

Goodbye Forry

FORREST J ACKERMAN
1916–2008



Forry at Comic-Con in the early 1970s.

Long-time Comic-Con friend, Forrest J Ackerman, the man who coined the term “sci-fi” and edited the beloved influential movie monster magazine *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, passed away on December 4, 2008. Known by countless nicknames—FJA, The Acker-monster, 4E, 4SJ, Dr. Acula, Mr. Science Fiction, and even the Mayor of Horrorwood, Karloffornia (our personal favorite)—Forry was first and foremost a fan. Over the years he amassed an incredible collection of science fiction and movie memorabilia, all generated by early exposure to “imagi-movies” (another term he coined for films such as *One Glorious Day*, which he saw in 1923) and science fiction. Forry first encountered the seminal fiction magazine *Amazing Stories* when he was only 10 years old.

Forry was active in the early days of science fiction fandom, founding the Boys Scientifiction Club in 1929 and contributing to the first issue of the first science fiction fanzine, *The Time Traveller*, in 1932. He was part of the Clifton’s Cafeteria Science Fiction Club, which included future authors Robert A. Heinlein, Leigh Brackett, Jack Williamson, and a kid Forry persuaded to attend, Ray Bradbury. In 1939, he attended the first World Science Fiction Convention

on the Fourth of July weekend in New York City. He came in costume, starting the convention tradition of fan costuming, and went on to attend Worldcons throughout the remainder of his life. He became a literary agent in 1948, with a client list that included such science fiction luminaries as A. E. van Vogt, Hugo Gernsback, and L. Ron Hubbard.

But it was in 1957 that Forry found his true calling. He was approached by publisher James Warren to develop a one-shot publication that tied into the incredible nationwide interest in old monster movies, many of which were appearing on television for the very first time. Warren and Forry came up with *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, the first issue of which sold out on its release in February 1958. It was one of those “perfect storm” moments: the combination of Forry’s pun-filled captions and articles, plus his incredible collection of photographs, along with the magazine’s simple and effective graphic design captured the public’s hearts and minds. *FM* became a monster hit.

Forry went on to edit the magazine for over 25 years. Along the way both he and *Famous Monsters* became an incredible influence on movie fans around the world. Stephen King, George Lucas, and Steven Spielberg are just a few of the *FM* readers who went on to big-

ger and better things. Forry opened up his “Acker-mansion” (in the Lincoln Park area of Los Angeles) to fans of all ages. His museum-quality collection included everything from movie posters and rare first-edition books to an original *King Kong* maquette; life masks of movie stars such as Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, and Vincent Price; and Lon Chaney’s original makeup kit.

Forry was present at what could be called “Comic-Con 0,” the minicon in March 1970 that preceded the first “real” San Diego Comic-Con in August of that year. Over the last four decades, Forry was an almost constant presence at the event, winning the first Bob Clampett Humanitarian Award in 1984 for mentoring talent. In 2008, he was on hand for the 50th anniversary of *Famous Monsters*, along with publisher Jim Warren. Sadly, it was his final convention appearance.

The world of fandom won’t quite be the same without Forry. In 1953, he received a special Hugo Award for “#1 Fan Personality.” Over 50 years later, he was still that and much more, a very special fan who became an incredible influence over an entire generation of new fans, people who went on to create some of the best-loved and most popular books, movies, comics, and television shows of the past half-century.