



BULLETIN OF THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN FEDERATION
FANDOM INTRODUCTION BUREAU

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ORIGIN is edited by John Thiel, 30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904, email kinethiel@comcast.net . Its purpose is to keep you up on the doings of the Fandom Introduction Bureau and present material of interest to those wanting to know more about fandom, science fiction and the N3F. This material will be requested from people who could be contributory to our informational outlook. We will also research writings about science fiction and fandom and make our findings available to the membership. People will present their experiences with science fiction fandom here and write of their knowledge of it. We will also have an open letter column where members may express themselves on the topics of science fiction's history and significance, as well as that of fandom and the NFFF itself.

The Bureau is still in its formative stages and has not as yet acquired any members other than myself, but I have been communicating with Joe Napolitano, a former NFFF member, who says I may list him as a researcher, which I will do if I can manage to persuade him to return to the NFFF with a public membership. I have asked two other members if they would be interested in having a connection with this bureau, but have not as yet heard back from them. Both have full qualifications, and I might add that qualifications are not that necessary as research does not require previous qualifications, and I'd be glad to hear from anyone who would like to do work of this kind for the bureau.

EDITORIAL

We are not trying to establish an infallible department here, but rather one which is useful or helpful to the membership, so our information is of a general nature. We are open to any disputes there may be about its accuracy or relevance. We find things out and consider them, and will be quoting from learned sources of information. Secret Masters of Fandom will not be among our writers.

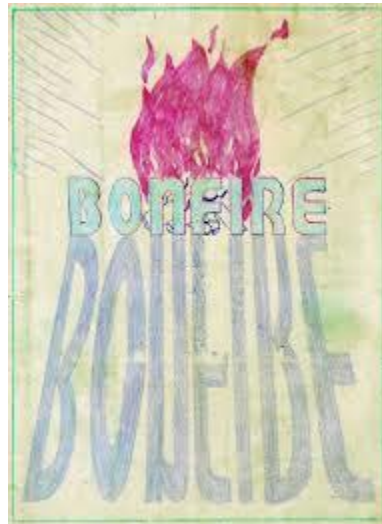
We feel that science fiction has a heritage and that knowledge of that heritage should not be lost. We want to be able to recollect our foundations, and to find out wherein fandom has progressed. There is much argument about this, but amidst all the arguments are found facts. Of course, one man's facts are not another man's, because from different perspectives there are different facts, factual to some, not known to others who have different facts of their own. No one dictated or predetermined how fandom would or should be, and many and various were the things that went into the making of fandom. It is not governed, and has no actual form except where forms have arisen for parts of fandom. But fandom consists of everyone who has edited or written for a fanzine or belonged to a science fiction club. No one holds sway over the way fandom will go. It goes into its own progress and cannot be seen as an ultimate entityship. This is, at any rate, my take on science fiction fandom, but, as I say, all disputes that may arise about this are taken into consideration with this bureau. We will be doers and thinkers, not makers of doctrine. If this is not so, let me know. One can only do one's best; if there are others who can handle things better, it is theirs to assert themselves and take over the functions that those presently working at it are trying to establish.

So, let us know your viewpoints on these things, and if you are in the researching spirit of this bureau, let us see your contributions.



The National Fantasy Fan Federation: A Brief History

By Jon D. Swartz, N3F Historian



First issue of Bonfire, another early issue, an earlier issue of TNFF



Later issue of TNFF

In the beginning of science fiction fandom in the United States, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, fans contacted and kept in touch with each other mainly by means of the letter columns in the professional magazines, later known in fandom as promags and still later as prozines. This process formally began with the appearance of readers' letters in the "Discussions" column of **Amazing Stories** in the late 1920s, although some fans had communicated with each other *via* letters to the fantasy magazine **Weird Tales**, which began publication in 1923. This pioneering pulp magazine, although emphasizing fantasy and supernatural stories, was a training ground for science fiction writers and even published some SF stories over the years. *Weird Tales* exists even today, although in a somewhat different form.

In these letter columns, readers commented upon and compared their favorite—and not-so-favorite—stories, authors, artists, other fans, and so forth. This fan communication via letters to the prozines continues in various forms even today. In the 1920s—1930s, however, such correspondence also led to the formation of local science fiction clubs (some of which were more *science* clubs than *science fiction* clubs), the publication of amateur magazines and newsletters (later called fanmags, and still later fanzines), and the organization of local, regional, and even national conventions. Some of these early clubs were sponsored by the SF prozines. Moreover, out of these clubs came a new generation of SF writers, artists, editors, critics, agents, and at least one publisher (Donald A. Wollheim).

