

Dinosaur Spit 1

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#### HARRY WARNER JR.: FAN OF LETTERS

[[A shorter version appeared in SACRED TRUST 2, my FAPazine, in the February, 1997 FAPA mailing. A majority of fHapans are not FAPans. I think printing it here is appropriate.]]

The year 1996 started badly with the death of Bob Shaw. It went from sad to sadder, with the deaths of Redd Boggs and Charles Burbee. Ethel Lindsay. Lynn Hickman.

I was standing in our kitchen in early December, not long before midnight, peeling and eating clementines. You just can't eat one.

My mind was wandering. I was under the influence of having read Francis Towner Laney's "Syllabus for a Fanzine," and a portion of his "Ah, Sweet Idiocy!" Both were reprinted in Joe Siclari's FANHISTORICA 5.

My thoughts returned to a paragraph in "Syllabus." Laney typed, what, 50 years ago?, a long, approving, sensible description of a contemporary fan.

"I've not had the pleasure," Laney reported, "of meeting Harry Warner, but he has one of the best fanzine personas of anyone. His stuff reflects a deep and informed interest in music, sound critical judgment, a reflective interest in the foibles of humanity, and a marvellous, almost Pepysian, ability to tell of the minutiae of his own life with elan and readability. His fanzines are so good that he must be remarkably like them."

So Harry Warner was then, and so he is today. Laney is long gone. Harry stayed a player in the fannish game. He played the regular season, spring, summer, and fall. In the winter he played winter ball.

Year after year, decade after decade, he has hit for average. His on base percentage seems likely never to be equalled. He is our Lou Gehrig and Cal Ripkin combined.

Harry Warner, Jr. is fanzine fandom's Fan of Letters. Locer. Historian (our Gibbon). Apan. Columnist. Faned.

I propose a publishing project titled HARRY WARNER, JR., subtitle FAN OF LETTERS. (My first impulse was to separate the two parts with a colon, but I do not wish to give Harry an excuse to not read it.) [[This is a reference to the previous FAPA mailing and one of Harry's mailing comments in HORIZONS: "I usually don't read a book that has a colon in its title because I've found its contents are normally the same as the kind of colon in human anatomy.]]

I do not have in mind a Best of collection of HW Jr.

writing. I want to know what other fans think when they see Harry's name. What does a Harry Warner mean to fandom. What are the qualities which fanzine fandom values which he possesses?

This project needs art and cartoons as well as words. Faan fiction, reprint and written for the occasion. I remember admiring a Taral Wayne MacDONald faan fiction set in Toronto involving Yonge Street and pinball and an ending which involved the hermit of Hagerstown. Verse heroic, limerick, sonnetic, anyone?

Who wants to write, using HORIZONS as the example, an analysis of Harry's philosophy of the best use of white space in fanzine page design? [[HORIZONS is page after page of wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling text.]] Harry as a character in an episodic television series that could be confused with Northern Exposure? [[Northern Exposure was a favourite of Harry's]]

By celebrating Harry, we celebrate all that is best about our words and drawings on paper culture. If you can put words or lines on paper, I invite you to do so. Also, share suggestions. Pass the word. For Harry! For Fandom! For Posterity!

HARRY WARNER, JR., FAN OF LETTERS, of course will be distributed through FAPA. Perhaps circulation through fHapa, the new fan history apa, will be appropriate. And single copies will be available to satisfy general demand.

Be a part of fan history. It a Ghood Thing.

Who wants to do Walt Willis?

If you were seeking material for this project, who would you approach? For what would you ask them?

The word Harry is foremost an abbreviation of the word letterhack. What defines the letterhack? Wit, discipline, strong fingers?

Have you met the Hermit of Hagerstown? If so, tell all. Let not minor details get in the way of a good story.

Harry has published HORIZONS in the FAPA forever. Can you imagine doing the same? Is he nuts, or what?

Have fans besides Laney written substantial pieces about Harry? Fans besides Taral written fan fiction about him?

Send contributions, suggestions, et cetera, to me; my addresses appear at the top of page one.

#### Richard Labonte, Travelling Jiant

Richard Labonte was mentioned in fHapa 2, in part one of Garth Spencer's history of Toronto fandom. I met Richard in 1973, during Torcon 2, my only worldcon. Around that time, I organized an invitational apa, the Protean Apa (PAPA). Richard typed three PAPAZines on stencil and I printed them, so I feel confident in typing that this writing will be new to everyone here. You will have to imagine the green ink on yellow paper. Here is MOPING 1.

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## Moping

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'The sudden solitude had not frightened him and with some misgiving he realized that he had easily grown to like it.

'Two months of absolute indolence, lying around, watching clouds traverse the sky, sheep in the blue pastures.

