

ORIGIN 3



**BULLETIN OF THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN FEDERATION
FAN RESEARCH BUREAU**

MAY 2018

The editor of Origin is John Thiel, found at kinethiel@comcast.net and addressable on the ground at 30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904. As yet the editor is the only member of the bureau, and is its proposer and the bureau head, but I am looking for members for the bureau and also contacts, and have one contact person outside of the NFFF, Joe Napolitano, at justjoeguytwo@aol.com . We're wanting research people and contact people here.

Editorial

I have been asked to explain the name of this bulletin, and, indeed, I have been a bit unclear in accounting for its name. Its title refers to the inception of being, to the conceptualization and creation of something. This is important to our bureau because we are attempting to learn where fandom came from (as you have seen, a debatable matter) and to find out how science fiction came into being; and fantasy, too, is being studied, although it is too much akin to life as it proceeds to be considered to have identifiable origins—all through the history of writing there has been an element of fantasy to what is written. Families know how important it is to find out the origins of their family through a study of their genealogy, so they can have a true existential grasp of their place in things, and take pride in the family name and estate. Here in the N3F, we want to know where we place in the literary hemisphere, and we want to study where science fiction and fantasy came from and what kind of history it has, where fandom came from and also its somewhat discursive history, and finally we want the history of the NFFF, much of which seems to be unrecorded, or, if recorded, the records are not within easy reach. In this bureau we feel that the facts of the organization should be learned and viewed so that we have a full knowledge of it. Of course this will be an ongoing

effort, and I am saying long life to this bureau. It should be a vital element in the development of the NFFF and insure us against future losses of knowledge.

So you are here at the founding of a new bureau, akin to other bureaus there have been in the NFFF but, importantly, some of those bureaus have been lost and this can be seen as a replacement for things that have a vital function for the organization.

There has been some disturbance here with opinions and outlooks being stated as facts, but I think we can welcome opinions and outlooks here as valid reading for the organization. As far as facts are concerned, we are searching for those, not asserting them, and we want to have a good look at what fandom is; therefore Neffers are invited to submit their experiences in sf fandom and their ideas about it for printing in Origins. Space for that is always available here. Viewing fandom and being in fandom are both part of the experience of fandom, and we want to make that experience more available. As for any facts we may find in our research, these will be presented for consideration, and although we are not declaring their validity and relevance, they are more likely to be valid and relevant than other considerations. Facts, as we all know, are disputed and disputable as to their significance and sources, but they are nevertheless a basis of knowledge, and it is much better to have such knowledge than to be lacking in it.

So Origins, mutable in its nature, not any more fixed and dogmatic or doctrinal than it ought to be, is a well-intentioned publication which, if it has faults, as it very likely does and will have, can always be made better by active involvement from the membership. We hope that it furnishes the membership with good reading and will be another good reason for being a member of the N3F.

Let us be hopeful about each step we take and see how things will go.

THE NFFF TIME CAPSULE



Someone once suggested that there be time capsules buried in the earth to survive the nuclear holocaust that was visualized so that American history and even the histories of the rest of the world would be available to future generations. That was back when books like *NO BLADE OF GRASS*, *THE LONG LOUD SILENCE*, and *FAIL-SAFE* and films like *DR. STRANGELOVE* were looming large in the American consciousness. Of course, nothing ever came of this, although perhaps it is still being discussed in the District of Columbia.

Discussing this, some members of the then NFFF got the idea of making a time capsule which would survive the coming holocaust, nuclear or not, but one which was starting to look more and more plausible by the way things were going in the world news. Again, nothing ever came of this idea, though there were a lot of contributors to the discussion of it. Now we might almost wish there had been a time capsule, what with the lack of histories being kept.



LETTERS

GEORGE PHILLIES: I enjoyed the last issue of Origin. It was good of you to publish the negative letters. I did catch one typo, sorry. damon knight like e.e. cummings, not Damon Knight, and I do not know why.

