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The Last Official *eI* Letters to the Editor Column

By Earl Kemp

This is the official Letter Column of *eI*, and following are a few quotes from letters concerning the last issues of *eI*.

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Tuesday December 13, 2011:

Dave Locke: I just finished reading Earl Kemp's *eI59*, which is the last regular issue. The next issue will be an index for the complete run. *eI59* is as good as you would expect it to be, but that's not what I'm here to post about.

It's the middle of December and we've seen a number of good SF fan articles in 2011. But Earl just published the best one. In fact, it's the best one I've encountered in several years.

"God, how silly!" by John-Henri Holmberg.

This is a tour de force. Masterfully structured, exquisitely crafted, intensely personal, even weaving SF into a basically intellectual discourse on the nature of the nonsense which pervades too much of our lives in all corners of the world.

I would hope that we all remember John-Henri's article when it comes time to be serious about what we consider to be the best fanwriting of 2011. This one deserves to be remembered far into the future.

I urge you to go read it. <<http://efanzines.com/EK/eI59/index.htm>>

Wednesday December 14, 2011:

John-Henri Holmberg: A fabulous fanzine, as it has been over these ten years. Too bad you didn't publish it in the sixties, when actual fanzines still managed to win Hugos – *Warhoon*, *Xero*, *Amra*, *Yandro*, *ERB-dom*, *Niekas*; none of them should have had a chance, though admittedly *eI* might have

been viewed as the richer man's *Habakkuk*.

The Ron Ellik letters brought back memories, as did the photos of Ron and Lois. I corresponded with Ron for quite some time, met him at NyCon3, and was looking forward to having him in Stockholm, where he was supposed to be working from sometime in late Spring 1968. Instead, his letters stopped coming and I learned of his death. And sometime during the Summer, Lois came to Stockholm during a European trip and visited for a day; I got the impression that she was looking up fans who had been in contact with Ron. But it's been a while, and I may misremember.

Just thought I'd thank you for the pleasure you've offered over this last decade. I'm proud to have been even a minuscule part of it.

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John D. Berry: I'm not surprised that John-Henri would have written a really good article.

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Roy Kettle: Congratulations, Earl and Bill. The boys done good.

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Sandra Bond: Bravo! Just been reading, rapt, the Ron Ellik letters in eI59. I can't thank you enough for presenting these to us to pick the bones out of, all those years on. They are completely fascinating reading — to me, anyway — and once I began I just could not stop till the end, which I might add has messed up all my plans for the day. As Walt Willis said in *I Remember Me*, there's a certain something about reading other peoples' letters which is provided by no other form of literature.

It helps of course that Ellik was a damn good writer, the sort who is fatally easy to read, and it just shows once more how tragic his early death was.

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John D. Berry: Congrats on the conclusion of a fine run!

Note to Rob Hansen, whose compilation of TAFF correspondence I started to read: you got the "e" on the end of *SCOTTISHE*, but you left it off the LASFS fanzine *SHANGRI L'AFFAIR[E]S*.

[Now fixed (it was correct in the body of the piece), but in lower case is it *L'Affaires* or *L'affaires*? I see it both ways on a search. —Bill Burns]

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Frank Lunney: Yow... I just went to check out *eI*, to skim through the covers and the artwork/visuals, and came to Cartiledge's article "Dedicated to Frank Lunney, for starters".

What an accomplishment, Earl. And Graham, I'm touched. In a good place.

Who did those "visuals" that Earl kept asking about... And I mean "Mrs Kemp's Pickled Onions" and "Frank's Starter Pack"?

I'm still chuckling... That was a pleasant surprise.

Magnifico!

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Phil Stephensen: Excellent stuff as ever! I was particularly interested to see mention of a fictionmag I hadn't come across before:

"I included a checklist of all of Westlake's short story magazine appearances. The list included 'The Rape of Rodney Royal' as by Edwin West in the June 1966 issue of *Dapper*, a short-lived and now obscure girlie magazine."

Obscure, certainly, but actually not very short-lived. From what I can tell, it ran for three issues in 1963 as *Harlequin* (not to be confused with *Harlequin Magazine* in the 1970s); then as *HQ* for seven or eight issues in 1964/65; and then as *Dapper* for another fifteen years or so, racking up 100 issues or so.

