

YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE: THIS FANZINE ORIGINATES FROM A POINT ON THE AGONIC LINE....



..FOR SHADOW FAFA AND OTHERS

, from DON SIMPSON FW1-26.....

through the aid of Bill Blackbeard & Redd Boggs, who furnished stencils, paper, duplication, and encouragement. All of which was volunteered, as I had no intentions of trying to publish a fanzine while I was in the Army. For one thing, the unit I'm with currently has a habit of putting everyone on 24-hour duty for a week or two before inspections -- you are either eating, sleeping, or working; and the army has inspections like a department store has sales. Also parades, training classes, night school, special details and extra police calls. The thing is not that the work is hard, but that it is unpredictable and very, very time-consuming. Being unpredictable, it is also time-wasting; and advance planning is impossible.

Another thing getting in the way of any non-army activities was lack of space. In our barracks we are allowed two wall lockers and a foot locker. We also have frequent surprise locker inspections. Even with most of my stuff in storage downtown, I was told I had too much stuff in my lockers. Actually, besides my clothing I had only some paper and envelopes, a few rubber stamps, a stamp pad, some ink for my pens, some pencils, my camera and accessories, a shaving kit, materials for shoe shining and brass polishing, an ophthalmoscope kit, a Magic Gypsy Fortune Teller, and my bookshelves and filing cabinets. Downtown in a trunk I kept my art supplies and electronic equipment, my art files, and my infernal machine for glass and wood carving. On free days (mainly Sunday afternoons) I would take the bus downtown and get some artwork done, then bring in a few things to use over the next week, if I had time. My backlog of requests for artwork was getting longer and longer. So was a pile of unreviewed fanzines and unanswered letters. Most of my major projects were getting nowhere. What could I do?

Bill Blackbeard suggested that I put out a fanzine as a review-and-letter substitute -- all I would have to do would be to cut a set of stencils, and he and Redd Boggs would do the rest. Before this, I had considered publishing, but I had always thought it would take more time. The thought of saving time by publishing a fanzine was irresistible. So here I am, and many thanks. So much for the synopsis; now go on with the story....

I WAS A PRISONER IN A WAMPUM-BEAD FACTORY? or I Was a Mess for the BSA and Found Space: As noted, I had little time to call my own, so when next-bunk neighbor John Fitch asked me to become a Merit Badge Councilor for the Boy Scout troop on post, I naturally accepted. As long as nobody was actually working for a badge in art, sculpture, pottery, mechanical drawing, photography, or electronics, there wouldn't be any work involved. And the scouts were working on basics like hiking, camping, and first aid. However, as I dropped over to the Scout Hut one evening to see what the place looked like (It had twelve rooms, all of which were being painted) I was invited to take part in a pageant. It was just exactly 200 years ago that the colonial governors met with the chiefs of the great indian tribes at nearby Augusta, Ga. to sign a peace treaty; and the event was to be reenacted for a dinner of the Richmond Historical Society. Because of their knowledge of indians, the Boy Scouts were recruited as indians and translators, but there were some parts still unfilled. And how about me taking one? Again, I accepted. How could I turn down a part in an indian pageant called "Peace in Our Time"?

Only, there was the matter of the wampum beads to be presented by one of the chiefs -- nobody had any wampum beads here, and the ones being sent showed no sign of arriving. Then Fred Fultz, the Scoutmaster, recalled that I was doing some work at the ceramics craft shop. There, when I had a free evening, I would restore my sanity by working with clay. Someone once remarked that ceramics was a wonderful thing--without it few adults would be able to make mud pies. I agree. I love ceramics, and it has kept me going through some rough times here. Now it was about to get me into a rough time, because we needed twenty feet of wampum beads in two days time, or else no show. Say, 4500 beads, give or take a thousand...."Well...", I said.

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Well, I had twenty-five pounds of modelling clay; and by rolling it into long snakes and letting them dry a little before cutting, I could make up to four beads per second. Up to, I say, because it was usually less than that, depending on how dry the clay was. Meanwhile, Specialist Lewis was punching holes in the beads with a blunted lead pencil. She is the Wac in charge of the craft shop, and a forthrite, outspoken, young woman. Also a good pistol shot. Ever so often, some sucker would wander by and ask what we were making. "Wampum beads!", I would explain, and Lewis would recruit him for the Wampum-bead Hole-puncher's Brigade. She's not quite as forthrite as Bjo, but quite effective anyway, and we got the beads fired that night. "Who's going to string these things?", She asked, And I said "Not me!" I was wrong: Next day I was sitting there stringing beads with Mrs. Heyer, the ceramics teacher holding the far end of the string and Lewis holding the middle. As I got a section of beads threaded, I would shoot them down the string, around Lewis, back to me, and over to Mrs. Heyer. The arrangement looked more Rube Goldbergish than it sounds, with everyone alternately raising and lowering their arms as groups of beads shot from one part of the room to another, along the string. I spent the trip to the Town House Hotel, where the dinner was held, threading a last string of beads.

It was a success. No one forgot their lines, and none of the beads fell apart. In my trapper outfit, with tricorn hat and shaggy shoulder-length wig, I looked more like Maggellin with a hangover than a frounteeersman, but I got to carry a genuine old flintlock from the local museum. A beautiful weapon -- I hated to have to give it back. I'd do it over again, if I had to.

By now the paint had dried in the Scout Hut, and I was asked if I wanted one of the rooms for an arts and crafts room, where I could keep my art supplies and infernal machine. "Well...", I said.

So now I have a studio. It's small (6x10 ft.), but adequate, and with a little time I can get the things done that I have been months overdue on. Stand by for further bulletins.

ANOTHER THING that has meant a great deal to me is that pile of letters and fanzines. Bruce & Dian Pelz, John & Bjo Trimble, Fred Patton, Thomas Schluck, Chuck Hansen, Steve Stiles, Ed Meskys, Bill Evans, Kris Carey, Redd Boggs, Bill Blackbeard, and others have sent me fanzines. I read them all cover-to-cover and I enjoy them very much. I had planned to review these fanzines in this issue of PHANTOM CIRCUIT, but I'm limited to two pages, and I don't care for one-line reviews. I hope the next issue will be a little larger, so I can put in some art, the fanzine column, and a little blank space to rest the eyes.

THIS HAS BEEN the first issue of PHANTOM CIRCUIT, from  
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And the whole works was done on stencil, late one Sunday evening. The typewriter is an old open-frame Underwood decorated with gold curlicues, and belongs to Fred Fultz, the Scoutmaster. The Y doesn't print very well unless you go over it twice. The Agonic Line is a line along which magnetic compasses point to true north. It runs from the north magnetic pole down through the eastern United States and on toward the south pole.

I got on the FAPA waiting list when I joined the army, figuring that when my three-years was up I would be near the top of the waiting list. I am now 26th and have eight months to go. I plan to be at the Pacificon, if the Army will let me take a leave then. They'd better, as I've missed the last six conventions, and there's talk of holding the next one in a foreign country. When I get out, I plan to go to art school in Los Angeles, despite smog and earthquakes. Till then, I should be here, holding down the fort. Gis revido.