

HOW I MADE MY FIRST CONTACT WITH FANDOM  
 (AND, JUST INCIDENTALLY,  
 VICTORIA FANDOM'S PREHISTORY  
 AND FIRST FLOWERING)

by Stan G. Hyde

Though I am personally unaware of any organized fannish activity in Victoria before 1974, when the Science Fiction Association of Victoria first assembled, I know that there were fans. Around 1970, if my memory serves me correctly, there was an unsuccessful attempt to start an offshoot of the Count Dracula Society movie fan club. I contacted the organizer of the club through an ad in the Victoria Times, but if any meetings were ever held I am unaware of them. (Nobody invited me. Perhaps they were put off by how young I sounded on the phone, and the fact that I was a self-confessed Godzilla fan.)

I became aware of fandom -- Lord, how I hate to confess this -- through the fan pages of Famous Monsters of Filmland Magazine and Lin Carter's book reviews in Castle of Frankenstein. Contacting other fans by mail, I soon sent away fifty cents for my first fanzine, Greg Shoemaker's Japanese Fantasy Film Journal. My fate was sealed.

My reading habits got better, and I was soon perusing the fan pages of Amazing Science Fiction. I had also written to my first con committee -- I read about the convention in Famous Monsters' "Graveyard Examiner" feature. The con was in Dallas, Texas, and I think that, at the time, I was unaware that conventions had ever been held before or had ever been held anywhere besides Dallas, Texas.

I never got to Dallas, but soon after I read in Amazing that the World Science Fiction Convention would be held in Toronto. So during the summer of 1973, having saved up the money that I made on my paper route, my friend Murray Grieg and I set off across the country by Greyhound bus to attend Torcon 2. At a Torcon 2 autograph party, Murray and I were accosted by Mike Bailey, then a very active fan in the BCSFA who published his own fanzine. He introduced us to some other Victoria fans and talked about plans for a "Victoria chapter" of the BCSFA. (At the time, fans from Victoria were going over to Vancouver for BCSFA meetings, among them Michael G. Coney.) Alas, I don't remember the names of any of the Victoria fans I met there, but the implication was that there were a fair number of them who attended BCSFA meetings from time to time.

I was now on Vancouver fanzine mailing lists and, besides Mike Bailey's excellent fanzine, and a few issues of the BCSFanzine, I also received Daniel Say's SF. In a letter to Daniel Say, I mentioned that I had been thinking of going over to Vancouver for a BCSFA meeting. He wrote back, saying in essence that Vancouver fandom was boring and, instead of wasting money on a ferry trip over to Vancouver, why didn't I start my own club in Victoria.

So I did.

Originally, the club that was to become SFAV was called NOVA. I don't remember where the name came from, but I think it was probably Samuel R. Delany and not the PBS science program from which our inspiration was derived. In past historical accounts of SFAV's beginning, NOVA has been described as a beer, pretzel, and poker

organization whose members discussed Robert Heinlein and Robert Silverberg when they weren't playing poker. That is basically true. There were some fannish activities though. Of the four original members, Murray Greig, Kirk Bullough, Alan McInnes, and myself, Murray, Kirk and I all attended V-Con III in February of 1974. We discussed putting out a fanzine, and managed to secure a fair amount of artwork -- including the piece by David Ross which was to be the cover of the first SFAV fanzine, Up the Tubes. However, a fanzine by the members of NOVA never appeared. Geoffrey Edwards, later to become an active member of SFAV during its early years along with his brother Rod, was still at high school with me, and frequently discussed the club with us, hovering on the edge of club activities.

In 1975, Kirk Bullough, Alan McInnes, and I attended V-Con IV. We were wearing membership badges that, as I recall, were made for us by Kirk's father, who painted for a hobby and was a political cartoonist for the Victoria Colonist for a while. Daniel Say (whom we'd met the year before at V-Con III) also met Bruce Zado, a Victoria fan going to BCIT, and promised to phone him when we had our first meeting.

A few months later we were contacted by the Victoria Colonist. It seems they had done an article on science fiction which Daniel Say had taken exception to. He'd written them a letter and he'd said that, if there was anything the paper wanted to know about SF, they should contact the local club in the future. He'd also given the paper my name, and Kirk's. I went down to the paper, fanzines in hand, to explain that science fiction fans didn't believe in UFOs and occult phenomena, that we were "normal" people who were concerned about the future ... in short, that we were fans of a literature and not a group of people who take astral trips to Jupiter.

The papers are never very happy when you tell them that, but they printed a story with our phone numbers and addresses. A few days later, I also did a morning interview spot on CFAX radio. People started phoning me.

