

CLOUD  
CHAMBER  
ELEVEN

more for FLAP from Dave Langford, 22  
Northumberland Ave, Reading, Berkshire,  
RG2 7PW, UK. This one dated 20 Jan 82.

Hello again, everyone. I'd relate the story of my life since the last ill-fated (ie. time-warped) CC, but I've just hammered out some occasionally truthful autobiography for FAPA. Well, if A.Hlavaty can do it then so shall I: a copy of my FAPA stuff (CC10) follows. Life has mostly been work with a brief pause for one (1) wedding and 1 (one) Christmas; the wedding, in early December, was that of nearby fannish friends and sots Martin Hoare and Katy McAulay, and the event was most notable for heavy snow before, during and after the ceremony. The photographs show the just-married pair standing in a foot-deep drift with more and yet more snow streaking down like cosmic confetti: one regrets to admit that in later photos of the series, a purported best man can be seen thrusting snowballs with delicate dexterity into the bridegroom's ear. (I don't know what came over me, your honour.) As is usual at the first fall of a snowflake, the entire British transport system was paralysed and only about a dozen of thirty-odd guests could get to Reading that day; Martin failed to look as regretful as he might have, perhaps because of the effect this low attendance had on the (already lavish) allotment of champagne per head. With this and a slightly better-attended party the next day, recovery wasn't complete until Christmas, when the weather was worse than ever. Imagine the horror of it, being trapped in Reading with Hazel, Martin and Katy, our only resources being tons of food, hundreds of gallons of booze and a nearby pub serving the best beer in fifty miles. I don't know how we survived... Onward, to drunken mumblings about FLAP mailing 13 (Dec 81):—

*get me  
use to  
Dunkles*  
**Dumbia/Carkett:** One of my favourite silly purchases when I did visit the USA was an Olde Englysshe typeball, though it's damn difficult finding an opportunity to use it. But I don't mind your picking on the English, Roy. I don't understand them myself—I married one, yes, but I wouldn't want my sister to marry one since I haven't a sister. As a Welsh fan I can take an unbiased view (except of people who have the temerity to call me English, mutter, mutter, snarl).

**SomeThymeOrOther/Stopa:** Utterly avoiding the subject of your zine, Joni, I still have this burning question for you (I think I've seen it raised elsewhere in FLAP but can't remember where). Last year you and Jon sent along a staggeringly huge TAFF donation raised at your 4th of July party, with the amount broken down to give the incomes from things called the Atari Troll and Pun Troll and Poker Troll: did you ever get my letter asking what on earth these things were? I used to think I knew what a troll was until then. All my imagination could come up with was this vision of fans hideously garbed as loathsome trolls, threatening their victims with fearful puns, pokers or video games until paid huge sums to go away. It wasn't like this in Tolkien, or Isaak Walton.

**ViewFromUnderASixtyWattLamp/Locke:** So this is where I saw someone else baffled about Trolls. Isn't that wonderful—my second appearance in FLAP and already I'm insinuating (see above) that Co-Boss Locke writes rotten lousy unmemorable fanzines. Any more of this and people will be getting together in a friendly way to set me on fire and not piss on me, or piss on me but not set me on fire, or whatever the suggested endearment for Our Joseph was...

**TheHighAestheticLine23/Hulan:** Ah, someone else who likes early Michael Innes while having misgivings about the later stuff (or at least only a 'mild liking' of the later books)—or so I interpret the comments on *What Happened at Hazelwood*. The first dozen Innes detective stories are by far the best of the forty-odd, I think, full of outrageous and bizarre ideas which were diluted to merely unlikely

ones in Appleby's later life. Favourites include the 4th, 8th and 10th books (as well as *Hazelwood*, the 12th): *Stop Press*—issued in the USA as *The Spider Strikes*, probably a blow to sales—*The Daffodil Affair* and *Appleby's End*. All three are lunatic in the extreme; and *Appleby's End*, perhaps the funniest and silliest of them all, features Appleby's resolve to marry the eccentric Judith Raven (after certain discreditable adventures in a floating cab and subsequently a haystack) and to leave the police force. Marriage, it seems, was intended to be the Reichenbach Falls for Appleby. Like Holmes, though, he was brought back; and as they said of Holmes, he was never the same man afterwards. The books following *Appleby's End* are *From London Far* (with no official detective at all), *Hazelwood* (with the egregious Inspector Cadover), *A Night of Errors* (where, an ominous sign, a retired and now much older Appleby is asked to assist the police), *The Journeying Boy* (Cadover again), and *A Private View*—with Appleby back in Scotland Yard as Assistant Commissioner. Despite his later knighthood and even later retirement, Appleby features in most subsequent Innes books, most of them mildly likeable but no more. Beware, or I may print a complete bibliography!

