



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

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Available only via the net. See the colophon for the usual disclaimer.
Supporting Toronto in '03 for the 2003 WorldCon, Seattle and then
Belfast for the next Corflus, Andy Hooper for Duff and Paul Kincaid for
GUFF. This issue dated, already, 17/1/99.

I had a conversation with a very good friend of mine in the pub the other night. We'd had drink taken It was one of those conversations, which started off completely stupid and giggly and then slid, subtly unnoticed, into a very serious and intent talk. I've had these conversations with my brother in the past and they usually end up in a fight, a vicious argument or a falling out. I knew, in my heart of hearts, drunk though I was that this was where the conversation was going. But this one couldn't end up like that. I wouldn't let it. But it was hard.

We had been talking about the local pubs in our area and how it was so cool that we now had a choice of where we would like to go for a drink rather than the one place where we had to go. There were three pubs in our area, one was just an armpit that we never went into and the other two were split on sectarian grounds, and our pub was chosen by default. Now there are four pubs in the area, one is still a fleapit, the other two have been completely revamped and look wonderful and the new pub is very trendy and stylish. In our happy drunken state we compared the merits of each:

"Just because you pit a lick of paint on a pub doesn't mean it has a whole new clientele. The same gob shites, thugs and paramilitaries still drink there" he argued.

"Yeah, but now you can spot them more easily. The faded green of their tattoos now stands out against the salmon pink of the paintwork" I replied. We laughed at the nonsense that we wouldn't be able to spot these people, cease-fire or not.

We also chatted about mutual friends and enemies and stuff that you talk about. It was about this time that I noticed he was a lot drunker than I thought he was and he admitted to having a few pints before hand. It was then.

"So I checked out your web site yesterday" Oh dear. Any conversational gambit that starts like that is never going to be happy. 'This is not good,' I thought to myself. Either

I get ripped to shreds for my shite HTML code or someone complains about the download speeds of some of the pages and pictures. Sometimes people even say that I have the design eye of a marmoset with cataracts.

"So, what did you think of it?" Layout? Design? Links?

"I thought your intensive naval gazing was appalling. How can you put such inane, self-obsessed meandering onto a public space such as your website? What on earth we're you thinking about? Exactly who is this for anyway? Some form of self analysis?" Naturally this isn't word for word but you get the picture.

I tried to answer each of these questions rationally. I tried, really.

"Well for the most part it is aimed at fans who already know me. It is a public journal, which some people call amateur journalism. I was sharing some of my thoughts and experiences with a bunch of friends and it is much easier to do this in a public space, which they can access at their leisure. And I'm sorry you didn't rate them, you can always go to another site."

Each of these replies was met with a 'yes, but' and he threw up arguments that I was self obsessed, or I was letting myself be open to huge back lashes from people I talk about and to my friends and family who are not part of fandom. This dragged on for an hour or so, me explaining what I was about, what the part of fandom I was involved in was all about and, well, he wasn't getting it.

It took us a couple of shots of Bushmills Irish whiskey to realise what was happening in this conversation. I was explaining to him something that he didn't get. He was putting across the views that a lot of people outside hold, expressing the thoughts of people outside fandom. It was clear we were completely at cross-purposes, neither of us was getting through to the other and we were just getting more annoyed at each other. If he were my brother the testosterone would be flaring up and we'd be taking positions.

I excused myself and went to the toilet. Looking into the porcelain depths of the urinal I quietly shook with anger and resentment. I'm doing everything right, going about the conversation properly. I'm arguing my case passionately and with vigour, but steering away from snide remarks or anything that would cause trouble. I was trying. This is a person who is not a fan, but who is important in my life for many, many reasons. My brother and I will always make up (it's a family thing) but this could get really awful.

I went back in and took my seat. Before he had a chance to say anything, I spoke up in that voice. You know it, everyone has one. It says: 'Shut up and listen to me, I'm serious.'

"Listen, this is about fandom. Something you don't understand and apparently never will; I'm sorry about that. I tried to explain it to you, you just don't get it..."

