

PIPS VIII



In which 3 mighty heroes of the North American continent slug it out to become Masters of the Universe (or Taff Delegate of Choice to attend the UK Eastercon for 2012)



Greetings— Jim Mowatt here once again talking of Taff and t'ing. This is the Trans Atlantic Fan Fund where we propel some worthy fan from one side of the Atlantic to the other and tell them to bloody well enjoy themselves or else. You pay a nominal amount to vote and this all goes toward the expense of sending those fans across the water and making sure they don't starve to death when they get there.

This year it's the turn of those North Americans to send us a splendid and worthwhile delegate and they've offered us a choice of 3 noble specimens.

I interviewed two of them — Jacq Monahan who wishes to apologise for saying 'absolutely' in answer to every question and Warren Buff who is awake at some very odd times indeed. I didn't manage to link up with Kim Kofmel as she was busily bustling about the continent connecting up with family folks. However, I did send her a list of questions, she obligingly interviewed herself and sent it in to me.

So what is this fan fund thingy?

The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund was created in 1953 for the purpose of providing funds to bring well-known and popular fans familiar to those on both sides of the ocean across the Atlantic. Since that time, TAFF has regularly brought North American fans to European conventions and European fans to North American conventions. It exists solely through the support of fandom. Interested fans all over the world vote on the candidates, each vote being accompanied by a small minimum donation. These votes, and the continued generosity of fandom, are what make TAFF possible.

Who may vote? Voting in the 2012 race is open to anyone active in fandom prior to December 2010, and who donates at least UK£2.00 or US\$3.00 to TAFF. Larger contributions will be gratefully accepted. Voting is by secret ballot: only one vote per person, and you must sign your ballot. You may change your vote at any time prior to the deadline. Votes in this race must reach the administrators by **23:59 on December 9th 2011 (GMT in Europe, MST in North America).**

And now— **The Interviews**

Jacq Monahan

Jim Mowatt: First things first I'd like to know how should I address you because I've seen your name as Jacqueline and I've seen it written down as Jacq.

Jacq Monahan: I'm the girl with three names; Jacqueline is very formal. I might use that in writing. You'll see me very often as Jacq. People call me Jackie.



Jim Mowatt: Fair enough. Well hello Jackie and welcome to the TAFF podcast.

Jacq Monahan: Thank you for having me.

Jim Mowatt: Lovely to talk to you and give you a chance to introduce yourself, to be able to tell everybody... well everybody that doesn't know who you are. So if you can give a sort of short intro about your name, where you live and some of your hobbies and things.

Jacq Monahan: My name is Jacq Monahan. I've lived in Las Vegas for 5 and a half years. Most of my life has been spent in Chicago. The thing I do out here the most is write for an assorted number of websites in both film review and entertainment reporting, so it's not a dull life at all.

Jim Mowatt: Ah yes I saw one of those websites. Which was it? Oh About the Town and I looked at the first couple of things and the first is that there's lots of pictures of zombies, then there's 5 guys named Moe, then there's a metal horse and some horses that aren't metal.

Jacq Monahan: I know, it's quite an eclectic group. What I try to do in my writing, to show Las Vegas off, is stay away from stereotypical things about Vegas, gaming and carousing. I stay away from that and I try to show that Vegas is full of art galleries, children's charities, restaurant reviews. So you could see in the first three a play, a horseshow and Fright Dome which is full of zombies. It's different as a weekly column

can be.

Jim Mowatt: Yes. It's a great website, there's no slot machines at all on that website.

Jacq Monahan: Right.

Jim Mowatt: I wanted to know why are you standing for TAFF? Why particularly this year? What is it you want to do for TAFF and why do you want to be a TAFF delegate?