*Caution Road/Idfriculating/Helgesen*: 'Inventing bizarre drinks was something of a popular pastime...' Have you ever played Jacks, a game which evil Kevin Smith keeps suggesting in the small hours of conventions? The rules are simplicity itself. A small number of players sit round a table and a well-shuffled pack of cards dealt round, face up. When the first jack is dealt, there is a pause, and the person who got it must name a drink. The unwritten rules demands that this be fairly revolting: Guinness and Pernod is a popular choice. The deal continues, and the recipient of the second jack must go to the bar and buy the chosen drink. When ready, the concoction is duly admired ('Mark how the purple bubbles froth upon/The evil surface of its nether slime!'—Max Beerbohm, 'Savonarola Brown'), the deal continues, and the duty of the next jack-getter is to *taste* the drink. Finally... you guessed it. He or she who gets the final jack must drink the drink, every last drop of it. After an understandable pause, the cards are reshuffled and the game resumes. Try it sometime.

*Kenning/Causgrove*: Oxfam America? If it's got any connexion with Oxfam over here, it certainly isn't a religious organization. Hazel wouldn't donate to it if it were religious, she having strong views in that area. Probably it's the best-known organized charity in Britain, and particularly quick off the mark in setting up emergency aid to places hit by disasters (famine, earthquake, epidemic, ~~That that/Reagan~~, and so on). Perhaps they cleaned up Boston after Noreascon?

*Meaningful Relationships/Bowers*: I too find the business of apa-as-conversation difficult to sustain. A mailing arrives, is read with pleasure, and is filed: there's never time until later to write comments, and one has to work desperately through the mailing again in search of something to talk about. Well, that's all OK, that's just Langfordian sloth and the Human Condition. What really drives me up the wall is digging out ancient mailings again and again in frantic search of a context for stuff like 're your ct Joe, I agree with Ann's reaction to Fred's ct Esmeralda'—all right, all right, I exaggerate. But top applause goes to the wonderful folk who make a special effort to have their comments meaningful even alone—I've tried this myself, as best I can. / Hey, Bill, why is it that your short item seems one of the longest in the mailing? Is it...because of...your... idiosyncrasies of...punctuation: the ones which...make...the eye...have to slow down...every so often...in deference...to what appear to be...pauses...? Do you...speak...like this too...or does it only happen when...you write...?

*That was Cloud Chamber 11, to be followed anachronously by Cloud Chamber 10 →*



Boston Tea Party -  
Yah, Emma & Dunklebauges  
did it.