My understanding of that is that the lower case name was his name in science fiction fandom, and the upper case was his name amongst the pros.

JOE NAPOLITANO: Yes I was finally able to get Origin 2 open and I am a little bit surprised at what some members of the N3F said about it but everyone's entitled to their opinions. Also I really like the way it is presented, very well done, John. I hope the members appreciate all the work you've done on behalf of the organization. We don't really have many historical documents on the subject and what we do have is really the authors' opinions, beliefs, impressions, *etc.* In a way these writings are kind of like the fantasies the literature is supposed to be about. I am certain that much of what appears in, for example, A WEALTH OF FABLE is really more fantasy-like than anything else and can it be relied upon as factually accurate? Not really. Thus we have fans who take it as gospel word for word as if it were something like the Bible. But we know it's not. It is a work of entertainment as much as it is anything else. But there are some facts in it or what appears to be factual. So there's some overlap for sure.

There is a reaction like those are works of gospel, but nobody ever says so. Notice two major titles are mythological, A WEALTH OF FABLE and THE IMMORTAL STORM.

ROBERT JENNINGS: On the subject of your ORIGIN fanzine and the history of SF fandom—first off, I think you made a number of mistakes or misjudgments in your first couple of issues. Second, I sincerely believe this is a subject that is too broad and far-reaching to be undertaken in a fanzine or by a club like the N3F. There are entire fan history projects and websites running hundreds of pages long that are already chronicling the history of science fiction fandom, and they are still uncovering material.

The University of Georgia now has something like twenty-five thousand fanzines in their archives that they are working their way through, with more donations arriving every day. The Hugo Award-winning fanzine MIMOSA devoted its entire history to unearthing the facts of early fandom, printing interviews with the survivors of First and Second Fandom, and publishing numerous documents about the subject. Editor Rick Lynch continues to be an active researcher into the history of fandom and is directly connected with one of the most extensive on-line fan history bases. (If you are interested, all issues of Mimososa are posted free on the internet.)

These people have a lot of resources, including substantial monetary grants, to carry on their research, including double-checking all their facts. The reality is that almost from the beginning SF fandom was a widely fragmented activity with local clubs, individual fans and fanzines, scattered over the whole of the USA, Canada and the UK, some of them barely coming into contact with other groups. Unraveling all of this and making the connections to the history of the hobby as a whole is a never-ending project that involves vast amounts of research and verification.

Sticking your foot into this swirling whirlpool of activity is a mistake. If you want to write up your own personal experiences getting involved with

SF fandom, and how things were for you over the years, that would certainly be appropriate. Getting other N3F members to write their personal histories of their fannish experiences would keep Origin going nicely. But trying to develop your own independent history of a complex, convoluted hobby that has been in existence for close to a hundred years is foolhardy.

Well, our own small attempts at historical research can coexist with major ones, and this isn't done for world acclaim, but only for the membership of the NFFF. And look, you are helping make them knowledgeable about these other and bigger projects, which is what we also intend to do in this bureau.

I wasn't intending to do a history, only an elementary sketch. Historical facts of interest here, but the only real history we're interested in getting anywhere with is the history of the NFFF.

GARY LABOWITZ: Thank you for the effort to publish ORIGIN, a most interesting item for me. Introduction: I was a neofan for the longest time, beginning back in 1950 (or so). Living in the great Fandom Desert (the mid-West) in those days I felt very alone. Oh, there were others around, on the fringe as I was, like John Murdock and a bunch of "readers", but everyone else was far, far away, in Minnesota, Ohio, Indiana, and St. Louis. I felt VERY alone.