Jacq Monahan: I believe that, win or lose TAFF is a meaningful adventure. I fly out of my comfort zone even if I don't get to fly across the Atlantic. It's something that helps me experience new things. My brave new world if you will - both a challenge, kind of a validation - all of it enriching me as a writer that can be shared with everyone. What happens to me I can share with everyone. I've never been to Europe so the discovery factor is sky high and I've noticed that Eastercon is called Olympus and that's after all the home of the gods and who wouldn't want to meet them?

Jim Mowatt: Yes. I can't promise any gods will be there but we'll do our best.

Jacq Monahan: Oh absolutely. I'm sure.

Jim Mowatt: So you're standing for TAFF, well, because you want to see Europe and what would you like to do?

Jacq Monahan: Everything would grab my interest or fancy as soon as I step off the plane. There's certainly a large crowd of people I'd love to meet. I'd kind of be the open book that other people would write on as far as what the adventure would be. I don't really know. I know two places. I know Birmingham and Croydon.

Jim Mowatt: [Laughter] Right. Two very fannish places I see.

Jacq Monahan: Yes absolutely.

Jim Mowatt: Steve Green is in Birmingham.

Jacq Monahan: Absolutely.

Jim Mowatt: And, of course, Novacon was there for many many years and then Croydon. Well there's all sorts of people in Croydon. I know Croydon for ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha which is the Hitchikers' Guide to the Galaxy Appreciation Society. There's a lot of our people there. Claire and Mark were both members of ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha.

Jacq Monahan: Absolutely. Claire and Mark would be people that I'd love to meet.

I'd love to reconnect with Sandra Bond and Steve Green.
I certainly would want to see John Nielsen Hall. I would love to meet Pam Wells. I know I'm leaving people out. Doug and Christina from Head. I believe they're -
Jim Mowatt: Oh yes they'll be running the fan program this year at Eastercon as well.

Jacq Monahan: Right. There's just so many people that I would love to connect with.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Jacq Monahan: But I almost can't tell you how I will do it but just that oh that's gonna happen.

Jim Mowatt: Well yes. It's all quite big isn't it?

Jacq Monahan: Absolutely.

Jim Mowatt: On to the next question. I wondered if you could tell me a little bit about what your relationship to fandom is. How did you introduce yourself to fandom and have you any particular stories about you and fandom and your relationship?

Jacq Monahan: That actually happened through a fan artist. Alan White had a group called Cineholics and we would screen films every Friday night in his home and, through that, I was introduced to the Veggrants with Arnie Katz and Joyce Worley Katz and became a member there and that was a fast track into everything fannish for me into just immersing myself in fandom and what it meant.
I already had a little bit of a background in and my interests matched those of fandom. It was a good fit and all these took place beginning in 2008. As I said I only lived here 5 and a half years. Three of them have been just wallowing around in fandom if you will.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Jacq Monahan: Absorbing things like a sponge.

Jim Mowatt: That's fascinating. So that's only the last three years, sounds like quite a ride.

Jacq Monahan: Absolutely. It's been immersion and discovery and launched right into fanac.

Jim Mowatt: So out of your fanac, your fannish activity, is there anything you're particularly proud of?

Jacq Monahan: I do like some of the articles that I've done for Snaps. One is about a Las Vegas attraction here called the Minus5 Ice Lounge, everything takes place in minus 5 degrees Fahrenheit so that's kind of an alien landscape. Another was a Star Trek auction when the Hilton's Star Trek Experience closed down, another alien landscape and one is mourning the loss of Pluto as a planet. So I particularly like - I'm proud and would show those to people.

Jim Mowatt:
Yes.

Jacq Monahan:
Other things are ongoing that I'm proud of, in that other fanzine editors are starting to ask me for articles for them; Nick Farey in Beam, Kat Templeton in Small and Far



Away. I would love to write something for Steve Green's Fortnightly Fix. John Purcell's asked me something for Askance so there's lots of things on the horizon that I'm very proud of. Not everything is in the past. It's the present and it's yet to come.

Jim Mowatt: Yes. So next question. Taff has been going for many many years, so why do you feel it's still relevant nowadays.

