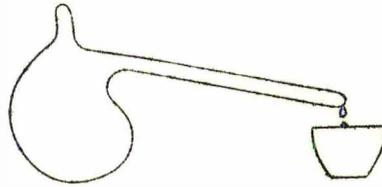


THE SHAW RETORT:

A Further Symposium on
Fannish Behavior
in the Human Pro



(Published by Bob Pavlat, 6001 43rd Avenue, Hyattsville,
Maryland, for the November 1959 FAPA mailing.)

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"And the Unholy Three drew apart and took counsel unto themselves, and they each answered in their kind." *

And still did Pavlat wonder, and still did his heart beat sore when he thought on the Unholy Three and the answers they had given. And so it came to pass that there were others than the Unholy Three who had wise counsel to give, and so was their counsel sought. Two wise men he asked, and then a third, and yet a fourth he asked, and three of them shared their wisdom with the seeker, and answered in their wont.

*Larry Shaw in "The Pavlat Report," August 1959, prefacing answers by Tucker, Bloch, and himself in answer to an inquiry I had made about the dearth of pros in fandom.

A. J. Rudrys

There I am suddenly on the FAPA waiting list, just under Louis Russell Chauvenet, and if you think that doesn't tingle my fannish heart.... But, what am I doing on the FAPA waiting list anywhere at all?

Bob Pavlat has said to me: "Long and long ago you were an active fan, and then you dropped" (Meaning 'out of fandom,' I suppose, though of course one can't be sure. aj) "for quite a while....Are you re-entering fandom?" Well, yes, I'd like to now publish a 'zine, preferably to a closed audience; I'd like to contribute occasional pieces to other people's fanzines; I'd like to meet other fans whenever my rather time-consuming livelihood permits me to; I, too, would like to join in some of the fannish interests, like jazz and sports cars. But I've always felt this way. Underneath it all, I'm the same sweet, somehow wonderful little child I was in 1943, when I was an N3F member-- and I always have been. I can show a string of quiet fanac extending right through to 1959, even though I did stop letterhacking in 1952.

And I can even show a letter in the next-to-the-last issue of Planet Stories....

But, though I never completely subsided from fanac, I am not here to hand you some music about how I never stopped being a fan. Between '52 and '58 I worked at nothing but science fiction; I supported myself on it, and made outspoken claim to that status. A pro is not a fan-- my unfavorable people in science fiction are those who accept and exploit both conditions simultaneously. There is something of the wolf in sheep's clothing about them, and also something pitifully sheepish. Conversely, some of my favorite fans are those people who are solid professionals outside science fiction, and who bring to science fiction fandom the relaxed competence of someone who, when he goes out for blood, goes out to someplace where his hobby does not extend. I think here of Tucker, Bloch, Shaw, Dean Grennell, Joe Gibson, and, speaking of blood, Doc Barrett, among scores of others.

Anyhow, sometime in 1959 I stopped renewing my options in the sf writers' guild. I wrote not one piece of sf for money alone, and stopped thinking of it as my primary source of income. Result: I sold 8000 words to the sf magazines, and one novel which, when completed, will be my last piece of fiction whose lineage can be clearly traced to that issue of Astonishing which began my acquaintance with pulp sf. What I am now is a mainstream novelist who occasionally gets short story ideas, and article ideas, some of which may appear in sf magazines. But don't get confused: henceforth, no matter what you see on the contents page of some prozine, as far as science fiction is concerned I'm once more a fan. I like it much better this way, and I hope I'm welcome back.

Bob Silverberg

I don't know whether I belong in the class of "fans who pretty much left their fanning behind them when they entered the professional author group." True enough, I've stopped publishing the subzine that was my chief activity during the time I was generally considered a fan. True enough, I no longer contribute to fanzines with the volume I did in the 1949-54 period of my fanhood. But I've remained a member of a fannish group (FAPA), albeit somewhat inactive until recent months. I've attended every world convention and a good many local ones, including such purely fannish local ones as the 1958 Disclave. I've continued to read fanzines with interest, if with a growing lack of comprehension.

