

JOEL D. ZAKEM'S (ANNOTATED) CORFLU IV GUEST-OF-HONOR SPEECH

For those of you who don't know mw, my name is Joel Zakem or, if you're Larry Tucker, Jo-El Zah-Keem¹, and I am standing here as proof that the guest of honor drawing was not rigged. I've probably had less involvement with fanzines than most of the people here. In 1968, along with three others who I'll spare embarrassment by not naming², I published a forgotten piece of trash entitled "Advocates Of The Infinite." I thought that I might bring a copy over but, when I dug one out of my attic, it was even worse than I remembered. I did join ALPS³ about seven months back but, so far, my contributions have only totaled about 10 pages⁴.

So the question may well be—what am I doing at CORFLU, the convention for fanzine fans?⁵ Well, I do go to several cons each year. Unlike some others here, I don't keep count⁶, but I've probably been to between 75-100⁷. This year, I will hopefully attend my 20th straight MidWestCon⁸, and this was an easy con to get to. I've known Bill Bowers⁹ since he moved to Cincinnati and consider him, for the most part, to be a friend. That was part of the reason I am here. I knew that I'd see others who had become friends over the past 20 years, and that is a lot of the reason why I am here.

There is also another reason. And ever since I was told, Friday Night, that I was the recipient of this honor, I've been searching for the words to express what fanzines have meant to me.

Now if this were a Bill Bowers speech¹⁰, I could digress into something unrelated—like dinner at the House Of Hunan last night; specifically my fortune

¹ At the time, Larry was doing a fanzine on cassette entitled "Uncle Albert's Electric Talking Fanzine." I was mentioned in one issue but, even though I had known Larry for a while, he had mispronounced my last name (the correct pronunciation is Zah-Kim, but I rarely correct anyone who gets it close). When I sent him a recording-of comment with the correct pronunciation, he came up with several other alternatives. Jo-El Zah-Keem was my favorite.

² I will still not name them, since at least one (and possibly two) still have some involvement with fandom.

³ A music-oriented APA, now defunct.

⁴ I contributed to about 20 ALPS mailings prior to its demise. I later contributed to five or six mailings of KAPA (Kentucky Amateur Press Association), which is also currently defunct.

⁵ Corflu IV is the only Corflu I've so far attended, but I've since been to three Dittos.

⁶ First obligatory Bill Bowers reference.

⁷ Well over a hundred now.

⁸ I've now attended 36 straight MidWestCons.

⁹ Second obligatory Bill Bowers reference.

¹⁰ Third obligatory Bill Bowers reference.

cookie. Denise Parsley Leigh and Leah Zeldes Smith suggested I talk about who I am. The fortune cookie said that I was “apt to be shy and retiring in a dignified way.”¹¹ I think that somewhat describes me—at least I hope it does. There are a few other adjectives that I could use, but they may come later.

In the almost 20 years since a shy and retiring, although dignified, 15-year-old journeyed to the North Plaza Motel¹², I’ve read a number of fanzines. Probably not as many as most of you, but a number nonetheless. I’ve written for a few, locked some, but many, unfortunately, have been read without comment. I don’t know why that is. A lot of it is just plain laziness. Part of it, however, is insecurity in what I write.

It’s my fault, and I would like to take this opportunity to apologize, en masse if you would, to all who have sent me fanzines without receiving any response. They were appreciated. When I fanzine comes in the mail, or I’m given one at a con, it gets read before anything else—before the comics (except, maybe, “Love & Rockets”), before the music mags, before the law journals. And even before the science fiction books. And even though I may be a little slow in expressing my thanks to the creators¹³, I know that the few fanzines I receive are an important part of my life. I’ve never totally subscribed to the philosophy that ‘fandom is a way of life’, but it has been an important factor in my life, and it is something I have no intention of letting go.

So maybe it is not such a bad choice to have someone like me as Guest Of Honor at Corflu. It gives me the opportunity to say thanks to those people who have helped me muddle through the fringes of fanzine fandom these past 20 years and tell them, even if they don’t always hear from me¹⁴, that their work has found an audience.

Someone, I think it was Taral, told me, last night that, because of this, I’ll have to publish another zine. Maybe I will, one of these days. Stranger things have happened.¹⁵

Bill¹⁶, I’ve had fun. I’d like to thank all who’ve worked on this con (especially whoever it was that brought the Brador¹⁷). If nothing else, this has given me a chance to apologize for all those unsent locs and to say, in public, thanks to all of you.

¹¹ That is the actual fortune I received at dinner on Saturday at Corflu IV.

¹² Sight of the 1968 MidWestCon.

¹³ A habit that I, unfortunately, still have.

¹⁴ I should have said ‘in writing’.

¹⁵ Except for APA contributions, it has not happened yet.

¹⁶ Last obligatory Bill Bowers reference.

¹⁷ This was before good, micro-brewed beer, was generally available)

Given at Corflu IV, 4/5/87
Originally published (unannotated) in
"It's My Dance 7" (for the 44th Mailing
of Alps dated May 1988) and in
"Outworlds 62, edited by Bill Bowers,
dated January 1992.
Annotated 9/21/03