I can't find much trace of other fiction in the magazine, but guess there must have been some.

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Murray Moore: Earl, you are the George RR Martin of fanzine fandom, but better: you finished.

How many thousands of pages in the run of eI?

[**See December 28 below: Bill Burns:** "over 3,800 pages in the run, not including the indexes!" —Earl Kemp]

But you are dropping out at 60 issues. The incomparable (I just re-read *A Princess of Mars*, 45 years after first reading) Bruce Gillespie with his *SF Commentary* is at issue 82.

His bibliographer should know the page count-to-date of *SFC*: I'm looking at you, Mark Plummer.

Apology to those of you with equally high or higher number of issues but a total page count not in the thousands.

Chris Garcia, of course, is awesome.

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Bruce Gillespie: Earl's finishing his run is sad for me...because he has been such an inspiration to fanzine editors everywhere. Just when it seemed that lack of funds would stop most fanzine publishing by most people on small incomes, along comes Bill Burns with *efanzines.com*, and Earl Kemp rises to the occasion with his magnificent effort ever since *efanzines* appeared.

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Robert Lichtman: Perhaps if you also published LoCs in *eI60* that would encourage more people

(besides the ever-reliable but boring LP) to write one.

[I'm toying with a one-shot, something like "Letters to *eI*" that might make it. –EK]

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Pat Charnock: End of an era. Well done, guys.

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Jack Calvert: What they said.

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Harry Bell: Absolutely what Pat said.

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Arnie Katz: I heard you're going to fold *eI*. I consider it the finest electronic fanzine of its era. You have helped bring legitimacy to electronic fanzines, a cause dear to my heart.

Thursday December 15, 2011:

Gregory Benford: Always glad to see John-Henri Holmberg, speaking reason. Indeed, "racist" now seems to apply to any non-PC opinion, including disdain for religion. So it just means "bad" now. Astounding he had "to fill out the form required by law to leave the Swedish state church."

I like his distinction: "science fiction is one of the two literary descendants of the enlightenment, the other being the detective story" — quite true, and why I read both, preferring the deductive plot structures. That led me to realize that religion could not offer shelter from death and I sought some solace in cryonics, which at least allows one to die with some hope. I wrote a whole novel about this, teasing out the emotional underpinnings of the field, in *Chiller*. I wonder if John-Henri has considered it?

Indeed, I wonder why John-Henri isn't brought over to our sf cons as one of the leading figures in European sf fandom for decades? I wish we had more contact with European sf fandom and its many flavors.

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John-Henri Holmberg: Gee whiz!

Earl, thanks for forwarding this. I was glad to see it. To the extent of adding a copy of *Chiller* to my Amazon to-buy-real-soon-now basket; I hadn't seen it, and Greg is indeed one of the authors I've been reading since I first stumbled on him in the old issues of *Void* I somehow got hold of in the early-to-mid-sixties. Including at least two of the issues he published with his brother before Ted White got into the act and it turned into a fannish focal point.

It also reminds me of a strange incident a few years ago, when Swedish truly major author as well as former Texas A&M University Professor Lars Gustafsson phoned me out of the blue, wanting names of

scientists also involved in science fiction for some seminar or conference he was supposed to arrange. I know I suggested Greg to him (along, I believe, at that time, with Charles Sheffield and possibly Alastair Reynolds). Never heard from him again, but off and on I've wondered if anything ever came from it, if it was any fun, and if Greg really was invited to it.

Look forward to Greg's novel. Yes, I've thought about cryonics sometimes. But the cost is far beyond any means I could manage, even apart from my vague suspicions that it simply might not work at all. Though on that last, I assume I'll get a much firmer grip once I've read Chiller.

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Jay A. Gertzman: Thank you for all the great ezine issues, and for the latest. It has been a great resource, and will be for years to come. I personally appreciate your giving me the opportunity to write the essays. I will definitely keep in touch.

Friday December 16, 2011:

Dick Jensen: Thanks for the links to eFanzines and *eI59* and *60*.