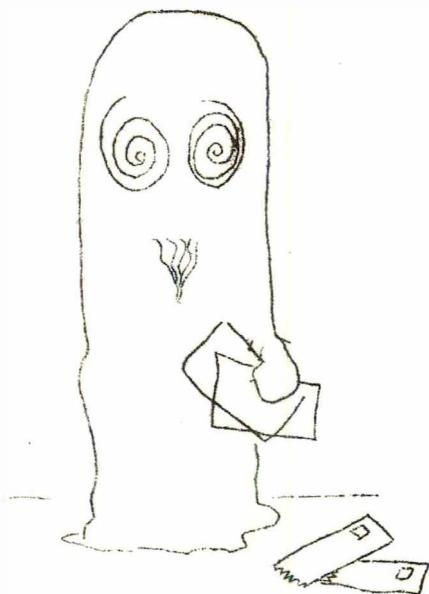
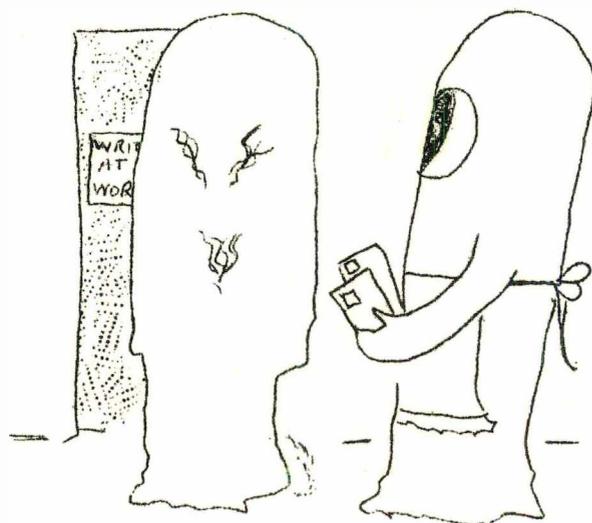
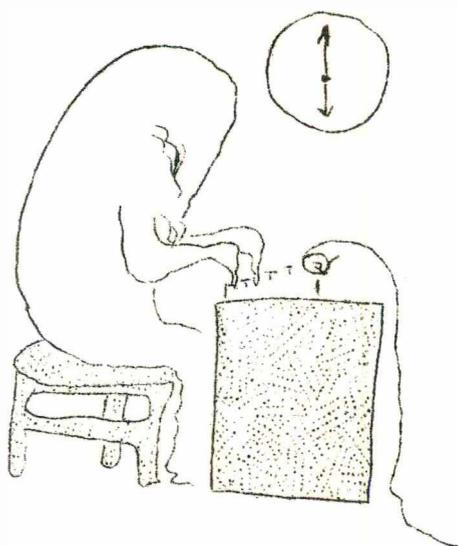
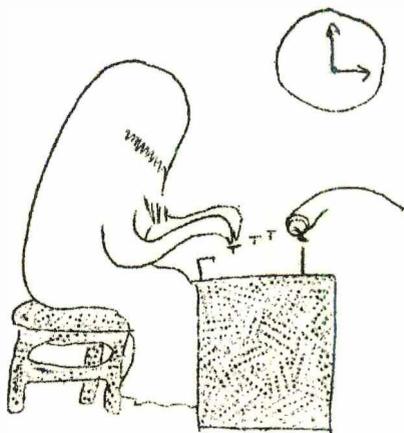
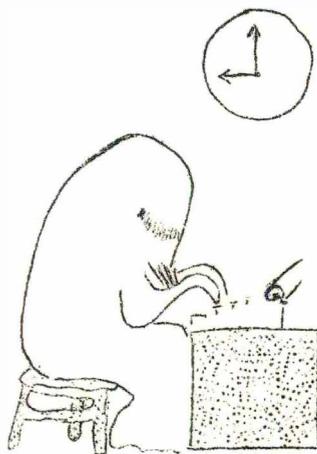
So let's not call me an ex-fan, but simply a fan who is not particularly active any more, and whose chief creative output goes not to fanzines but to paying markets.