Jacq Monahan: Well it's a noble and a generous tradition. I couldn't believe - you know when I first heard about TAFF and I think that might be with Steve Green's visit in 2009 I learned about TAFF and how I couldn't believe such a wonderful experience existed and that the generosity it took for people. It should be continued and nurtured. It offers an injection of the new and the different or the let-me-show-you-something on both sides of the Atlantic. I think it's a breeding ground for fanac, a validation for the visiting fan, sort of a mission to go forth and multiply by spreading the word. Go forth and tell them what you've learned here and I say long live TAFF.

Jim Mowatt: Absolutely. Yes. I myself I think it's a wonderful institution - I hate the word institution. How long were you thinking of coming across for?

Jacq Monahan: I've heard that people have stayed for as long as 6 weeks. I know that I think John Coxon stayed for 3 weeks. I would call upon the great encyclopedic knowledge of the people around me here to be my advisors.

I don't know quite now but I would just be open to suggestions and what people more in the know will tell me.

Jim Mowatt: You have a fine set of advisors there in the Vegrants.

Jacq Monahan: Absolutely. I have Arnie Katz. I have Nick Farey. I have Ross Chamberlain. I'm very fortunate.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Jacq Monahan: This cell of creativity.

Jim Mowatt: Right. So now we get to the really really tough question. I'd like you if you will to tell me in two minutes or less so this is campaign platform thing why you feel you should be the candidate of choice for TAFF?

Jacq Monahan: The most important aspect I could offer is that I'm a writer. I have tales of Sin City to tell. I have tales of cinema. I have enthusiasm. I have creativity. I am someone's mother. I love a good pun. I can make a room full of people groan more than an outbreak of e coli. I think I'd be a fun conversationalist. Personality wise I offer something for everyone, kind of a walking contradiction. I'm funny. I have a wicked sense of humor but I'm also considerate. I'm both traditional and irreverent. All the while I'd be observing, writing, reporting. I think the best is yet to come from me. I also think that the crown jewels I see in Britain will be the fans and I'm looking forward to it and I'd be a great infusion for a land known for its tea.

Jim Mowatt: Thank you very much. A fine campaign platform. Thank you very much.

Jacq Monahan: Thank you Jim.

Warren Buff

Jim Mowatt: So Warren hello. You're standing for TAFF this year and I wondered if you could possibly give us a short introduction.

Warren Buff: Okay. I'm Warren Buff. I live in Raleigh, North Carolina which is in the south eastern United States and I'm involved in both con running and fanzines and have a lot of fun with both, work in a rather boring job that I hopefully won't have to go into too much detail about here.

Jim Mowatt: I wondered Warren actually could you tell me a little about why you're standing for TAFF.



Warren Buff: Okay. I've been aware of the fan funds for a few years now, between Guy Lilian and Chris Garcia and then when Steve and Sue Francis ran for Duff I kind of picked up on that and Chris had been asking me, "Hey when are you running for TAFF? When are you running for TAFF?"

Jim Mowatt: Chris is very persistent isn't he?

Warren Buff: Oh yeah he's good at that. So I looked at my vacation schedule at work and I said well it's actually possible. I could stay over more after the convention which in the past few years definitely wasn't the case. All my vacation time in 2010 went into promoting the NASFiC. I said "Okay I can give this a shot."

Jim Mowatt: And you got a fine bunch of nominators didn't you? James Bacon, Paul Cornell, Chris Garcia, Tim Illingworth, Lloyd Penney.

Warren Buff: Yeah

Jim Mowatt: So you're running for TAFF this year. I wondered, could you tell us a little about your relationship to fandom. What was your introduction to fandom and what type of fanac do you do?

Warren Buff: Okay. I got into fandom slowly, in stages really. We had a club at my high school but it wasn't connected to much of anything else. So, it was a bunch of us hanging out and talking about books and playing Diplomacy or Dungeons and Dragons and watching a few movies but it wasn't really keyed into anything.

