



TommyWorld Two - The 'let's-get-going' issue.

The second issue of a weekly, or thereabouts, letter substitute from Tommy Ferguson, at 768 Manning Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6G 2W6. Email: tferg@globalserve.net Phone: (416) 539 8992 Web page soon to be announced. Distribution in the UK by Eugene Doherty, 110 North Parade, Belfast, BT7 Email: e.doherty@virgin.net Available in the North Americas only via the net at the moment but send me some money and I'll print you a copy and put you on the list. Dated, already, 28/1/97.

Free Beer and Sex - An American Science Fiction Convention.

Confusion 17 took place in Warren, Michigan, which is just outside Detroit, over the weekend of 24-26 January 1997 and it was the first American convention I have attended. At the monthly fannish party in Bob Wilson's house (Robert Charles Wilson - check out his SF books, pretty cool) in Toronto, a few weeks before, I was trying to get an idea of how the weekend would go and how these cons compare to British cons. Amongst other things, I found out, there is free beer served in the 'con suite' - essentially a meeting place for all and sundry at the con. And, allegedly, there was a lot more totty going about and, "with your accent Tommy, I wouldn't worry about getting laid." As you can imagine I was eagerly anticipating my first American Con.

First of all I had to get there. Check out the map, Detroit is a ways from TO. I don't drive and the public transportation system in Detroit ("Home of the American Auto industry," public transportation is for commie scum) is non-existent. So I managed to hitch a lift with local fan Mike Glicksohn, who was GOH at the first Confusion and has attended every one since then. He and his wife, Susan Manchester, were driving down after work on Friday and picked me up at 3.30 - we hoped to be in Detroit by about ninish. At 11.30 we got into the hotel and were thankful just to be there. Complete whiteout conditions on the way down, driving snow, black ice and a new phenomenon to me, freezing rain. Thank you Susan for delivering me safely into the hands of, what?

A Science Fiction convention. At the start of every con I've ever been to there is a period of time, usually half an hour to two hours when I wander the con, try to get my bearings and assess the talent, when I think to myself: "What the hell am I doing here amongst these reprobates and genetic throwbacks?" Confusion was no different. The same costumed freaks were kicking about, the socially inept were ineptly trying to strike up a conversation with me, "I used to work at Palo Alto but I can't tell you that." Strangely this particular freakoid had never heard the witty comeback, "I used to work in Belfast, but if I told you what I did, I'd have to kill you." I suppose the accent helped to explain his startled look as I walked off.

"Okay, I'm here, they're here, so I'll try and avoid them and have a good weekend. Free beer, eh? Let's see what that is all about..." Sure enough there were a couple of kegs set up in the con suite and although the beer was quite foamy, it was passable enough as American beers go. I'd already had a large dose of reality check medicine (Bushmills) before venturing out from my hotel room and the beer kicked in real quick. I met up with Mike and Susan again, they had similar boosts of Brandy and we set off on the party trail.

Not bad, folks. Lots of parties going on, lots of things happening even at 2 in the morning and I met quite a bunch of people. I spent most of the morning chatting to a fellow Canadian fan, Valerie, in the con suite (beside the beer, natch) and, when she left at 5 am I started chatting to another woman who was kinda cute but completely bat-fuck. And anyway her boyfriend quickly interjected himself into the conversation. Time for bed.

Well, at least there was free beer.

Saturday started late. Always does, for me. I looked at the programme, more for appearances sake than anything. There was only one item I wanted to attend and this was a memorial for Bob Shaw. A few other items looked interesting, but not so much that I'd actually want to go. "The deviant dating game," certainly had potential, as did the, "Bheer panel." At the end of the day though, I have a certain reputation to keep up and didn't attend any of them - I later found out I had made the right decision (I mean a fannish dating game? You could almost imagine it word for word.) Saturday afternoon was thus spent at a local mall, getting some money, aspirin, a very large coke and a Big Mac - instant hangover cure. The freezing temperatures and windchill during the walk there and back ("Jesus Madge, some guy's out there, walking..." "Must be a tourist, Biff...") soon woke me up and got my sytem organised again.

So it was 'revived and raring to go' that I found Mike and we went to the Bob Shaw gig. Although some people had the idea of talking about Bob Shaw's books Mike and Bob's widow Nancy Tucker Shaw soon dispelled that idea. A moving 45 mintes were spent re-telling stories and ancedotes about Bob, reminiscing about good times and the great things he had done for our hobby. I'd brought the litre bottle of Bush, and passed it around for inumerable toasts. The six people in the room sank about fourth fifths of the bottle. After a few tears and hugs, I left the rest with Nancy and we took our leave. I felt good after that. I felt good about my hobby and the people at the con. Even the freaks took on an air of respectability.

After a brief visit to the consuite ("Free beer, yeah. Americans, go figure...") I got roped into the Wizard tournament. This was new to me but not the rest of Confusion. Essentially a trump card game with a few bits and pieces extra it turned out to be a whole lot of fun, and was an official ranking tournament with the 36 players grouped into

tables of six and the top players going into the finals. I turned out to be good at the lower hands, when each player had only a few cards, but completely shite at the top level when all the 60 cards were distributed to the players, ten each. Seems it isn't a game to gamble in, just to be fairly conservative. Lots of fun, none the less.

We then adjourned to the restaurant, although a small diner attached to the bar could hardly be called a restaurant. The service was slow, the orders were wrong but the food was really tasty. The conversation was fun and I was glad I had a steak with fries as I knew I would need some setting-up for the night ahead - I mean I was sitting at a table with Mike and six women, the night could only get worse. It didn't.

I checked back at the con, talked to a few of the new friends I'd met, hung out for a while but then around the time of the guest of honor speech (Samuel "Chip" Delaney) took myself off to my room to crash for an hour. This proved an immensley smart move as I showered and changed into the glad rags for Saturday night I was feeling a hell'uva lot better. It was about 9 and party time.

The pool outside my room was full of kids, being supervised by a bunch of parents and a professional life gaurd the con had roped into attending. The atrium beside the pool was half full of people watching the Wizard final, the con-suite was buzzing and people were hanging around the corridors, drinking ('Pop,' and, 'Soda' - Jesus wept...) and chilling out. This was cool - there was even some talent lurking about. Re-filling my plastic litre sized mug with beer (a bit like that Irish story - dream - about the Guinness bottle that never empties...) I allowed myself to be dragged off around the party circuit by various women, in various states of undress. This tour included the fannish dance in the function suite. Listen people: Fans can't dance. When will people realise this and not embarass the rest of us? The Scotch whisky tasting party - I kid you not, a party whose sole function was to meet people and drink excellent malt whisky (Thanks Chad). A few bid parties, one birthday party and shit, this was turning into a good party-on con.

It was after midnight that I ended up at my final party with Diana, Valerie and a whole bunch of people I didn't know - until Chip turned up. Yep, that's his name and I'm sure you won't be surprised to learn that he is a Republican Party Politician. The room party was great craic and, around 6 in the morning I left with Vickki - the life gaurd. I was thankful that I'd told Mike and Susan to leave without me on Sunday as we didn't get out of the room until the second half of Superbowl 31 - around 9pm on Sunday.

On the train from Windsor to Toronto on Monday, the idea of visiting my folks in Windsor had also long vanished, I thought about that party in Bob Wilson's house. Free beer and sex - hey, works for me...

This is being distributed to a whole bunch of friends on the net, if you received this and would NOT like to be on the mailing list please accept my apologies for this intrusion and let me know so that you will not be bothered by further ramblings. If you know someone who would like to be on the mailing drop me a line.