I contented myself with reading stf and prozine trash of the times: STARTLING STORIES, THRILLING WONDER, and a bit of the others, largely PLANET. It was all I had, but the letter columns were the contact with other weirdos (fen and readers). Disaster came in the form of a letter from K. Martin Carlson (publisher of KAYMAR TRADER). This was the adzine that kept isolated spots connected and allowed buying and selling stf old and new by mail. Kaymar said, in that letter, that it was getting to be a lot of work putting an issue of Kaymar Trader out because of all the typing,

layout, *etc.* that had to be done. He finished the letter with this: "Anyone interested in being a co-editor?" SNAP. I snapped. I wrote in, saying I would do it. I think my response was published in Startling Stories a couple of months later, and I heard from Moorhead, Minnesota, with the offer of letting me type stencils for the magazine. Well, I typed, but knew nothing about mimeographing. Kaymar sent me stencils, the ad copy on scraps of paper, and instructions on how to type and correct, letter headlines, and dividers between ads, and mentioned such stuff as corflu, and lettering guides. I got a few things together and began typing stencils.

This was before the protective sheets and it was indeed hard work. My lettering guides weren't the best and I only had a couple. Being a poor, broke child (!) I couldn't get much in the way of supplies.

I "co-edited" the zine for a couple of years, and then the big break came. Kaymar wanted out. Did I want to take over Kaymar Trader completely? I agreed to do it. I bought a really cheap mimeo (a Dusco Commander, open drum machine that has seen its last turning copy for a military base). It landed me in "Mess City". I now had to get ads (with payment of dimes and quarters taped to index cards), arrange the ads, type them on stencils, and then run the copies. This involved getting the stencils onto the pad on the machine, painting ink into the inside surface, running copies, repainting ink, fixing paper misfeeds, repairing torn stencils (or re-typing them), putting them on, taking them off, *etc.* I was usually covered in ink by the end of my work in the basement. My pants (I remember an old yellow pair) were smeared with ink from my hands. The table (folding card table), floor, many sheets of paper, were also ink-smeared. I can hardly believe that I could do this, only a few feet away from our washing machine, without getting ink into the laundry.

The run for Kaymar Trader varied from about 100 to 200 copies, but brought about another miracle: trade with other fanzines! I began to get

and read a lot of other stuff (which you so bravely listed in Origin) and began to see a larger activity field in which to "play". I discovered the N3F, and heard myths about apas of various kinds. All this boiled my blood and sent me into Fandom proper. I was becoming a neofan of stf.

The horror of this didn't hit me until years later. The steps to it were: I joined the N3F. I longed for the time and money to go to a "convention", without really knowing what they were. The con reports I read were often a form of fantasy, rather than reportage, after all. Once in N3F the REAL opportunities to screw up blossomed. I offered at one time to publish an issue of TIGHTBEAM. I was accepted and did so, even getting some little artwork from a friend in high school.

I was getting smart and dumb at the same time. I dropped out of high school to go to college (won a competitive, full scholarship). I continued with publishing stuff for N3F, and also was overwhelmed with Kaymar Trader. At a point when N3F most needed reliable publishing for communication, I blew up. For an annual election (president and others) I goofed up the National Fantasy Fan, ran short, was late, and made a decision to extend the voting deadline (not a good idea) and caused general mayhem for N3F. At the same time, the then-current president and treasurer ran away with the money and left N3F orphaned. If it had not been for the adult thinking of some solid members, N3F was a goner. They kept it going, got it back on its wounded feet, and continued to this day.

By the way, I found a good soul who took over the Kaymar Trader subscription list and replaced it. It was his zine, so no subscribers were injured in my making my escape. I hope I never get a confirmation of it happening, but I trusted him.

Anyway, I continued, joining a couple of apas, published my own zine, moved up to a Gestetner (electric with good paper feed and interleave feeder, experimented with color mimeo printing, etc., and dropped out of

college, started going to cons, and all this in the 50s! It still doesn't seem possible to me. Maybe I'm getting some of this out of order!

I'll say little more, because it isn't terribly important. But I eventually went back to school, finished college (1962) and joined IBM. After two years I was moved to Poughkeepsie on a large project, eventually left them to move to Philadelphia area (where I still am), married, and did a little more reasonable fanac, having more money and time, and then drifted out of fandom "for good". And here I am back again, but just as an unofficial observer.

