



The forty-third issue of a sortof letter substitute, kinda thing, maybe weekly, maybe not, from:

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Supporting Toronto in '03 for the 2003 WorldCon, Andy Hooper for Duff.
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Of Wee Sweetie Mice & Men.

About five years I had a conversation with James White at one of the Irish conventions where he was Guest of Honour, the gist of which was that the well-known fans of his generation were dying off. In their obituaries in various zines they were getting a type of praise, bordering on simple adulation, which was obsequious at best, and at worst wasn't deserved. Whilst he and Walt Willis, Bob Shaw et al were responsible for what we know as fannish fandom today, and that they wrote some of the best fan writing to be found in the genre, at the end of the day they were just these blokes: forty years ago did something really important in our little universe but outside that just went about there fairly average lives as the rest of us do.

James could not agree more. His argument, Which Walt Willis later backed up in correspondence, was that they had done their bit and thanked everyone for the words of praise. But the over arching adulation had gone too far. They weren't 'Gods of Literature,' had never won a Pulitzer or Nobel Prize, they were just these guys who enjoyed writing and publishing and getting the ego boo. What they would rather have seen, than all this historical revisionism, is that the fans of today should pull out the finger and continue what they had started all those years ago.

Having met most of these fannish Gods in my time, I was heartened to hear them agree with me as I had been arguing this case for the last half dozen years. I hold my hand up now and admit before that I was one of those new fans whose adulation and glorification of fifties fandom knew no critical bounds. Having done that embarrassing apprenticeship I'm now arguing that these people should be remembered for what they wrote and should now be regarded for who they are. James wrote a fannish piece, which we published in Götter a while ago, which wasn't up to his standards of old but reminded us of a long, long night at that convention and why he is renown as a 'gentleman.'

As a group of people fans are generally not that nice. It is difficult to have a conversation with them about the price of butter, and what the new 'in' recipe is or why Paul Smith's new work is a bit shabby looking. It is hard to talk to some of them full stop. And a whole bunch of others are just down right annoying. This is as true of the fifties fans as it is of the various people I met and avoided at Novacon this year. Fandom is like that.

Vincent Clarke was never like that. All the utter crap I first wrote and published in fandom nearly fifteen years ago received due care and attention from him in his locs. I still have half a dozen of these locs on my first half dozen issues the shortest is two pages of closely typed text telling me how to do this thing properly. It took me at least as many years as the number of his locs for me to catch on. Arthur Thompson and Ethel Lindsay were the only others to do this.

Throughout my early years in fandom Vincent was this behemoth of fandom that was constantly there for me. He did Electro stencils for me when I couldn't get them done locally. He advised on layout and production of TASH 6 the only TASH that was duplicated and looks good. He made that issue and I'm only sorry that the rest of that zine didn't live up to it.

In the early nineties I had the opportunity of a secondment to London for a month with my then employers the Inland Revenue. Apart from some time with non-fannish friends I had two weekends free and was welcomed to Folkestone by Maureen and Paul Kincaid Speller. The other weekend, a long weekend as there was a bank holiday, was spent at the gracious invitation of Vincent Clarke in 16 WWW.

I arrived, tired, lonely and a bit down after spending time working in the Oil Taxation Office in Aldwych a depressing and depressed office of a depressing and depressed civil service department. It was nearly eight p.m. when I rang on Vincent's bell and he ushered me into his home and his life the two were synonymous. Seven hours later, not feeling tired at all, but thinking I would need to get some sleep, I was tucked into bed with the now legendary hot water bottle. Like so many before me and so many after, what a welcome surprise that was!

That weekend will live in my memory for a long time. A gracious host, he thought his cooking wouldn't be up to my haute cuisine standard and insisted on buying in Marks & Spencer's pre cooked meals. Little did he know that bangers and mash was haute cuisine for me. He insisted on giving me huge wadges of fanzines that I didn't have. He talked long through the night when he was obviously tired, but we were kindred spirits and his love for fandom and Science Fiction over took any tiredness he felt.

After that visit we continued to correspond, though not as much. It was if that visit was my finishing school in fandom, all the early fumbblings and stoops had been ironed out. All the youthful exuberance's had been curbed into an adolescent joy and later a more

adult carefulness. It is hard to think of Vincent as a mentor to me, there was too much distance, in time and space between us, there were other people who had that role in my fannish life.

It is hard to think of Vincent as a fan. He was contemporaneous with Walter, James and Bob Shaw, the people I think I have to continually live up to in my fannish career. In the same way that they are to me personally just these bunch of old guys who long time ago did something, Vincent is a wonderful man, a great guy, the perfect gentleman and one of the all time greats of fandom. Fandom really was a way of life for him, but he injected his warmth and vitality into fandom, rather than drawing his life from fandom.

Today, knowing he is now dead, it is still hard to think of Vincent.

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.