

Bixel Factfinder #1

Facts in the Case of F. Towner Laney

A Report to Stfandom

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Being a man of piece-loving propensities, it is not often that I will stand up on my hind legs (as the saying goes) and lash out at some character, who, by various acts of one sort and another, earns himself a spot in a publication of this sort.

In effect, this is an open letter to fandom. It is possible that one of you will be surprized at this publication. Perhaps you have expected something like this from this quarter for some time. It is quite possible that no local fan wishes to come right out and say things that have been begging to be said all this time.

I first met F. Towner Laney (aka Francis T. Laney) via the US mail system. I read his glowing ad for Acolyte in that once sterling magazine Fantasy. (In this same issue I read of Sam Russell's Fantasy Critic, the adult fanzine that saw but one issue--now a collector's item--and lost the first quarter I lost in fandom on an unredeemed subscription). I sent Laney a subscription. He replied at once with a copy of his mag, and thereafter, I received succeeding issues as they appeared.

I suggested I might write him a story. A spirited correspondence ensued. I did not write him the story. Then he stopped writing. At the same I also stopped writing. We seemed mutually pooped out on the matter.

Then he came to Los Angeles and I got to know him personally. He seemed, at first, to be a likeable chap, serious in his fanning, and possessed of a genuine hospitality. All right. Then I met his wife Jackie and admired her legs. So did Mel Brown. Now.

There was some sort of trouble in LA fandom afterward. I remained on good terms with F. Towner Laney. I was on excellent terms with him. This can be proved by various items in Shangri-L'Affaires (which I edited) for 1944 and early 1945, before the mag took a slump in the hands of another editor, here nameless.

When I left LA to go to war (if the war had come to California I'd have seen action) Laney and I were on fine terms. He even wrote me a letter one day. He wrote it on my own typewriter while he and Jackie (his wife, the one with the legs) were visiting my whisky and my wife. It was this very typewriter.

Now--I hadn't given him permission to use the typer. Perhaps my wife did, but that is of no moment. The typewriter is a precision machine, often tooled to tolerances of 1/32 of an inch. Did his using of this precision machine irk me? No. I never gave it a thought till this moment.

In the current Acolyte Laney has published a story of mine. I written this story (or sketch) in 1945 for a projected fm of Saha's

and Brown's. (The same Mel Brown who admired Jackie's legs.) This unnamed mag never saw the light---maybe Saha and Brown did and that is why it didn't. All right.

I said nothing to Laney about editing this story heavily. I am known to be irked when people edit my stuff heavily. I naturally assumed that Laney, knowing this, would, if he edited it at all, first ask my permission and perhaps we could work something out on the matter satisfactory to both. That seems only logical and fair, doesn't it?

When I read the story in the current Acolyte I enjoyed it very much. Furthermore, it hadn't been changed at all. And if it had, I didn't notice it.

I came back from the wars, having served faithfully if fretfully through Fort MacArthur (where Ackerman once held sway), Camp Roberts, and Fort Ord. At Roberts, they'd boasted that they made killers out of men. Well, I heard somebody say it one day. Upon my discharge they failed to inform me that anywhere along the line they'd made a man out of a killer.

In this dangerous state I returned home. I thought I would find Laney the same tolerant, genial, ~~generous~~, intelligent, friendly, humorous fellow as when I left. You must all agree that I was completely justified in thinking so.

And that is precisely the way I found him. The wars hadn't changed him at all. He was still the same F. Towner Laney (or, if you prefer, Francis T. Laney). Time hadn't mellowed him a bit.

I can't say that I still admire Jackie's legs (now famous in the Malay Archipelago) as the last several times I've seen her she has worn slacks.

But F. Towner Laney is the same. The Laney of old.

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