

Pips 10.5

A TAFF delegate floating around in a carton of milk

Many years ago I was watching the David Bowie documentary, 'Cracked Actor'. He set up rather a contrived scene in which he was being asked about his experiences in America. The interviewer suggested that he'd picked up many of the local idioms and influences and wondered how that had happened. He was drinking a carton of milk at the time. He glanced down into his milk and said, "there's a fly floating about in my milk, a foreign body there and it's soaking up a lot of milk. I feel like that fly, a foreign body just soaking up everything around me." Of course it was probably pre-planned but it did illustrate the point pretty well. I'm no David Bowie but I am absorbing so many influences as I move from place to place. I feel a desire to soak up all those influences but also a fear that they will overwhelm me in such a way that I won't be able to process them and they will just be a confused mass of disconnected notions. This is one of the reasons why during my trip I have requested of my hosts a little time where I can hide away somewhere and do a little writing so that this onslaught of culture can settle down and find a place to sit among my many thoughts and reminiscences.



I realise that I am skimming North America in quite a superficial way but I am getting perspectives that many other visitors may not do. Firstly I'm getting a fannish perspective of the continent. Our connections are through our fanac and so not always geographically inclined. As I sit here we are only a week and a half away from a Worldcon so that has been a major focus during the journey. As I say my tearful goodbyes thinking I may never see these people again I am often jerked out of my gross sentimentality by the phrase, "I'll see you at Worldcon" and then, "hope to see you also at Loncon next year." Although this ruins my tearful departure scene it is a good feeling that I will see so many of the North American fans again and also an interesting reminder of the importance of Worldcons or indeed any conventions for bringing us together. This close to LoneStarCon 3 in San Antonio I am almost certainly getting a very skewed view of the importance of the Worldcon. Diane Lacey in Toronto is telling me about her role as Hotel Liaison. I see Glenn Glazer, division head for Events, in Santa Cruz. Carrie and I are part of the Newsletter team so we are getting updates about that and I am receiving information from John Purcell about Worldcon Fan Lounge stuff. Added to this there is notice of a meeting at San Antonio between Carrie, myself, James Bacon and Ian Stockdale about the Fan Programming stream for the Loncon 3. All this and the focus of my trip being the visit to LoneStarCon 3, it is far from surprising that Worldcons seem to loom large and give the impression of them being events of great importance to myself, and indeed many others at this time.

However, if I rewind just a few months, Worldcon seemed a very distant thing in my life. I have never previously attended a Worldcon and must admit, I have been and still am, quite apprehensive about attending something so large and all encompassing. I feel sure I will be overwhelmed by it and like a fly in milk soak up so much that I sink to the bottom and then break up into my component parts.

So, that was me saying hello, how are you and welcome to *Pips*. This zine is usually a little A5 pocket affair of around 22 to 30 pages containing personal reflections, observations and occasionally a review

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or two. Circumstances have conspired against us and for good or ill it is considerably foreshortened for this distribution of WOOOF. I hope you'll pop along to efanazines to take a look at the fully fledged editions <http://efanazines.com/Pips> .

Electronic Fanzines

In the last edition of *Pips* I spent some time talking about the conversion of text so that it can be comfortably displayed on devices such as the Kindle, iPad or Kobo. I've had very little written feedback but I have had several conversations with people who are considering producing ereader versions of their zines and some who have considered such formats and decided that it is not for them at this time. One of these people was Randy Byers who is one of the three man team that produces that fine fanzine, *Chunga*. The other editors are Andy Hooper and Carl Juarez. As Randy talked lovingly of the look and feel of *Chunga*, it made me realise that the style of a zine is often something that is put together over many years. Things are tried, tweaked, jiggered and poked until they become something that you feel is stylish, gruesome or has impact, depending upon what look you are aiming for. This means there is a considerable amount of investment as regards blood, sweat and gnawing frustration and to ask such people to switch to a plain single column with little formatting (the best layout for current ereaders) is asking rather a lot. Randy was obviously keen to consider the idea of an ereader *Chunga* but his heart seemed to revolt against any such thing. I think as the technology improves and we are offered more style options on our Kindles, then faneds will be more keen to play with the format to create ezines with personality. I'm in a different camp altogether. I am happy to portray personality through words but have neither the skill nor the inclination to do so through the medium of graphic design.

TAFF Trip

I am rapidly lurching toward the end of my Trans Atlantic Fan Fund trip now and have been tapping away on the laptop as I career wildly about the North American continent. I will be saving many of the details for my TAFF report but here's a very brief glimpse into what I have been getting up to for the past few weeks.

Toronto – The customs guards questioned me closely. “Who is this Catherine you are going to see?” Surely everyone knows Catherine Crockett. It seems not. I search for some magic words which will release me from this inquisition. “Science Fiction Conventions” I say. The guard grins, no doubt thinking of Spock ears and willowy women in slave girl costumes. I am allowed to enter Canada. Catherine whisks me away to show me the strange (Murray Moore) and the stranger still (Taral).

Abingdon – Curt whizzes me around the state showing me history (Monticello), famous artists (Charles Vess) and snakes. A fine frolicking time in South Virginia.

Seattle – Every time you throw out the coffee dregs you hit another fan fund winner. They are uncommonly common in Seattle.

Bay Area – Glenn Glazer shows me planes, trains and automobiles. I even get to fly a plane over the bay – Wow! San Francisco with Jay and Dixie Kinney is sooo much fun.

Las Vegas – A very silly place but an enormous chunk of fun. A fine thriving fan community that keeps wanting to ply me with beer and food – gosh what diabolical fiends they are. Jacq Monahan – the hospitality goddess, Alan White – creative maniac and Nic Farey – *Beam* co-editor and rampaging tornado of fanac. I see many more Vegas fans in my immediate future.