In 1941 science fiction fan (and neophyte SF artist/author as well as a member of the Futurians of New York) Damon Knight suggested that it was time for a national organization of science fiction and fantasy fans: "I sincerely believe that a successful national fantasy association is possible, that it could offer a needed service to every fan, and that it could be established today." The N3F was organized in 1941 by elements of The Stranger Club of Boston, Massachusetts, stimulated by Knight's article "Unite—Or Fie!" Knight was respected in SF fandom at the time, being a member of the Futurians and known throughout the country. He subsequently became famous in the *genre* as a critic, editor, and teacher of SF/Fantasy. Fans responded to his suggestion, and the National Fantasy Fan Federation (later abbreviated both as NFFF and as N3F) was the result of 64 charter members. Other prime movers in founding this national science fiction club were Art Widner and Louis Russell Chauvenet of The Stranger Club ("Truth is Stranger than Fiction"). Chauvenet was the fan credited with creating the term "fanzine" as the accepted term for fan magazines instead of "fanmags", which had been the previous term. Knight soon lost interest in the national club project, and left the subsequent development of the club to Widner, Chauvenet, and others.



CORRESPONDENCE

Probably a lot of argumentation and controversy occurred in the early days of the establishment of the NFFF, as described by Jon Swartz in the article preceding. We have some of this in our second issue of Origin, in which we are tracing the past, a thing difficult to do without encountering a multitude of views. However, comment is just what we want, and some of this commentary is printed here for discussion. If you do not agree with things here, please let us know.

The following interchange occurred after the distribution of the first issue of ORIGIN:

[To George Phillies, cc kinethiel]

I'm embarrassed for the NFFF for the level of inaccuracy in ORIGIN #1, however well-intentioned this effort is. I've copied out the bulk of the text and pasted it into a Word file, and have made a lot of annotations and corrections (in red). It's attached. Beyond what I wrote, I think John's view of the JISFC is inflated, perhaps because it was one of his earliest fan connections and he was its president. It was short-lived, not influential, and soon disappeared. See Warner's WEALTH OF FABLE at page 265-266 for details.

I think it would best be withdrawn and reissued, but if that's not possible please consider publishing my corrections.

Best wishes, Robert Lichtman

[I don't know where George would publish them, but I'll do it here.-JT]

I responded that he had corrected a typo in my publication and that there was a typo in his letter above (no longer there) and added "I don't like his corrections and I don't agree that they are right, no matter how fast he got to work and got them emailed". A reply followed, addressed to me and the Cabal:

All I can say is that if John insists that his version of the history of fandom is correct *and* this is what is being distributed to prospective new fans (and/or NFFF members) through the "Fandom Introductory Bureau", then he's doing a great disservice to those prospects and to Fanhistory. There are plenty of other places in his flawed narrative that I could have commented on, such as his dismissive statement that "The sixties fandom was rather apocalyptic, with, unfortunately, a lot of warfare in it." Yes, there was "warfare", but there was so much else (including, for instance, the birth of Star Trek fandom). But time prohibited, and apparently it would have fallen on deaf ears.

Eventually, I suppose, Origin #1 will be posted on efanzines, as are TNFF and Tightbeam. I think that would be a mistake, given its errors, but once it's there I'll flag it on the various fan Yahoo groups lists I'm on so that others can also point out its many errors. People will laugh out loud at John's notion that Charles Burbee was part of First Fandom, that the first Worldcon was created by magazine publishers and "Fans were not that much present", and Bloch and Tucker had anything to do with the founding of FAPA. Where do you get your Fanhistory, Mr. Thiel?!

George, I don't want to put you in the position of having to be in the middle of this, but you are the "N3F Editorial Cabal" and I would hope you'd stay on board while this is being sorted out. John, if you reply to this,

please do include George. If not, I will forward your reply to him and/or include him in my reply if I make one.

Best Wishes, Robert

My reply to this, sent to both Robert and George:

Well, Robert, if you are wanting to talk, rather than just condemn, I'll do so, but you'll have to understand that that is fandom as I recall it and perhaps you have a different perspective out where you live; perhaps you're in a different fannish dimension. My sources of information were mentioned in what I wrote in Origin, Marion Zimmer Bradley and Forrest J. Ackerman, who were coaching me inasmuch as I was a neofan. If I dug through my paper collection I could find Burbee talking about First Fandom; maybe he'd laugh too. Have you heard his "Watermelon Story"? That's supposed to exclude people from fan circles if they haven't heard it, though that's just a joke, they aren't really excluded. I'm not familiar with what a "disservice" is. I doubt if I'll warp fan history with my statement; it isn't doctrine, and others can give their impressions of what I have written if they care to comment. The statement is to break the ice. A WEALTH OF FABLE portrays everybody as silly and disreputable and the cartoon on the jacket shows fans as slobs and fools, or if it doesn't I wonder what they're supposed to be. It seems like a valid history would be more respectful and less humorous than that was. I wasn't liking what he recorded about me and I think I have a closer picture of myself than he does. The JISFC existed as a fanzine called The International Youngfan, and people admit that one issue of it was published, perhaps even two; if I had the money and ink to do that many I was able to do one a month for as long as I pleased, and the club didn't collapse. When it finally did, it went down to feuding, but that was after years of existence. Read what you read, I didn't say Bloch and Tucker founded FAPA.