"No need to get upset"

"I'm not upset. I'm stopping this discussion now. I'm involved in a hobby that you don't understand and feel is less than worthless. Obviously I don't and I don't have to justify myself to you any more."

"Yes, yes, you're right, I don't get. I tried but you failed to convince me"

"No, I tried. You failed."

And we haven't talked about it since. Even in the spanking new bar called The Big House.

Hey there everyone, and happy new year. I hope it has started well for you and continues to be enjoyable. Hopefully everyone on the list will now have received Kerles 2 although the Americans will not be getting there copy next week sometime, as they were posted on Friday 15th. I intend to have Issue 3 out, for a limited number of people, at Mecon 2 the Northern Ireland Science Fiction Convention, which is being held in the Senior Common Room, Queen's University, Belfast over the weekend of 13/14 March. For those of you interested in such things, this is the (proposed) venue for Corflu 2001.

Speaking of which I'm currently putting together plans to travel to this year's Corflu, in Panama City Florida. At the moment (with great assistance from Cheryl and Shelby Vick and Lucy Huntzinger) I'm planning to fly into Atlanta the weekend before Corflu (24/25 April), then onto Panama city and would be interested in meeting up with anyone else whose travel plans coincide. I was intending to travel around the States a bit before hand, but I really want a holiday in the sun, and no hassles regarding the travel; so I'll be in Florida for two weeks.

Opening my folder for locs on TommyWorld I found nearly a dozen or so on older issues, including the last issue. A couple of them were excellent, but somewhat out of date for reprinting, but thanks for all the comments. TommyWorld 43, with my piece on the passing of Vinç, received a lot of favourable comment. I would like to think this reflected as much on Vinç as it does on my writing.

And Now You:

Joyce Scrivner: "Thanx for TommyWorld 42. I haven't read much about the (internal) country reaction to the Irish peace process and signing. I was interested to see your comments. Especially since you're bidding for a Corflu in Ireland in a couple years and I'm thinking of travelling to it, so I'd like a feeling for what is happeningYour notes on how you felt about living in Canada and your desire to be *home* ring more bells, though. I lived in Australia for four years when I was young, yet it was never as much *home* as the place I grew up in Colorado. I'll be talking with you again, I'm sure!"

Lloyd Penney: "Dear Tommy: So, there's a TommyWorld 42 after all! () Good thing Nyree is a good friend...I might not have been so charitable. If Assembly representatives are working class folks, and therefore, YOUR scum, why aren't they HER scum? Is she from the upper classes, looking down her nose with disdain? Or does this boil down to the usual Catholic/Protestant cliché?"

Latest news...I guess you heard about Ian Gunn and Vincent Clarke passing away. We've had a passing of our own. John Millard, who was the chairman of the 1973 WorldCon in Toronto, and our own bid's chairman emeritus, passed away nearly a week ago. We attended a small gathering at a funeral home to say our goodbyes; John asked to be cremated, and he was there in spirit, if not body. ((I think I met John briefly at my 30th birthday party in TO. Yeah, another sad loss))

Perhaps this is an outsider's narrow view, but it seems that alcohol and intoxication seems more a part of Irish life than anyone else's. I've read that the average Irishman's consumption of beer and spirits is more than double anyone in the European Union. Drink as tradition? Drinking to forget the Troubles? I don't know. ((And later, onTW43))

I agree, James White and Bob Shaw and Vince Clarke were just blokes having fun in fandom as we are, and they wrote some fun stuff, and they made their mark. Still, being fans, we would do well to think of those who fanned before us, and recognise and remember them. Not adoration, but remembrance. They have helped to make fandom the way we enjoy it today.

True, fandom can be not very nice. Some fans are nasty, and in that vein, joining RASSF does not appeal to me. They serve as examples not to follow, and I gather that Vince was among the gentlest of souls, an example to follow and cherish. There are not many neofans following our footsteps these days, but I would like to pass on to them that I've had and am still having a great time in fandom, and that life-long friendships can be made here. It should like Vincent was an ambassador, and was your fannish mentor. I like the idea of a fannish mentor, for it does take a while to wrap your head around the myriad strange fannish concepts we've learned to take for granted. Not much to say here, except that I thought I'd reply to the newest issue, and to wish that your Christmas was enjoyable, and that 1999 is a great year for us all. Yvonne sends her love, and we both say take care."