But are you TRULY intending these to be the last? Where else can I get so much info regarding SF authors, fans, and Sin-a-rama scuttlebutt?

And I owe you an ENORMOUS debt of gratitude for using my graphics. It's a debt which I doubt is repayable - perhaps only through my thanks (and a prayer or two to Crom to keep you safe, happy and, above all, active).

I noticed a very nice photo of a Potato Moth in the 'last' issue of eI, and am attaching a photo (from the journal *American Scientist*) of a tardigrade - a little creature about half a millimeter in size. Very cute, though...

This "really old, white haired relic" continues to be screwed over by time, but (and how bizarre can this be?) Ditmar is enjoying life more now than when he was a raw young man...

Sunday December 18, 2011:

Rob Hansen: Finally finished reading this now, Earl, and a fine issue it is, too. I liked the presentation of the Ellik letters, of course - good use of photos and cover scans - but found much else to enjoy. The Munroe/Block account of the missing story was fascinating and I laughed out loud several times at Graham Charnock's piece.

Good stuff. Now when are we likely to see that promised autobiography, assembled in large part from stuff you've written for *eI* over the years? That's a book I'll be getting a copy of when it appears.

Friday December 23, 2011:



Lynn Munroe: That last issue of your ezine was a beauty and I'm proud to have been a contributor.

Wednesday December 28, 2011:

Jim Linwood: What a great fanzine it was/still is...I'll start re-reading it.

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Rob Jackson: What they all said. Will we ever see anything quite the same again?

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Dan Steffan: I just wanted to congratulate you on your final *eI*. Capping it all off with the Moorcock and Block reprints gave it all a nice final sheen. Good for you.

I note, however, that in your index, you have forgotten to add the credits for my cover and illustrations that accompanied Ted's Jail Letters. In fact, you didn't mention Ted's Jail Letters under his name in the index, either. Have we done something to offend?

[No, just my editorial stupidity. Nothing personal. –Earl Kemp] [and now fixed. –BB]

I also wanted you to know that I tried repeatedly to write that article about Ted's arrest from my point of view. I finished two versions of it, but they didn't work. They didn't flow. I tried repeatedly to fix them, but I was never satisfied and eventually I just picked it to pieces. Perhaps one of these days I'll go back to the original version and see if I can salvage it. Anyway, I wanted you to know I tried.

Oh, and Harry Bell's cover on the index was the best cover you ever presented on an issue of *eI* – better than mine, better than all of Steve's great covers. Harry's was just short of brilliant.

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Harry Bell: Sorry I didn't get straight back to you when you notified me of the use of my work on *eI60*. I really appreciate seeing it there and now here's Dan covering me in egoboo. I'm moved, honestly I am.

#

Brad Foster: While certainly sad to see a zine come to an end, it's nice when you can end it on your own terms, as a project completely finished. And taking the time to put an index to it all is wonderful as a help in going back through all those words to find material for future reference, so thanks for taking the time to do this final issue.

I hadn't planned on doing any "checking", was just scanning down the pages to see what names would pop out, what articles would be clicked in my memory that I might go back to re-read again, when got to my own entry, and was surprised to see there were only two issues listed. Could have sworn I'd sent you a bit more than that. Being of the species "analist-retentivist", I checked my own on-line records, and found there were a few issues you had skipped over. Not sure if you want to list every tiny bit of art in the index, or only the larger pieces, but here's what my own records show, if you want to use any of this to update the listing:

[Brad's list used to update the index. –BB]

(I keep my own records on line, can check this entry at <http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com/inprint.e.html>. Waiting for you to do the pdf version of issue 59 so I can add in a page count to that entry.)

Looking forward to seeing what you come up with next. Like you, I've got that long list of "to do", and items being added to it tend to outstrip items being removed when done. Still, it just shows that we'll never be one of those folks sitting around sighing "I've got nothing to do...", and that seems like a good deal to me!

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Bill Burns: I just had occasion to count the pages, and the 2,000 I remembered must have been from quite a while ago - the full run is over 3,800 pages, not including the indexes! I wonder what else we'll find missing...

Ted's article and Dan's art are now listed in the master index.