Then somewhere late in high school, I started going to conventions to game but I didn't pick up on all the other fun stuff there was going on and I was going to game at standard science fiction conventions too but still I hadn't figured out how much was going on otherwise. It really crosses over in the parties at night here and I started meeting some of the authors and the folks running the convention and gradually I realized "Hey there's a lot of other interesting stuff going on here."

We made a bid for DeepSouthCon, the local convention that I started with. I wound up working on the committee eventually and we made the bid we won. While I was there I picked up my first fanzine which was Toni Weisskopf's 1997 Southern Fandom Confederation Handbook and suddenly I realized there was a whole other side to fandom that I hadn't been clued in on.

Jim Mowatt: And what was it about that fanzine that particularly drew you in?

Warren Buff: Well it's really written as an introductory fanzine. It explains in pretty good detail what's come before. So you can see the various kinds of fanac. You can see what some of the clubs had been, what some of the zines had been. It takes the time to define terms like APA.

Jim Mowatt: Oh yes. That's always useful.

Warren Buff: Yeah. It had a lot of stories of the glory days of southern fandom and especially DeepSouthCons and the worldcons the south had had and just picking up on all of these great stories and all of these ideas and I said "Okay well I can join SESFA. That might be fun."

That's really where I started meeting a lot of people. That's where I met Guy Lillian and he's been one of those people who talk to you into doing things. "Hey write me an article. Hey..."

Jim Mowatt: It's really encouraging when you meet someone like that isn't it, because you can feel part of the whole experience?

Warren Buff: Right and there was nothing in there that would have gotten me on to e fanzines. I think I got there through an email list. It may be Arnie Katz who pointed out e fanzines to me but once I got on there it was like "Oh wow. You got a lot out here."

Jim Mowatt: Yes. I wonder if you can tell me a bit more about your fannish activity. Are there any particular bits of it that you're most proud of? Is there something you've done particularly that you think you should blow your own trumpet about?

Warren Buff: I'd say that probably what I'm most proud of is the 2010 NASFiC which I chaired and there were a lot of problems with it but it came out okay. The people who attended generally had a good time. We wound up slightly in the black and the facilities didn't burn down. I point to that as a success for a first timer with that scale of a convention.

Jim Mowatt: It does. It does. I wonder what do you feel the value is in TAFF these days. Why is TAFF still relevant even now?

Warren Buff: Well there's a lot of value in getting to actually have sit down conversations with people. I'd read Steve Green's fanzines before his TAFF Trip but getting to meet him in Montreal even for 20 minutes suddenly there was a better impression in my mind of Steve Green. I'm more likely to remember "Oh yeah I ought to read this guy's fanzine when it shows up."

Jim Mowatt: Yes. The personal touch.

Warren Buff: Yeah. It's making that connection and seeing the person behind the fanac. Again with John Coxon. I've seen his zine before. I'd emailed back and forth a little bit with him but actually getting to have a beer with him was a completely different thing.

Jim Mowatt: Yes. It makes it more three dimensional. I think John is three dimensional. I have seen several dimensions with John. Yes.

Warren Buff: At least three.

Jim Mowatt: Yes. It depends on the beer. Yes. So I wonder have you thought about your trip. Are there any particular places you want to go or particular people you'd want to see?

Warren Buff: Well ideally I would like to spend a little more time hanging out around London but also getting up into the other parts of the country.

I'm not certain that trying to go all the way up to Scotland by rail would be an efficient use of my time but up into the north of England at least.

Something I'd really love to see, I read all about these great British club gatherings and pub meets and I'd like to see one of those if possible.

Jim Mowatt: Ah yes. Well that should be no problem. There are many of those. How long do you think you'd be coming across for? Do you have a plan?