Larry Shaw has pointed out that some people equate fan-becomes-pro with child-becomes-man, and I think he's right. I know of at least one fan-turned-pro of the past five years who regards fandom (or claims to regard it) as a pack of driveling idiots. (He still comes to conventions, too, and he's one of the people I'm fondest of in the science-fiction milieu. But there's no denying that since his ascension to the play-for-pay ranks he's come to regard fans as ineffectual fumlbers.)

In a certain sense he's right -- a very narrow sense. There are a few fans who want to become professional authors. They want it as hard as can be. They write reams and reams of stories, send them out, have them all come back. From my viewpoint, from the viewpoint of any selling pro, these people are ineffectual. They've tried for years to do something that I can do with monotonous regularity -- sell fiction professionally. I'm competent at my profession; these people are incompetent at what they would like to make their profession -- and any fan-turned-pro is entitled to look askance at unsuccessful amateurs, just as Duke Snider would be entitled to chuckle at my feeble attempts to hit major-league pitching.

The only trouble is, this has nothing to do with fandom. The number of fans actively wanting and trying to turn pro is slim -- and most of these are the rank neofans. I'm sure every fan has, at one time or another, entertained some idea of selling to Astounding. But few of them actually try, and fewer succeed. I don't doubt that Dean Grennell or Redd Boggs or Richard Elsberry or Bob Pavlat could have been writing lead novelets for Campbell, if they'd had the same desire to do it that I had. They hadn't the urge; I did. I got there; they didn't. That doesn't make them ineffectual fumlbers. It makes them people who didn't care to emply their talents and energies for the commercial production of science fiction, that's all.

And so, despite their lamentable amateur status, they remain interesting and stimulating people, whose company I cherish and whose opinions I value. Having been -- as a fan -- privileged to know these



"DEAR MR. SILVERBERG
WOULD YOU WRITE
ME AN ARTICLE FOR
THE NEXT ISSUE OF
MY FANZINE SMERB IT'S
MY ANNISH YOU KNOW
AND I SORT OF THAT..."

Jean Young



...the ...
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people, I don't see why -- as a pro -- I should immediately cut myself adrift from them.

Naturally, I no longer feel very strongly inclined to contribute to fanzines. I earn my living pounding a typewriter; it's no fun to crank out article after article for the fanzines when I've spent my working hours producing saleable copy. I turn for relaxation to other interests, not to writing. Fans who don't spend all their earning time writing are more apt to want to write after hours for nothing. When the mood takes me, I do a fanzine piece. But I'm hardly anxious to do dozens a year and maintain a BNF status thereby.

I don't publish, either. I served my time by the mimeo handle for six years, from 1949 to 1955. When fanzine publishing ceased to be rewarding creatively to me, I stopped. Six years is a goodly long time to publish a fanzine, and I'm more than willing to let others carry the sacred flame on.

I don't carry on correspondences with dozens of fans, either. Why should I? I'm busy, for one -- and most of the fans of my in-group are notoriously erratic correspondents themselves. The eager-beaver correspondents are the neofans. I don't have much intellectual kinship with them, especially since most of them attach the label PRO to me and make real communication difficult. But the fans I knew when I was a fan -- Ellison, Macauley, Pavlat, Raeburn, Eney, Ted White, etc.-- these people remain important to me as people, even though we don't exchange many letters.

At the conventions, I spend a lot of my time with the other pros. Why not? I want to trade shoptalk with my colleagues; I want to get to know them better, meet their wives, find out about their working habits. I have more in common with these people than with the crewcut set that discovered fandom way back in the golden age of Ninth Fandom. But I don't think I've ever altogether abandoned the fannish element at the conventions to hobnob with the other pros. Matter of fact, at Detroit I think I spent more time partying with the fans.