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Bruce Townsley: By thunder, what a whopper! Good work, Earl and Bill.

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Jack Calvert: What Bruce said.

Friday December 30, 2011:

Graham Charnock: This was a magnificent achievement by all concerned, and congratulations all round. Even I had forgotten I was once Schoerner, Wank (pseudonym of, see Charnock, Graham): "I Was Hitler's Projectionist," *eI25*, April 2006

Sunday January 8, 2012:

Lloyd Penney: Well, the run is done, and congratulations on sixty issues of *eI*. Sixty issues of any fanzine is a good run, but what you've put into it has made it exceptional. I'll ask immediately...has this zine allowed you to organize your thoughts so you can write the autobiography you wanted to write? I hope it has served its purpose.

I do believe that every good zine deserves some feedback, so with that in mind, I have two issues of *eI*, 59 and 60, and each will get some commentary.

59...straight to the local. My own loc...had another look at Who Killed Science Fiction?, and I will say once again this is worth doing again. In fact, the whole publishing industry should be asking themselves similar questions. An in-depth look into the industry might pick it up out of its doldrums, get some people thinking about it anyway.

I don't think Graham Charnock will be allowed in the produce section of his local supermarket any time soon. I guess as long as he doesn't do anything rude with his veggies before paying for them, it's

okay. I'm sure a little more Googling will give him ideas for his veggies he'd never thought of before. I hope he doesn't find anything to do with hot sauce.

Yvonne and I are thinking of a TAFF run ourselves for 2014, but I think we'll have lots of company. For every person who says that's a good idea, we've had someone hint that we're mad, and no one would vote for us anyway. With that said, we do want to at least try for it.

One of Bruce Gillespie's latest issues of *brg* is an exploration into one of his favorite authors, Mervyn Peake. I tried to read the Gormenghast series many years ago, failed miserably, and gave the books away. I wonder if it's time to try it again. This series of now four books looks like it is a series of books all should read, but I never have.

I can't believe we're still discussing sci-fi versus SF after all these years. I've given up on how the public views SF or science fiction (my own choice), and they can call it Fred for all I care. I see the current generations of fans and what they do, and they can do as they please; we certainly did differently than our predecessors, and we have no right to try to impose anything we didn't like being imposed on ourselves. Fortunately, as the younger fans do what they do, we can still do what we do, and have some fun.

We seem to need a religious father-figure, God or whatever we want to call him, to pry, or tattle, or cry to, or whatever it takes to allow us to solve our problems without using the logic we are supposed to be able to use. God allows us not to think, for thinking hard seems improbable or just plain impossible for the average human being. We're dumb, and we like it, and being smart is suspect. As John-Henri says, we are taught to think critically, except when it comes to religion. Extremists bother us in every religion, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, and they can be anywhere...the Middle-East, Asia, the White House, the Republican Party...

60...and the run is truly done. This zine has been so educational for those of us who want to know more and more about the background of fandom, and where it all came from. It went beyond being autobiographical, and became an exploration of the beginnings of the SF books we all love.

And so...will you miss it? Think you might do a supplement of it? Try another title? I doubt you'd do an e161, but if you do, let us all know about it. Many thanks for all your good works.

Tuesday January 10, 2012:

Richard Lupoff [Brazenly stolen from an LoC to Robert Lichtman's Trap Door 27: I haven't had a chance to read the entire new issue of *Trap Door* but I couldn't resist turning to Earl Kemp's "Revisiting Hef." I've spent a lifetime in and around the media world, primarily on the print side (although I've put in my share of tours of duty in broadcasting and film) and I can't resist this kind of inside, behind-the-scenes stuff.

Earl was indeed right there in the middle of it. In the early '50s I was a college kid and I bought the first issue of *Playboy* off my favorite newsstand in Coral Gables, Florida. I must acknowledge that the nude photo of Marilyn Monroe (it was a full-pager, not a gatefold or two-page spread) is the single most vivid memory I have of the event. Hey, I was a not-quite-eighteen-year-old male at the time. You expect I should remember the jokes?

A fascinating era, and of course Earl writes amusingly and lucidly. Who could ask for anything more?