Mr. Lichtman's answer:

Belated hi, John (& George)--

Either Forry and Marion were kidding you, or you're not remembering what they said. Both of them were part of the *same* fannish dimension as me, and neither would have said that Burbee was part of First Fandom (though, who knows, he may well have talked about it at some point, as you say)—and yes, I've heard the Watermelon Story, directly from Burbee a number of times, and can tell you it's a not-very-funny racist joke that would not be told today. But not having heard it has never been a form of exclusion—don't know where you got that idea. What I meant by disservice to fandom, if your version of Fanhistory was what neofans/prospective N3F members first encountered, they would be given a false impression of fandom's roots.

Yes, the cover of *Wealth of Fable* is jokey, but I don't agree that Harry's narrative was, too. His coverage of you (and everyone else, for that matter) was limited by what he could glean from fanzines, since he almost never went to conventions or mixed in-person with other fans except for fans' rare visits to him in Hagerstown. I didn't find him on you negative or disrespectful, just perhaps too brief.

And yes, you didn't say that Bloch & Tucker founded FAPA—you said they founded "the first fannish apa" and that would be FAPA.

I was glad to see that in his subsequent postings of fanzines in e-mails (one just today for your latest *Ionisphere*) he didn't include *Origin 1*. Guess he might have agreed with my comments—and input from others I know about.

Robert

I didn't reply to that one, but I'd like to point out now that his first posting was a mass mailing to the membership and I wouldn't expect it to be posted again. George had this to say:

I received multiple complaints about Origin issue 1 in terms of the historical accuracy or not. Bright side: we received letters to the editor. Downside: They were not positive. Opinions?

Jefferson Swycaffer responded: I'm mighty sorry people sent unfriendly comments. That, too, is one of the costs of doing marketing. You can't say "good morning" without some people getting shirty!

Judy Carroll responded: The complaints about Origin issue 1 are just that, complaints. John told the readers where he got his information. He also stated it was "an elementary overview of science fiction and fantasy fandom." Key word—elementary—not postgraduate. Just stay with thinking on the bright side. At least you know the issue was read.

Jon Swartz responded: I didn't find Origin to be wrong, just his idiosyncratic view of things. If his bureau is re-named Fan History, and he writes a lot about the N3F, I guess I should be involved.

Jacqueline Lichtenberg wrote to me: I have only 2 items to note: A) If you want people to read it, make paragraphs shorter and use a layout with some illustrations or graphics or quotes, maybe pix from cons. B) When you first mention N3F, include that it was founded by Damon Knight (explain the non-caps) and that he also founded SFWI.

Apparently I was involved in fandom only a few years before you were—but I was connected only by snailmail and zine subs, LoCs, *etc.*—in the very early 1950s. Nobody told me I was too young because nobody figured out I was not 21—and as far as I knew, nobody cared.

You should interview John Betancourt at Wildside Press for another issue—he has collected rights to reissue almost the entire history of early SF and early Mystery fans who grow up to be BNFs.

Lloyd Penney made nice comments about Origin in the May TNFF.

That's the correspondence; none of it was directed to Origin but there was commentary about the zine. I said I would also publish Lichtman's corrections, as he calls them, and that's coming up next. It was nice to hear from him...he did, at any rate, write a response, a very active thing to do.