Warren Buff: Well I'm thinking at least a week. It depends on what I can negotiate out of work on that but I could get at least that out of vacation. Rather a week after the convention.

Jim Mowatt: So Eastercon, the Olympus plus a week after that you think?

Warren Buff: And beyond that it depends on what work will allow.

Jim Mowatt: So finally the most difficult question of all. Can you tell me in about two minutes or less why you feel you should be the candidate of choice for TAFF?

Warren Buff: Okay. Well I think that I'm somebody who bridges the world between fanzines with the world of con running and both of them fairly intensely. I put out a club zine monthly and I'm active on my local convention and on worldcons so I think that I can connect well with both of those crowds.

And I think both of those crowds are very active in England. I've seen a lot of great British fanzines and I've gotten to meet a lot of great British con runners and it would be nice to connect to both of those crowds and see how you do it over there.

Also I think I'm fairly good at writing trip reports. I've got out

about 15 pages on this year's World Con without notes and without a camera.

Jim Mowatt: You did. I've been reading that.

Warren Buff: I am. I think I could put together a pretty good TAFF report especially if I take time to take notes and pictures.

Jim Mowatt: Oh yes there was a lack of pictures in your con report.

Warren Buff: Yes. I didn't take a camera to Reno with me and that's what came out of it.

Jim Mowatt: Well thank you very much and absolutely wonderful to talk to you. In the TAFF race I wish you all the best and there are three fine candidates and it looks like it's going to be a most excellent race. Thank you so much for talking with me.

Warren Buff: Thanks for putting this together Jim. Hopefully I'll see you in England.



Kim Kofmel

Kim Kofmel:

Hi Jim. It's Kim Kofmel. What I'm doing is I'm gonna read the questions and then I'm gonna read my answers.

Short intro, name, where you live.

I'm Kim Kofmel. I currently live in Houston, Texas in United States of America but I'm a Canadian citizen originally from Ottawa and later from Toronto.

Why are you standing for TAFF?

I'm standing for TAFF because it seems like it's a fun thing to do. I think three way races are

better than two way and it's a chance to get to know more fans better both in the UK and Europe and in North America.



What's your relationship to fandom? How did you get from here to there? How did you arrive at fandom?

Wow. How did I get here? That's a long story and it goes back to being a voracious reader in childhood. I used to hangout in the local library and read almost everything I could get my hands on. I was an omnivore and I read everything from children's books to Westerns pretty indiscriminately including fantasy and science fiction from both the children's section and the adult section.

Then, probably when I was about 10 I read Andre Norton's Zero Stone and there was something about that reading experience that really caught my attention.

At that point I realized that the little atomic rocket symbol on the back of the book was a

shortcut to more books like that and I set out to read all that I could find in that library and just kind of kept going from there.

When I was 16 Star Wars came out and that really focused my attention on science fiction, almost, though not completely, to the exclusion of anything else. Books, movies, tv, even music, science fiction and fantasy were my number one choices.

Sturgeon's Law being what it is I waded through a lot of crap but the good stuff was worth it. I became so excited by science fiction and fantasy that I started a club at my high school and created a bibliography of the science fiction and fantasy books in the school library.

At this point my mom showed me an ad in a small classifieds only newspaper for a science fiction zine called Stardock, available for a dollar, call this phone number. I called and a week later this big guy shows up at my house to sell me a fiction zine, tell me about the local club that published it and invite me to a meeting.

That man was Charles R. Saunders, author of the Imaro novels. The club was the Ottawa Science Fiction Society, better known OSFS and at the very first meeting I went to, I discovered they were planning a science fiction convention.

I thought this was a really cool idea. I arranged for someone from OSFS to come to my school to talk to my club. They sold us memberships. We went to the convention which was the very first MapleCon and I started making friends and contacts and learning about this whole new world called fandom. I loved it.