Now for the comment part of Origin. At the end of #2 you have a list of fanzine titles of an earlier era. Indeed, I traded with, bought, or saw copies of most of them (a couple were either in FAPA or otherwise more closely held and I never saw them, but heard about them). It is an impressive list, at least to those of us who lived through their time. Some brought back memories of really good and/or cool people: the Coulsons, Gregg Calkins, Dean Grennell, Redd Boggs, even Harlan Ellison (who I overlapped with in the Cult). Charles Lee Riddle was a favorite of mine; he was kind and understanding of my N3F mess, and gave me support I needed at the time. I even see your name there, but never saw a copy of Caveat Emptor. I think it would have been a nice touch if you had included K. Martin Carlson with Kaymar Trader. It was a fairly popular zine at the time. And great thanks from me to Ron Smith with INSIDE, who took the Kaymar Trader subscription list and fulfilled it with Inside (and SF Trader), which was a beautiful semi-prozine (offset). For now, I'm dry. Each little detail is a story all its own. If you believe you want more details about any of them I will attempt to fill your need. But generally speaking, I struggle to remember details and have to research a lot of them. They are findable.

For example I'm attaching a picture of my firstborn (the elder daughter) sitting on Ike Asimov's lap at a con. It might have been at TorCon II and one

in NYC or Baltimore (he came to some that he could drive to, not being a flyer). Maybe someone who knows where Ilana Rudnik is could send her a copy. Ilana was somewhere in the 10-12 range, I believe.

Anyway, that's it. Thanks again for your efforts. I think this will turn out to be a worthwhile project.



Postscript: You can understand my not remembering some of these details; after all, it was 63 years ago (about). I can't remember what I had for breakfast this morning! But here we go.

The Harvard University Science Fiction Room catalog still shows Kaymar as the publisher of Kaymar Trader in 1953-1954; entry is below. My assuming position over zine had to be after that, maybe 1954 or 1955. I'll keep looking.

Kaymar Trader: Moorhead, Minnesota. Number(s): 71-75, 87; 1953-1954.

Editor/publisher(s): K. Martin Carlson; N3F. 1 folders.

Date:1953-1954.

Consists of advertisements for sale/trade of sci-fi collections, two copies of no. 74.

I'm also mentioned as publisher and/or associated with (usually a LOC or article) in 1955 under NFFF's heading, my zine OMICRON (1956), POSTIE (chat for N3F, 1954-?), VAGABOND (John Murdock zine, 1955-56). FANSPEAK (1951, 1952, 1955), a "petition" with Janie Lamb (1955), NFFF Newsletter (publisher, 1955).

It also turns out that THE RECLUSE was published in 1927 (hey! I was close) according to Fancy 3.

I can find no other references to Kaymar Trader or to Inside and Science Fiction Advertiser, the only two adzines I was associated with. It's been a long time----.

Thanks for the long letter, Gary, and I would like to hear any further recollections you might have, both of the N3F and elsewhere in fandom.

I remember Gary from some of those times back then and was pleased to get a letter written in the same style he had then, making him entirely recognizable as a person. I have some recollections in common with those and he brings back the aura of the earlier NFFF.

Locations of fan histories and definatory matter

Fanac Fan History Project: <http://fanac.org>

You might also contact this by way of Joe Siclari, whose address is on the NFFF roster.

Fanhistory: search on Facebook.

This is a Facebook group which discusses and posts history of fandom.

Wikipedia: available by search.

This has a considerable amount of material on fantasy, science fiction and fandom. It is group-written and various writers revise the preceding material with supervision. It's in a continuous process of adding material.

Fanlore: https://fanlore.org/wiki/Main_Page

This is part of the Wikipedia devoted to fandom where writers of wiki material go through what they have. I've done some Wiki writing here myself. Note the 's' on http.

Here I conclude another issue of the Fan Research Bureau's bulletin. Write us at kinethiel@comcast.net



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