



BUSTED RIBS AND BROKEN ENGLISH

Published irregularly by
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Volume 4, Issue 2

August 2000

What's in a word?

One of my recent projects has been helping prepare the text for the forthcoming *Bran Mak Morn* volume from *Wandering Star*. As a portion of that task, I have been spending quite a bit of time with "Worms of the Earth." I have scanned and proofed three separate versions of this story: *Weird Tales* November 1932, *Bran Mak Morn* (Dell edition), and an early draft typescript. While I'll not step on Rusty's toes by analyzing these in great depth (though I have no idea what his plans are for the introduction and textual notes for the book), I do have some observations which I thought the REHupa crowd may find interesting.

"Worms" is a difficult text for several reasons:

- 1 The original *Weird Tales* appearance is one of the worst editing / typesetting jobs I've yet run across. There are many spelling oddities which are unlikely to have originated with REH (such as using "can not" rather than "cannot" and "for ever" rather than "forever"). There are also several bothersome textual inconsistencies.

This in contrast to "Beyond the Black River" which, despite being a significantly longer story, has a mere one typo (and one questionable word) in the entire two-part serial.

- 2 REH himself comments in a letter to H. P. Lovecraft that there were several errors in the *Weird Tales* appearance, going into detail on

a few of them.

- 3 There are (not surprisingly) some significant differences between the early draft and the published version. Normally this would not be much of an issue, but when combined with the textual sloppiness previously mentioned, it makes me scratch my head and say "did REH change this between drafts, or did the *Weird Tales* typesetter just not get enough sleep the night before...".

Here's an example for your rumination. First, a quick test: what was Bran wearing when he took his dive into Dagon's Mere to retrieve the Black Stone? Think about this before you read on...

Okay, did you decide what Bran's attire was for his dusk swim? Well, it depends on what version you read. In the *Weird Tales* version (and, so far as I've noted, all subsequent versions), we have this description:

Casting cloak and sword-belt on the ground, he stripped himself of his short leathern breeches.

but in the draft, we have this:

Casting cloak and sword-belt on the ground, he stripped himself to his short leathern[sic] breeches.

Hmmm... So in the draft he swims in his Skivvies, but in the published version it appears he's in the buff. This is, naturally, the way Tim Conrad portrayed him in the Marvel "Worms" adaptation in *The Savage Sword of Conan* #17.

All from the changing of one two-letter word.

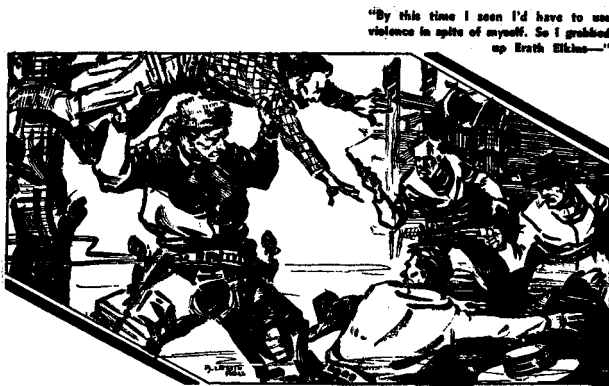
Pulpcon 29

There will probably be several Pulpcon reports & comments in this mailing, so I'll not dwell too long...

It was great having so many REHupans together in the flesh. 11 of the 29 active roster was in attendance! I have pictures, but they are still sitting in the camera awaiting a trip to the developer.

Rusty got to show off his better half, whose patience with all things Howard was truly impressive. They didn't arrive until Friday, but he immediately made the trip worthwhile by handing out promotional posters for *Bran Mak Morn: The Last King*. Three of the four were reproduced in significantly reduced form in mailing 162, but to see them in larger and with far more detail was simply stunning. Gary has once again shown the ability to capture on canvas the spirit of one of Howard's greatest creations. I'm not too enamored with the piece showing Bran on horseback: most of it is excellent, but Bran's face bothers me somehow. But the others are truly amazing. I can't wait to see the line work.

Some truly rare REH stuff in the dealer room, but often at rare prices. REH issues of *The Fantasy Fan* had me drooling, but at \$75 per issue that's all I did with them. Talked the seller down to \$60, but still way out of my budget.



"War on Bear Creek"
Action Stories, April 1935



"The Feud Buster"
Action Stories, June 1935



"Cupid from Bear Creek"
Action Stories, August 1935



"The Riot at Cougar Paw"
Action Stories, October 1935

Well, time for pathetic *Minac Man* to sign off yet again. One of these days...