'At home, it would have been considered abnormal. Even during vacations one was not supposed to relax completely; one must remain wound up. But here there was nobody. No exterior or interior compulsion prompted him what to do or not to do and when.

'Just an aimless boat on an aimless sea. The useless tension inside him had slowly uncoiled and he had let himself immerse in a blue flood of beatitude.

'Alone, he had found a part of himself that had always been there and to which he had paid no attention.

--Raoul Faure, The Spear in the Sand

This is really an apazine from the past, because by the time the second mailing of Murray's apa appears I'll be two-thirds through a three-month leave of absence from a job to which I may not return, and I could be in San Francisco looking for work, in Portugal living with a Roman Catholic priest and his wife, or on a pleasant farm in northern Quebec chopping wood for next winter and putting up the shelves I'll need for all the books I want to read.

The leave of absence was a surprise. I thought of it one day, decided the next day it would never be granted, decided to quit anyway, then was asked by my night editor if I wanted some time off.

I have a fine job. Newspaper work, for The Ottawa Citizen, editing copy mostly with a bit of writing on the side. But through a peculiar set of circumstances...others quit, wives of deskmen were very sick, we moved to a new building and met up with equipment which refused to function...I found myself, of but against my own free will, working six and seven day weeks and 12 or 14 hour days, for four months.

Oh, it was sad. No time for movies, entire weeks when I saw nobody from my house, visions of stock-market tables (have you ever had to edit a stock market table? I almost got myself a broker, to make the task bearable) filling my nights, which are actually days because I work nights.

So the bossman asked, when the situation eased a bit, fought for an extended leave of absence for me and gave me the name and address of a Father friend in Portugal.

I'm leaving in four days--on Sat. Feb. 9, to visit folk across Canada and attend a small convention in Vancouver the end of the month. From there I think I've about settled on moving down to San Francisco, finding a place to live for a month and looking for the rythm of the city. I may instead go up through northern British Columbia for a while...or back east through the northern U.S....or just stay in Vancouver. Whatever feels good.

Just as long as the the aimless boats-aimless ea idea attracts.

The greatest problem I've had to wrestle with since my decision to leave for an extended trip is how to finance my travels. I'm travelling mainly on the cheap, hitching or by bus and train, but there are several self-indulgences I'm looking forward to granting myself. Films and plays and concerts and the like, for one major example of what I can spend money on if I try hard, and books, before even breathing hard.

The choices I came up with were cash, lots of; travellers checks; credit cards; and my particular favorite, the letter of credit.

Everone told me cash was unsafe, and I'm sloppy with money, tending to tuck wads of cash into back pockets and then wash the jeans or ignore them for several months; and I lose countless dollar bills every winter pulling my gloves out of my coat pocket.

Travellers checks are convenient because they're accepted everywhere, but they reek of imperialism for that very reason; my political consciousness can't tolerate them.

The letter of credit appeals to me the most; a romantic concept, when purged of its ruling class gentleman son overtones. It seemed a fine idea to walk into a tiny town in Texas with a heavy-paper, gilt-edged letter of credit from the Bank of Montreal, National Office, and ask for some money please. Elegant but not flashy, simple and subdued.

The bank manager, a nice fellow with puzzle-frowns on his brow, said it wasn't usually done for such small amounts--I wanted \$350--and wouldn't I prefer travellers' checks.

The creases deepened when I told him why I couldn't take travellers' checks, and he winced--or was it wishful thinking?--when I mentioned corporate nationalism and the creeping power of multinational inter-connecting finances and stuff like that.

But he was, as I said, a nice fellow, and I have a lot of money in his bank so the code says he has to take me seriously. He whiffled and waffled and tried a couple of feints in the travellers' checks direction again, and then asked me...did I have a credit card? More specifically, a MasterCard card, which has moved into Canada from the U.S. through the Bank of Montreal.

I didn't, but now I do.

I don't much believe in the credit card mentality either, but we gotta except some of the evil in the world, right, meet it head on and come out on top.

And a credit card is so decadent...so apocalypse of the culture (once wanted to name a fanzine Apocalypse of Garbage but never got it done...still seems a fine name) that I couldn't say no.

I'm leaving behind a book of signed cheques and instructions with people in the co-op to pay every MasterCard bill the instant it arrives in the house.

I'm going to Las Vegas, perhaps, if that's the direction the urge takes me, but only to look. Slot machines don't take credit cards, probably...

Next mailing, I'll tell you all about it. Meanwhile, let me put in quick plugs for more frequent mailings, the right to use French (as long as the accent marks are in) and welcomes to John Bangsund and Leigh Edmonds, whose willingness to participate at long distances un-nerves me.

Best,

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Richard Labonte, 64 Marlborough Ave, Ottawa K1N 8E9, February 7, 1974

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