With MapleCon, I started going to cons. I was involved as a member of OSFS for a number of years. I even edited an issue of Stardock which was kind of a full circle moment because one of the stories subbed for that issue was by Charles R. Saunders



whose novels had started getting published in the intervening years.

More getting here from there in a year by year trip through my life and through the people in my life, like Bink who sold me my first con membership and three years later tutored me in math. Judith Meril who accepted me into my first writing group in Toronto which was an incredible thrill because I used to watch her on TV-Ontario giving introductions to and analysis of Doctor Who episodes.

Bennet Devereux who fell into my life during a traumatic year that included a divorce and a house fire and made everything just so much more bearable and all the folks in the Houston Science Fiction Association who just happened to be organizing a new convention in Houston when I desperately needed a big red arrow saying, "look here for fandom in Houston."

I'd have to say that discovering fandom was a homecoming for me. It was like finding family or as my friend Katy Pace likes to say "These are my people."

I met my husbands (ex and current) through Worldcon[see note]. I cannot imagine a world, or my life, without fandom.

I think part of why I stayed with fandom is because fandom has given me not just friends but also space to explore various facets of creativity and community involvement.

I've hall costumed. I've competed in, judged and run masquerades. I've written prose, poetry and some really bad filk. I've edited fiction zines, a perzine and a convention newsletter. I've helped run conventions, been on programming, been a board member and/or officer for two different 501(c)3s which are the American nonprofits, facilitated writers' group, helped found clubs, hosted parties at local cons, regionals and world cons.

I've sold art in the art show, been a vendor in a dealers room. I've moderated mailing lists, blogged a little bit and tried to keep up with social media which is getting harder and harder all the time.

I even wrote my dissertation on readers of science fiction and fantasy and I don't think I would have done that without my experience in fandom.

Out of all of your fannish activity of what are you the most proud?

I'm proud of my roles in forming various clubs, meetups and writers groups and of my contributions to other organizations. I also get a great deal of satisfaction out of developing programming for conventions and particularly for our local convention here in Houston, ApolloCon.

I'd been fortunate to have had a lot of input to the programming philosophy and process for ApolloCon. We're fairly well known for programming even though we're a fairly

recent con. We'll be having our 9th this year coming up in 2012 and our 10 year anniversary in 2013.

What do you feel the value is in TAFF these days? Why is it still relevant?

TAFF as I have come to see it is about building and reinforcing connections between individual fans and between North American and European and UK fandom.

Being connected is what makes us fans rather than individual readers or gods forbid consumers of science fiction and fantasy. Those connections are very important. I think TAFF being a tradition of nearly six decades also connects fandom vertically through time as well as horizontally across geography, if that makes sense.

Have you thought about your trip? Are there particular places you'd want to go or particular people you want to see?

To a certain extent I haven't thought too much about the trip. I don't want to jinx things but obviously I want to see the Eastercon. Working with the London in the 2014 bid and trying to balance what people tell me are the UK norms with the American norms has made me terribly curious and I'd like to see a UK con for myself.

I'd like to get to spend some more time with people from the London in 2014 bid when we aren't running around tearing our hair out. I'm particularly interested in what they do as fans beyond the bid. What do they love about science fiction and fantasy and fandom so much that they are making this kind of commitment.

As to places - well England. I've never been to England so it's kind of a so much to see so little time situation. I do have an invitation to go to Sheffield already and I think that what I would hope for would be English fans sharing the places and events they love.

Can you tell me in two minutes or less why you feel you should be the candidate of choice for TAFF?

Well I won't be making the trip otherwise right now if that influences anybody. I'm friendly though sometimes shy. I will bring maple syrup or barbecue sauce or both as feasible. I will work the Eastercon and visit people and take pictures and take notes and if I can get my phone to work I'll tweet all the squee I can.

I'd like the opportunity to see English fandom. I have some experience in the US and I have some experience in Canada. Both those countries are very large and so the fandoms vary quite a bit but I've never been to England. I've never seen English fandom and I would like to see that.

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