



The fortieth issue of a sortof letter substitute, kinda thing, maybe weekly, maybe not, from:

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Available only via the net at the moment. Welcome to the new readers and see the colophon for the usual disclaimer. Thanks to Mark McCann for computer usage and computer advice. Supporting Toronto in '03 for the 2003 WorldCon. This issue dated, already, 02/06/98

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"Getting Old, But still a skinny Bastard"

"Hello and good evening. My name is Tommy Ferguson and I am an alcoholic."

It was a large room, ill lit and with an over powering stale smell. There was a lot of heavy breathing, grunts and mumbles and, to be honest, it was hard getting up there, on that raised dais. The fact that this hall was just across from work and was too damned handy for all my fellow colleagues didn't help me either. However I did it.

"Er, Mr. Ferguson, this is a gym"

"Shit, I'm in the wrong mailing"

Hello and good evening. My name is Tommy Ferguson and I am a runner. It is not very often you hear that these days. Sure, there are joggers and keep fit enthusiastic. There are even people who work out on a treadmill or incline runner but no REAL runners. Not the sort of people I consider runners. Where the pain and hurt is welcomed. The intake of water during a run is measured in 2 litre jugs and the stink and smell of sweaty socks is not to be minded, and in some case actively enjoyed.

That is the problem with being a runner, you don't want to recover from the pain. You enjoy it. You like the high that you get from hitting the wall and going through it at 13 Klicks. You like the feeling of a bad cramp in the muscles of your stomach that twists you over as you rush through the late evening traffic, not stopping of course, just grimacing and bearing it. I even like the feeling, 40 minutes into an hour long run, of blisters bursting on the soles of my feet, my sock get soaked with that oozing, clear fluid that. I like the pain. I like discomfort, the nastiness and the agony.

However all this pain does lead to injuries and in the past four or five years I've had my fair share. Which I've always thought very weird as the most productive years of my athletic career were during my early teens, 1980-84, when I had no injuries worth

talking about Recently, however, I've torn ligaments in both my ankle and knee. I've badly torn up my left Achilles tendon; pulled god knows how many muscles and twisted even more joints. Personally I think it is a sign of getting old.

Now I'm reduced to jogging on a treadmill in the local gym. This does have certain other, non-injury-related benefits. It means I can control my speed; the distance I run is measured accurately and I can do various programmes, including cross-country and inclined programmes. There is the uniform running surface, the complete absence of dog shit and Belfast drivers and it doesn't rain. It also means I can check out the women in the gym in the mirror, listen to the radio or whatever CD I want when I'm running and show off to all and sundry. These are things not advantages to be dismissed out of hand to an old fart like me.

Ten years ago, of course, all this would have been anathema to me. That was when I was a serious athlete. I even ran in a Northern Ireland international meet once (right enough, it was against Israel and I didn't do so well; but hell, I was there.) In those days pain was also welcomed, but a lot more of it. The winter was for slogging your brains out in fields on the North West Coast of Ireland where, 30 minutes before you were due to start the race, the cows had been herded off. As the stragglers came back in from the 10-Km run, the cows were being herded back on again. Where Thursday night meant anaerobic training. For the uninitiated this means running as fast as you can, as far as you can, until you literally can't breathe, collapsing into a heap on the track and then, as is the nature of this particular form of cruelty exercise, you get up and race an 800m or, even worse, a 400m against your colleagues. I kid you not. And we enjoyed it.

All that has changed. Like so much of my life. I swore, for years, that I would never become anything remotely like a computer programmer; and now I'm rattling away merrily at SQL and Access Visual Basic. As recently as two years ago I made an effort never to wear a suit, shirt and tie combination to work again; I now own more shirts at the one time than I have cumulatively owned throughout the rest of my life. And for years I have despised people who used a treadmill in a gym, rather than running properly, in the wind, the sleet and snow.

I swore I would never be any of these things, and now I are.

News & Views.

What can I say? It is pissing down with rain outside Jesus, It's June! Mark has buggered off tot he cinema to see Boorman's new movie, The General, based on the life and timely death of the Dublin based gangster Martin Cahill. Smart enough to outwit the Garda and other Gangsters in the seedy heart of a Dublin housing estate, but stupid enough to take on the IRA at their own game? Please. Apparently it's not a bad movie though (unlike Titanic.)

I'm listening to the new Massive Attack CD which is an absolute gem and was finishing off some work related database stuff (I'm even taking work home with me) when I thought of all the nice messages I'd received from all my chums out there. (John Fairleigh I will be in touch, honest, just not this week) So another TommyWorld is here. The above article has been waiting around for a month or so now and really TW should have been out well before this.

There have been visits from Victor Gonzalez and Shelia Lightsey to report on. There has been a local con (which you may remember me advertising a while back details at the Götter website, with pictures and a report by Eugene Doherty, new job (obviously), a couple of good nights out that bear repeating and a bunch of other stuff. Oh yeah, this vote thing a while back. Apparently, not a bad thing. Or so the papers said, not that I read the buggers much.

And the future? Lesley Reece visits town on the 13 June and I'm bunking off work for two weeks to show her about. The World cup starts in eight days and I've got Brazil in the office sweepstakes (though I secretly fancy Bulgaria to get to the Semi's this time round). A few trips to England are forthcoming (Chester on 6th July, Nottingham and Teeside later in the summer) and then Novacon. Jesus, that's the year gone already. I hope I had a good time. Though no doubt you'll hear all about it anyway.

Best wishes to one and all. (Oh, and if anyone still has a copy of TW39, I'd appreciate it if you could send it back to me. I'm so knackered I just irrevocably deleted my own copy.)

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.