What it boils down to is this: the cycle of fan activity generally begins in early high school days, rises to a peak with growing maturity, and culminates at around age eighteen or nineteen. After that come college, marriage, military service, all manner of distractions -- followed ultimately by a career of some sort. I entered fandom actively around 1949, when I was a high school sophomore. My greatest period of activity was 1950-52 -- my final three years of high school. When I entered college, in the fall of 1952, fanac necessarily had to suffer, but I continued publishing and contributing to fanzines in what time I had. By 1954, my five-year cycle of increasing fanac had reached its end -- and in 1955 I became a full-time selling professional. In 1956 I married. Something had to give, and it was fandom; I couldn't set up housekeeping, establish myself in a tough and uncertain profession, graduate from college, and continue fanac all at once. So fanac went, all but the social contacts -- a FAPAcon at Eney's in '57, a Disclave in '58, the worldcons, and sporadic and highly minimal FAPA activity.

I think I've settled down in the groove I want, now. My income is as assured as a free-lance writer's income ever gets; the hectic business of furnishing a house is far behind me; college, even further.

Most of the people I liked in fandom still are in fandom. I enjoy their company. I don't see any reason for snubbing them simply because I earn my living writing books and they earn theirs selling furnaces or operating mimeograph machines. To the extent that fandom served as my personal apprenticeship for professional writing, I'm no longer a fan: I don't need free space to get training for pro writing. But to the extent that I find a congenial social group in fandom, I remain part of fandom. I don't embrace all of fandom in one all-loving hug, though. I don't want any very close contact with beatniks, with seventeen-year-olds who don't know how to hold their liquor, with panhandlers, with rabble-rousers, with moochers. I've always been fastidious that way, reserving the right to pick the company I mix with. But I see no necessary dichotomy between fan and pro. Larry Shaw, Bob Tucker, Bob Bloch, and some others are both fans and pros. So am I. Fans like Don Wollheim, Ray Bradbury, or James Blish have left their interests in fandom behind (though they still keep in touch with a few of their old friends.) My own fannish days are not so far behind that there has been a total turnover in fandom, and so long as I can find half-a-dozen people around who, though not interested in selling to Campbell, are people worth having as friends, I'll remain a fan. Not a publishing fan, not a fanzine-contributing fan, just a social-type fan.

But a fan.

Damon Knight

Well, what it amounts to, I guess, is that I'm too flibberti-gibberty to be a faithful fan. This year I've been on a big kick of translating s-f stories from the French, and next year it might be ceramics, if I can afford it, or God knows what. I like fans except a few whom I loathe, but the people I love best in the world are writers. This gets to be a clannish thing, exactly like fandom, only if you are a writer it fits better.

Bob Pavlat

In this report I've tried to garner some comments from additional fans-turned-pro to add to the comments the Unholy Three made in The Pavlat Report. I want to thank Shaw, for the spark of inspiration which led to his report, and both his contributors and those appearing here for the troubles they have gone to in hopes of throwing a little light on this bemusing subject. I also want to mention that I asked Budrys a different question than the one asked of anyone else--I asked him why he was coming back, rather than why he left in the first place. I think he's provided some insight into both.

Shaw, in his comments, came to the conclusion that I had asked the wrong question. The question which set this off might bear repeating: "Why, of all the pros there are, are you three {Bloch, Shaw, and Tucker} so much more involved in fandom than the others? Is it, I wonder, a matter where you are different from other professionals, or are you fan-type people who happen to have the capability to make good professionally." Shaw said the question should be the reason some fans can go on enjoying fandom apparently without limit. "...my basic postulate {is that} most fans tire of fandom fairly rapidly; becoming a pro may accelerate the process, but not enough to be tremendously important. Other fans don't, and continue their romances with fandom indefinitely. The important question is, what makes these latter types tick?"