Pamela Boal "Dear Tommy, Like most Irish writers I have come across you have a wonderful knack of painting the scenery and distilling the atmosphere while just relating the facts. I understand why you went home and I empathise with your mixed feelings over events of the past year. Thank you for sharing those thoughts with me. ((And later))

I agree whole heartedly with your comments on Irish Fandom of the 50s and your appreciation of Vince. The last postcard I had from him was received about a week before he died. Although it was little more than a reiteration of the symptoms that had put him back in dock (his expression but used only because he had an unfailing ability to know terms we would have in common) it was expressed with his usual gentle courtesy. You are quite right fans can be as mouldy as non-fans. Non fans can and do contribute more to humanity as a whole than fans. It is right to thank these people on the basis of what they have given to our group and not to exaggerate them out of proportion to life as a whole. One thing you did miss though was their sense of fun which still comes across today in a world and fandom that seems to have lost the ability to have fun in simple ways."

Vicki Rosenzweig: "Dear Tommy, It's things like this that remind me that Ireland is a very different place from America. Not because of the newness of the peace--there are dangerous places in America, still, and people here who will murder for their political opinions. So, what brings home the difference is Nyree's definition of "scum." Class doesn't work that way over here--in the US, if you have a university education and a well-paid job, you aren't working class, even if your parents were poor. There is a widespread American disdain for the poor, but it's coupled with an idea that, somehow, being poor is their fault. So someone who comes from that sort of background, but goes to college and becomes a lawyer or accountant, is respected. Or someone who makes a decent living at a skilled trade--plumber, carpenter, electrician. The money is more of an issue here, I think."

Mike Glicksohn: "Tommy, I only met Vin¢ once or twice and then only briefly but I'm aware of his reputation and his career as a fan. Your words about him are without doubt the most eloquent of the tributes I've read since he passed away. A fine piece of personal writing in honour of a fine gentleman indeed and I thank you for sending it my way."

David G. Hartwell: "Dear Tommy, I thank you for the giants of the 50s thoughts, and the bit that follows on Vincent Clarke. Some fans can be kind, hospitable, and enthusiastic. That makes up for a lot of other defects (and other fans) and is part of the glue that holds it all together."

Caroline Mullan: "Hello Tommy. Thanks for this - Vince was a gentleman and a fan and we will miss him. But as you say, the only true homage is to carry fandom on."

Bridget Wilkinson: "Hi Tommy, Thanks for this. At the top I was worried that you were going to slag Vince off in an obit, but then realised that that was just a preamble. I would add Ken Slater as somebody else who has been very helpful over the years, but agree overall that fandom contains a mixture of good, bad and unbearable people, all over the world both in the past and at present. (Other sectors of life are much like that too...)"

Ned Brooks: "Good tribute to Vince Clarke. I never met him but we corresponded and traded weird literary items. I was struck by your notion that fans are not nice people... As compared to who? Of course you and I have seen different fandoms, but I wouldn't have stayed around 30+ years if I didn't find most fans pretty easy to get along with."

Curt Phillips: "Hi Tommy, it was very good to read this tribute to Vincent Clarke. I've been seeing many such comments about him on the net recently and particularly value yours for making the point that he was an awfully decent fellow as well as an accomplished fan."

((And finally, Eugene Doherty, with a few witty words on the TommyWorld publishing ethos:))

Eugene Doherty: " 'The forty-first, and last, issue of a sortof letter substitute, kinda thing' You lying fuck, you've had more farewell issues and final comebacks than Frank Sinatra. ((And later, on TW43)) Tommy, now I remember why I used to enjoy reading your stuff, this is your best in years, should we kill you now before you lose it again?"

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.