The first official meeting of the as-yet nameless club which would become SFAV was in the basement of my parents' house. Of the original members of NOVA, Murray (soon to gaffiate), Kirk, and myself

were there. (Alan McInnes was, despite being absent at that meeting, very active in the early years of SFAV, and meetings were often held at his apartment. In all, Alan remained in the club about two years.) Bruce Zado, whom we had met at V-Con IV, attended. Lynne Fonseca, who had contacted me by telephone, was there with Linda Thompson. As well, Marinus Lutz was there. (Marinus, who was even more serious than the rest of us and who wrote science fiction poetry, generated the first SFAV schism. There were some mild personality conflicts, especially between Marinus and Murray, who himself would only attend two meetings. Marinus was interested in a club that was primarily a writer's workshop and literary circle, and when talk of fanzines and conventions started to dominate meetings, he dropped out.)

Though I had already spoken to them over the phone, Pattie Whitehouse and Steve Jackson were not present at that first meeting. Eventually they, along with Geoffrey Edwards and Rod Edwards, would form the nucleus of the early SFAV.

We were unsure of our identity at that time. The old name, NOVA, was immediately dropped. By this time, spring of 1975, I believe the PBS science program did figure in our decision to seek a new name. There was some talk of following the BCSFA's lead and calling ourselves VicSFA. There was even talk, for some time, about becoming part of the BCSFA. Kirk, Lynne, Linda, Katie Cordingley, and I attended V-Con V, and many of the Victoria club members were out-of-town members of the BCSFA and received the Vancouver newsletter at one time or another.) Eventually, we decided we needed a more unique identity and decided on The Science Fiction Association of Victoria. (This was in large part due, as I remember, to the fact that it was generally agreed that VicSFA was an ugly word, whereas SFAV -- pronounced like suave -- sounded more sophisticated.)

I realize at this point that the one person I've forgotten to mention from these early days is Katie Cordingley, who is now my wife. As always, we take for granted those closest to us. Though Katie wasn't present at that first SFAV meeting, Katie attended many early meetings and took a fairly active role in club activities.

That about ends the story of the birth of SFAV. Even though I was president of the club until 1979, the title was an

honorarium and not a fact. Since I was away to UBC for eight months of the year -- until 1978-79, when my wife and I spent almost two years in Victoria -- my real involvement with club affairs was sporadic. Also, the political organization of the club during these years was very loose. (Not a bad idea in many<sup>2</sup> ways. The United States would probably be in far better shape if Ronald Reagan was "on vacation" eight months of the year.)

There are two people from the early period of SFAV whom I feel I should mention, for they, far more than I, are the reason the club still exists.

The first is Lynne Fonseca. Through SFAV's history, Lynne's role as secretary was probably more<sup>2</sup> important than any single other member's role. She began SFAV's archives, kept all vital records, and -- more than any other person -- saw to the organization that kept SFAV going. (She also made the first sizable contribution to SFAV's bank account.) Throughout most of the years of my "presidency," it was Lynne Fonseca who kept things on track and moving.

There remains, however, a<sup>2</sup> period when Lynne was not present, which has not been dealt with very thoroughly in club histories compiled at various times by Gary Harper or Paul Delany. During SFAV's early years, when I was the club's cofounder, Kirk Bullough, who to all intents and purposes did what a club president is supposed to do, with Lynne's assistance as secretary. It was also Kirk who remained the driving force behind SFAV when Lynne left to work in Ontario. (although Linda Thompson served as secretary during that period, and active fans like Gary Harper and David Thomson had made their first appearance in SFAV, all of which helped bind the club together). So, for many years, Kirk held the distinction of being the only president of the club while Lynne was absent, and his formative influence on SFAV should not be forgotten.

My very active period in the club ended after 1980, and Gary Harper, Paul Delany, and Garth Spencer have all written histories of SFAV dealing with the post-1980 period, and which fill in the gaps necessary in my history of the club because of my absences for long periods during each year.

What remains to be said is, "Thank you." In the years I have been involved with SFAV, many good friends -- many of my best friends -- have been people I first met through the club. The best part of fandom is -- and always will be -- the friends you make. Some of them I have mentioned here, others belong more properly to the period after 1977, which is dealt with in other articles. All of them have been precious to me, and I hope to stay at least enough involved with the club to have many more.

If there's one suggestion I have for the club now, it's to have a grand ten-year birthday celebration in the spring of 1985, and try to get everybody to attend.

May SFAV continue to keep on keeping on.