One of the original guests told me about Wine Country Comic Con and this was going to be an opportunity to see each other, greet fans, and network. Seeing as how we just had an audio book released (Thine Enemy’s Eyes) (now on audible!) <http://www.audible.com/pd/Fiction/Thine-Enemys-Eyes-Audiobook/B01789CK6W/ref=a_search_c4_1_1_srTtl?qid=1460510962&sr=1-1> this sounded like a great idea.

When I contacted Uriel, The Con Head, about being a guest at the show, he couldn't say yes, because they had already used all of their budget. I offered for them to keep me in mind for next year.

He messaged me back asking, "How much would it cost to get you out here?"

"$250. It’s an 11 hour drive.”

“Can I pay you when you get here for that?”

“You want me to cover my own way out there, and then you pay me once I get there?”

“yes.”

“I can’t do that, but I'll do half because it's a first year con.”

I was going to let them get their feet under them. I waived my appearance fee, and was ready to go. He was very grateful and told me about the autism Kids that would be helped, citing his own child as one of the beneficiaries of this program.

I also have children that were developmentally delayed and understand the importance of catching developmental issues, pre 18 months.

So I was very behind this cause and very willing to work with them in support of this. Within minutes of announcing that I was going to this convention, I had fans showing me articles saying that this was a problematic show. I received articles saying that the charity was a fraud, that the person was not in any way associated with the Lions Club International, and a bunch of other stuff that confused me. So, I asked Uriel about it directly.

I asked him, "What about all of this immediate bad press regarding your convention?"

Mind you, that happened the day I was announced. So he explained that there was another con badmouthing his con. Which apparently is true. He assuaged my fears and reassured me that the charity and the sponsorship were legit.

He proceeded to upload a picture of him and the Lions Club Sponsors. I shared it because I felt it proved that the concerns that had been expressed to me were unfounded.

I continued to be very supportive of this convention. I even dedicated a day to make a video announcing their VIP Pass winners. Every time something posted, I promoted it. I was very positive for this show. Then, I got word that I would have hotel accommodations for Friday and Saturday only. I contacted Uriel and asked, “Am I having hotel arrangements Thursday through Sunday?”

He replied, “No, Friday and Saturday only.”

“Well, I'm driving 11 hours and I need Thursday and Sunday night.”

“I will talk to the ‘board’”.

By this point unbeknownst to me, several guests had already pulled out. (The Power Rangers, The Ewoks, the 501st legion, almost all of their guests, etc) They were already gone, so right then, there should have been no reason not to accommodate my request for Thursday and Sunday.

At this point, my partner said, "I'm starting to get a bad feeling about this convention. I'm not going to spend the night after driving 11 hours in some parking lot somewhere in California because we're not good enough to have a hotel room for this con."

This was especially problematic after all of my efforts to promote this convention, since they knew I was driving 11 hours. They knew the cost of my gas was going to be almost $300. That's not a cross town ticket.

At this point, my agent, my partner, and our other partner in the business started expressing their reservations as well. Then, investigations online were brought to my attention by a staff member. They cited several situations, including the loss of 13 guests from this convention, (reported in Nerd & Tie), that the Roseland Lions Club International had to post announcements that they are not associated with the convention and that the money for the autism Charity isn't going to the Early Learning Institute.

My company's board pays for all of my incidentals when I go to a convention, especially if the convention isn't covering those expenses through an appearance fee. We count on the sales of books at our table to recover those costs. With the 35 year old parade that clogs the highways that day, plus another festival that happens on Sunday in the same place, and the fact that there are TWO other conventions nearby on those same dates that are more established, The partners determined that there would not be sufficient attendance to recover the costs incurred.

This is especially true if I had to find hotel accommodations for Thursday and Sunday. I gaveUriel alternate arrangements as a possibility for my lack of hotel, but told him it would cost an extra $50 in gas money because it would add six hours onto our trip.

He said he was going to have to petition the board to get the extra money. I even cited that $50 is way cheaper than two more nights of hotel rooms, and he appreciated me giving that option.

Then we found out how one of the other guests who had not canceled was being treated, now that a certain big name with an extremely high appearance fee was going to be at the convention. The other guest had their panels cut, and they were being treated like they were an insignificant guest.

That guest was a bigger name than I am.

If this was what they were doing to this person who had signed on early, brought guests to him, supported this convention, and been very positive about the show, there was no reason to believe that I would be treated any better. In fact, it looked like I was going to be treated even worse.

These things made my board pull the plug on attending. At this point there was no way to recoup our losses, and the event was looking like it was going to cost us far more money than we could make selling to the attendees.

Due to all of this, the company decided that we needed to join the ranks of the people who canceled on this convention. I find it very unfortunate that I cannot go to this show. I was really hoping to make some new contacts in California, so I could open up the area for other appearances. Now, I won't have that chance.

I hope I get the opportunity to attend something in Northern California because I have friends there and hope to do networking.

I don't necessarily believe that Uriel's actions were malicious intent. I think that he was trying to do something and made some decisions that started him down a path that ended up being problematic for him. As each new incident came up, because of the way that things had been handled prior to that minute, the actions were taken in the worst possible light.

So now we have a situation where a convention that was brand new is having more problems than a first year convention should.

This was a very big learning experience, and I hope that the lessons learned will enable the convention to not make those mistakes again. I really want a new convention to succeed cause ultimately when these things happen, no one wins.

Warky’s Statement

What Tangl said. I am withdrawing my attendance from this convention. Wark!