanzine *Chunga*, which is edited by Randy Byers, Andy Hooper and carl juarez.

Grant Kruger's Noreascon Four Worldcon report-back is up on the web and available at <http://members.aol.com/scifisa/perssf4.htm>. Grant is a really easy-going soft bloke, who is like a mobile PR machine for Worldcons.

Sue Mason (a previous TAFF winner too) was really cool when I asked her to do a picture for me; it's the first time I have really done anything fan-art-ish. I can't thank her enough: it's perfect. (That's you, Peter!) She even let me have it, so now it's framed. Sue does interesting things with wood: see www.plokta.com/woodlore.

Mike Dashow sent me the cool cartoon of the dictionary panel; I really appreciated it, as he is a pro, just like Sue, so that makes the taste sweeter. See Mike's awesome work at www.michaeldashow.com.

Neil Gaiman was a surprise; I had seen his report on his blog and asked for something from it, which he kindly agreed to. I just wish I had spent more time chatting to him, but sure, not enough time. Decent fella. Here is Neil's site: www.neilgaiman.com

'Peer Groping' appeared in *Chunga*. Issues of *Chunga* can be found on Bill Burns's excellent website <http://www.efanzines.com>. My piece about accepting the Hugo for James White was previously in Tommy Ferguson's fanzine *Tommyworld* (www.tommyworld.net) and 'Worldconosaurus Rex' was in the BSFA's *Matrix* (where I stole the layout from) – see also www.bsfa.co.uk.

The pictures were taken by many people who I handed my camera to. I also received pictures from Colette Reap, Norman Cates, and Vince Docherty.

The cover is of course my own stuff. It's only some of what I brought home. I will attach this and other stuff to a cork board, the best place for badges.

James Shields was involved as usual: it's paper, it's fannish, therefore he has done it.

Many thanks to you all.

– James

Seven hours later we have a fanzine.

Of course it's not always his fault. Like this time, when he got most of it to me almost two weeks ago. It just happened that they were weeks when I was out of the country most of the week, and he was away most weekends, so we didn't make much progress till the last few days.

James has a way of making things happen. If you want to get something done, your best strategy is to phone James and tell him it's impossible. Within hours he'll have people on three continents making it happen.

If James ever moves his amazing creative energies from fandom to another area, the world will know about it. I expect a massive multinational business empire to rise from the dust overnight. A new political movement will sweep the globe. Perhaps even a radical new set of religious beliefs will answer all the questions we've struggled with for centuries.

James Bacon will lie at the centre of it all, and all will flock to him for answers.

Especially all the pretty girls.

– James Shields