Larry's question was a good one, but I couldn't see what it had to do with the main issue at hand. This failure in perception held sway through two drafts of this article, one of which was discarded, and the second of which follows. It wasn't until I had wended my way through this second draft that I finally saw what Larry meant, and how intimately these two questions are connected.

My only role in this was that of an observer. All that I could do was to sit back and watch, and see what answers seemed to run through the comments made by those with experience. Only one point came through to me with gem-like clarity. That is, that those pros who are fans remain in fandom only because they consider fans to be likable people. There are variations in degree, ranging from Tucker's awe over fans and their antics, through Silverberg's more analytic selection, all the way to the negative expressed by Damon Knight who says he likes fans well enough but finds his fellow professionals better company.

The second point isn't quite as clear, but I think it's there. That is, that the pros who engage in fanac like fandom as an entity. This seems to come out in the views of Bloch, by the nature of the reply he chose to make (Faust Fandom), in Silverberg's emphasis that he is still a fan (and I couldn't agree with you more Bob, particularly now that you're once more appearing in FAPA as a person rather than as a mere writer), and negatively in Damon Knight's failure to recognize (or dis-interest) in the fact that fandom is as flibbertigibberty as he accuses himself of being--it's this very trait that causes the often commented upon lack of emphasis on science fiction in what is called science fiction

fandom. This liking of fandom as an entity also comes out in the views of Budrys, while we can see the reverse in the case of the fan-turned-pro cited by Silverberg, where said pro apparently thinks that fandom has a purpose other than just being a hobby. Maybe the sf portion of the hobby is underplayed; I'd not deny that, but like so many other things, that's another subject. The basic point is that fandom is a hobby, not merely a stepping stone from one place to another, nor even necessarily a resting place, refueling stop, or comfort station on the wayside. For many fans, it may serve one or another of these purposes. For others of us, including at least half of the FAPA membership, fandom has proved to be a satisfying long-range hobby.

On the negative side--why pros aren't in fandom--we have Bloch's summary of reasons, as well as those of Silverberg and Budrys. Most of the problems faced by the pros are little different from those of any worker, and all of us have our own problems of home, time, other interests, and money which may interfere with fanac. There are a couple of problems peculiar to the pro, however. The feet of clay and distance lends enchantment aspects mentioned by Bloch, and the problem recognized by everyone: "Why should I give away what I can be paid for?" There's obviously only one reason--because what comes back, in terms of egoboo or access to the fans and their doings, is sufficient payment to balance by its worth the loss of money income. In some cases, from the sheer economics of writing for a living, money must be the prime consideration, however desirable the non-monetary return might be.

Another consideration, and one that's hard to assess, is an apparent limiting factor on amount of time spent on activities related to science fiction. Both Silverberg and Budrys are cutting back their science fiction writing, and both appear to be broadening or re-establishing their fannish output. I'll leave it to someone else to attempt to find if this is sheer accident, or if there is some actual limiting factor at play.

A final negative consideration is doubtless fandom as it is. Fandom is a discussion group and social group in which science fiction is much more frequently the catalyst than the subject. A fanzine specializing in sf can interest the pros: Magnus's file of letters in reaction to Speculative Review is reasonably conclusive proof of this, while the letter columns and pages of Inside, Peon and Amra further demonstrate it. But fandom as it mostly is? Well, there's no good reason for continuing in it except for a liking of the people in it. There may be other reasons for the short haul--writing practice and analysis, time-killing, crusades, misled expectation that fandom would be different than it is. But, fandom being as it is, only the people make the field worthwhile, for there is no true body to the field apart from the people in it.

Yes, Tucker, I'm in fandom because I like it. And because I have broad mental horizons. And I'm glad that you do too, and Bloch, and Shaw, and Silverberg, and Budrys, and in fact all of you who are the body fannish. You are the reasons I'm in fandom, and I guess that's true of all of us. I can't think of a better reason, and I don't believe that I need or want any other reason.