Robert Lichtman's corrections to the first issue

Origin: They informed Weird Tales and Amazing stories of their existence and offered to let readers view their publications, which were printed on real presses, not mimeographed like later fanzines. RL: **Assuming this is about Fantasy Magazine, there were in fact fanzines published before it commenced that were mimeographed. They were printed because (a) they aspired to wider circulation and (b) they could get it done cheap. The Lovecraft Circle came into existence in the 30s, contemporaneously with Fantasy Magazine.)**

Origin: At that time, Amazing, Weird Tales and Air Wonder Stories were the only sf and fantasy magazines in existence. RL: **Wrong—there was also Astounding Stories. Also, depending on what time you're thinking of, there was also Science Wonder Stories—but it and the Air Wonder Stories were merged into one title, Wonder Stories, in 1930.**

Origin: Other people joined them at amateur editing, among them Charles Burbee, who presented a publication that had in it the minutes of a scientific society which the publication represented. RL: **The publication Burbee edited was for the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, which was NOT a "scientific society".** Origin: Burbee's publication was a cornerstone of what later was called First Fandom, with the Circle being referred to as

Proto Fandom. RL: Burbee became editor of the LASFS publication, *Shangri-L'Affaires*, with its May 1944 issue—well beyond the period known as First Fandom. Origin: More such magazines came into being, perhaps due to their observation of the public demand which fandom represented. RL: This is dubious—it didn't cost much back then to start a magazine, and the small numbers of fans in the 30s would not have been a sufficient incentive. Origin: In Startling, Sam Moscowitz gave fanzines their first big reviews. RL: It's "Moscowitz" and he never reviewed fanzines in Startling. I think he's confusing him with Sam Merwin, who did. Origin: Wilson Tucker and Robert Bloch got together on establishing the first science fiction amateur press association. RL: Totally untrue—neither of them had anything to do with the formation in 1937 of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA). Tucker didn't join until the organization was nearly two years old, Bloch not until 1955. Origin: The term "fandom" was invented by Rick Sneary. RL: Wrong, see http://www.wordorigins.org/index.php/site/comments/word_of_the_month_fandom/ for the truth. Origin: Fans were not that much present at the first one, but thereafter were invited, and editorials presented description of the conventions. RL: This is all so completely wrong. Fans organized the first conventions. The first Worldcon was held in 1939 and was completely fan-organized. There were pros there, of course. [What did they do, party? -JT] RL: I suggest a *lot* of research is necessary if you're not going to mislead NFFF members and others with incorrect information, as above. Where did you get some of what you presented?

To answer that last, here and there. Now I'm wondering why you have such a complete knowledge, and what kind of background you have. Perhaps you're the very man who can take over the bureau if I have some mishap like my computer going out. I did wonder who might be able to replace me and you've up and come forth with all sorts of credentials.

I note you refer to sources deemed virtually infallible, and I suppose one of them may be the Wikipedia, but I would point out that this source of information is group written and readers may become contributors to its store of information fairly easily. I recently found an error concerning the NFFF there—it says in the “Zine Wiki” that The National Fantasy Fan ceased publication in 2009, and says nothing about its resuming publication. So far no one has cut in and corrected this, speaking of something being misleading to potential NFFF members.

Well, the correspondence wasn't so harmonious in this issue, but perhaps things will improve as we go along and build a better *rapproch* with the NFFF members. I'm going to be doing my best to make this bureau work out to the betterment of the organization—which means that I will be striving for the betterment of this bureau.

Hopefully the editorial will have explained the bureau a little bit better to the members than the first issue did. I'll conclude this issue with a listing of the fanzines that were important to me when I was first in fandom—I haven't seen the names of a lot of them going around in fannish discussions these days and I wonder if people now regard them to have been of significance. They certainly had significance to me—and they were well thought of by the fanzine reviewers in the magazines too. The magazines I read at that time that had fanzine reviews were *Amazing*, *Imagination*, and *Infinity*. There were fanzine reviews also in the fanzines themselves, but it seemed that fandom was not as much in contact with the magazines as it should be, which led to my interest in dealing with this that received its expression when I was established in the Fan-Pro Coordinating Activity of the NFFF by then-President Irvin Koch. I recall having an argument in *Amazing's* letter column with a reader who said that fanzines were no good and a waste of time. There should not be such a rift.

Fanzine titles of an earlier era

EISFA, Robert and Juanita Coulson

ISFA, Ed McNulty

DIMENSIONS, Harlan Ellison

VOID, Greg and Jim Benford

OOPSLA, Gregg Calkins

SIGMA OCTANTIS, John Mussels

INSIDE, Ron Smith

HYPHEN, Walt Willis

QUANDRY, Lee Hoffman

HARMONY, Jim Harmon

BRILLIG, Larry Bourne

SFANTASY TIMES, James Tarausi

CALIFAN, Dave Rike

EQUATION, Richard Brown

CAVEAT EMPTOR, John Thiel

JD, Lynn Hickman

WHIMSEY, Ron Voigt

SKYHOOK, Redd Boggs

INNUENDO, Terry Carr

GRUE, Dean Grennell

ABERRATION, Kent Moomaw

PEON, Charles Lee Riddle

CRY OF THE NAMELESS **NECROMANTICON** Manly Bannister

