PARTIAL RECALL

The Fan Memoirs of Len Moffatt

Part Five - Crifanac Categories (1947 - 1957)
((continued))

WESTERCON I: One of the happy byproducts of the series of LASFS History Panels at the 1964 Worldcon was the Guest Book of the First Westercon, brought in by Arthur Jean Cox, to be handed over to the LASFS Archives. This has been done, but not before I copied out the list of names for my own records and for use in this memoir.

On the assumption that the guest book was signed by most, if not all, of the attendees, it is safe to say that at least 73 persons attended the First Annual West Coast Science-Fantasy Conference, held at Park View Manor (site of the 4th Worldcon, Pacificcon I, in 1946), which is near Westlake Park in Los Angeles. Actually, the park has been known (officially) as MacArthur Park for many years, but many of us still prefer its original name. As an ex-Navy medic who served with the Marines in WWII, and as a reader of histories, I am not nor have I ever been a General MacArthur fan.

Westercon I was a one-day get-together, chaired by E. Everett Evans, and organized pretty much by Ev and by Walt Daugherty. At this late date I'm not sure whose idea it was, but I have always thought it was Ev's, as he liked to talk about the fannish get-togethers in the Midwest and thought that the LASFS should do something similar, as FoO only knew when we'd see a Worldcon again. He was certainly right about the latter, as there would be no Worldcon in the Los Angeles area until 1956. Walt takes credit for creating the Westercons, and rightfully so, as I have no doubt he was the one who made the arrangements for the meeting room and aided in getting speakers to attend. For all I know he may have arranged for all of the speakers and left it to Ev to do the actual chairing.

As I recall, there was no Guest of Honor as such, but I do remember that Ray Bradbury was one of the featured speakers, coming to the conference with a ream of paper purporting to be his speech. This gag went over pretty well, especially as he was somewhat briefer than he would have been had he actually brought 500 pages of lecture to read. I don’t recall if Van Vogt spoke, but I do remember Clare Hinger Harris, an elderly lady who had stories in the early sf mags. I think Guy Gifford gave a cartoon/chalk-talk that most of us found amusing.

There was a "Dutch auction" where Walt held up a painting of a spaceship and announced that he would call out prices starting at $20, then $18, and so on down. He said that he would not go below a preset figure, and if someone hadn't accepted the bid by that time, the "auction" would be over. June waited until it got down to $8 and got it. Walt said that that was his lowest limit. Forry may have conducted one of his book raffles. The reason I'm not quite sure is because at this late date it is very easy to confuse the first two or three Westercons, especially the first two, which followed pretty much the same pattern. The third one--sponsored by the Outlanders, but with LASFS help in getting speakers, etc.--is easier to remember as I worked on that one, whereas I was merely an attendee at the first two.

The Westercons started out as LASFS’s proprietary convention and, to a degree, still is. The Outlanders volunteered to do the third one, keeping it in the LA area, but after the conference began to travel (with the fourth one in San Francisco), the standing rule was that if nobody else wanted it for the next year it would revert to the LA area (even if "out of rotation") and be put on by the LASFS. I believe that rule is still in the Westercon bylaws, a safeguard against the conference dying for want of a sponsor. Not that it is likely to, in this day and age with the current Westercons almost always the object of competitive bidding, and the attendance much larger than Worldcons used to enjoy.
Following is the list of names I copied from the Guest Book of Westercon I. (It was held, incidentally, on September 5, 1948. This was not in conflict with the Worldcon in Toronto that year, as the latter was held over the Independence Day weekend, the last Worldcon to be held around that particular date. In any case, there would have been little or no conflict as most fans in those days could not afford to travel out of state, let alone out of the country, for a convention which, as I've said, is one of the reasons the Westercons were started in the first place.)

Some of the signatures were difficult to read; a couple were virtually impossible, and are so noted with question marks. The numbering is mine, and the names are listed in the order they appeared in the guest book. The asterisks after H. P. Lovecraft and Elmer B. Perdue are my indication that I believe that Ghod signed both names. I'm reasonably sure that HPL was deceased by 1948 and I am positively sure that he was not in attendance...

1. Rick Sneary (South Gate in '58!)
2. O. K. Smith
3. Howard Miller
4. Mrs. Robert S. Richardson
5. Stan Woolston
6. R. S. Richardson
7. Roy A. Squires
8. Marsha Walton
9. Len J. Moffatt (6766 Hannon St., BG)
10. Mrs. (Marguerite) Ray Bradbury
11. Forrest J. Ackerman (236½ N. New Hampshire)
12. Ross Rocklyne
13. Con Pederson
14. Bryce Walton
15. Tilly Porjes
16. Phil Rasch
17. Howard Johnson
18. Fred Johnson
19. E. Everett Evans
20. Seth Shepard
21. Mike Scales
22. Louise Leipiar
23. Arthur Jean Cox
24. Richard Timmer
25. Clare Winger Harris
26. Dave Lesperance
27. Norman E. Willmorth
28. Ray Bradbury
29. Kenneth H. Bonnell
30. Louise & Frank Bell
31. Mark B. Blanck
32. Eleanor Stratton
33. Walter James Daugherty
34. Henry Lemaire
35. Nieson S. Himmel
36. Virgil S. Utter, Jr.
37. Dale Hart
38. John Sonessa
39. Evard J. Noble
40. Lurille (Lucille?) Noble
41. Guy Gifford
42. Al Ashley
43. Louis Lamacke (?)
44. June Leipiar
45. Gerry G. Thompson
46. Victor J. Clark
47. Claribel "Bel" S. Babcock
48. Eph Konigsberg
49. Chas. E. Cooke
50. A. E. van Vogt
51. RA Hoffmann
52. David L. Fox
53. Beverly Doe
54. Walter C. Buckner
55. Walt Liebscher
56. Charles O. Simms
57. Eugene J. Allen
58. Dorothy McCormack
59. W. A. Roach
60. Ford McCormack
61. Don Bratton
62. E. Mayne Hull
63. Ned Johnson
64. John Scott Campbell
65. William Rotsler - Camarillo
66. G. Gordon Dewey
67. Alan U. Hershey - Bell
68. Genie Willmorth
69. Freddie Hershey
70. Russ Hodgkins
71. Mary Hodgkins
72. H. P. Lovecraft*
73. Elmer B. Perdue*

(TO BE CONTINUED, WHENEVER...)