solve cubes in times like 20 seconds, I took a certain pride in doing several at last year's Eastercon while nine-tenths paralytic. I'm ready to take on those whizkids on equal terms—half a bottle of scotch before the contest. Hazel, meanwhile, loathes Rubik's gadget and prefers her own 'organic cube', a seamless two-toned gourd presented to her by Ian Watson (mainly, I fear, as a gesture of mockery because her gourd plants didn't flower and his did). "You can never get it scrambled," she correctly points out... Cognate/Hickey: Gosh, I'd never thought of running technical papers through an apa. My college ones are a bit dusty now, but five years at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment have left their mark—not to mention a faint blue glow—and in no time at all I should be able to unearth and xerox my celebrated 'A Preliminary Comparison of Diffusion- and Transport-Based Computer Codes for Evaluation of X-ray Energy Deposition in Selected Materials'... a title which is a byword among document shredding operatives throughout AWRE. (Alas, I resigned last year to try full-time writing, so I can't now do a Glicksohn and enclose tasteful pieces of plutonium as souvenirs in my fanzines.) Gypsy2/Scrivner: Hi there Joyce! There's something I like about this fanzine. Can't put my finger on it... could it be the fact that my name gets dropped 21 times (and only once or twice in anything nasty)? Best line is '...the great problems of British fandom. (These number among them Leroy Kettle, Robert Holdstock, Sheila Holdstock, David Pringle, Kevin Smith, Dai Price, Mike Dickinson, Chris Atkinson...)' How right you are, Joyce. As for the 'only British peer who writes SF', that must have been Lord St Davids—Jestyn Reginald Austen Plantaganet Philipps, Baron Strange of Knokin, Baron Hungerford, Baron de Moleyns and Viscount St Davids, Bart. Nice fellow, though all too inclined to tell you What He Did In The War at interminable length. But he isn't the only member of our grotty peerage to aspire after greater things by writing sf: Lord Weymouth, a thoroughgoing loony whose major achievement to date has been the defacement of walls in Longleat House (the family seat) with appalling murals, has published something called *The King Is Dead* (as Alexander Thynn). I know this all too well because I had to review the godawful thing. Sample—the evolved human race is speaking: 'To describe us in terms that might be reminiscent of your own times, I suppose you might liken us to huge steaming lumps of purple jelly, anchored to metallic plates which are embedded within rubberised constructions of great architectural beauty... And we emit a soft, musical blurping sound for the purposes of communication.' Oh, the man has a way with words. 'An acute connoisseur of the distinction between which side his bread was buttered.' Onward—quickly! Horizons/Warner: Full marks for the Dickens essay—I've come across a lot of writing on Dickens and found most of it unmemorable (with the exceptions of Auden's pieces and Chesterton's book *Charles Dickens*), but I enjoyed this ramble no end. Personal favourite one-liner: Mr Mantalini in *Nickolas Nickleby* ingratiating himself with his wife—'There is the graceful outline of her form; it cannot be mistaken—there is nothing like it. The two countesses had no outlines at all, and the dowager's was a demd outline.' (All right, so that's two lines.) But I don't agree that to have Pecksniff saying 'the offensive and the defensive' is to make a parade of his ignorance. It's not at all unnatural for oratorically-minded people to stress the contrast between similar words in this way surely?—no matter how they pronounce them separately. Pecksniff is not so much ignorant as infatuated with the sound of his own voice... The Devil's Work/Metcalf: Chesterton again, a favourite author of mine. But I'm not sure that GKC can really be said to have written 'examples of Roman Catholicism in sf'. Even the Father Brown stories, with a priest for a hero, are never narrowly sectarian (see Kingsley Amis's essay 'Unreal Policemen'), and this applies even more to

his fantastic novels. The most 'religious' of them all is *The Ball and the Cross*, and even there both the believer and the atheist are treated with approximately equal sympathy for having the courage to hold and express strong views: the boot goes into the succession of people who want these two main characters to stop fighting (on the grounds that no mere faith is worth fighting over) or to continue fighting for the wrong reasons (eg. as a spectator sport for aesthetes who like blood). Incidentally, chunks of C.S.Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*—to my mind an inferior novel—seem to have been lifted from *The Ball and the Cross* with the serial numbers only imperfectly filed off. Still more incidentally, I myself incline to agnosticism—my liking for GKC has nothing to do with vested interests... Synapse/Speer: Why do people do it? Why, when I've just choked off (with difficulty) my flow of babble about GKC, must people ask questions about his 'invisibility' story? Anyway, the one in question is one of the Father Brown pieces: 'The Invisible Man'. And the murderer, of course, is not truly invisible, just psychologically so—nobody ever notices a uniformed postman, says Chesterton. Obviously versions of 'psychological' invisibility are far more practical than any attempt at the real thing, and in this sense the sort of invisibility-by-consensus of Chesterton's story (or of the throwaway line in Borges' 'The Lottery in Babylon' which, I read somewhere, inspired Silverberg's memorable 'To See The Invisible Man') is more plausible than the H.G.Wells version. By the way, I've noticed that a lot of people come out with that line about 'an invisible man would be blind' with the implication that Wells was too stupid to think of this. Not so: he fudged his way past this difficulty with talk of the retinal pigments still being visible ('faint as mist') and thus operational. Fair enough—any further attention to realism and bang goes the story. OK. End of lecture. Students should consider the following questions before our next session: (a) Isn't it odd that the version of invisibility closest to the 'genuine' method (invisibility via posthypnotic suggestion that such-and-such an object is not to be seen) comes not from sf but fantasy, in Randall Garrett's Darcy stories? (But see also Niven's *A Gift from Earth*.) (b) Who do you think has recently written a long boring chapter on invisibility for a forthcoming Peter Nicholls epic?

*After Line 35 On The Stencil—What?* I think some people from AWRE have been talking to local newspaper reporters again. A few years ago one of them chatted to a reporter in a pub and informed him that he (the AWRE scientist) had suffered severe neutron contamination, and only by drinking twelve pints of beer every day could he flush the neutron-activated poisons out of his system. The reporter duly printed this and there was a terrible uproar—especially from workers in the active areas who wanted to know why they weren't getting their life-saving twelve daily pints, all expenses paid by the Ministry of Defence. AWRE had to dust off their Press Officer (a functionary whose normal duties can be covered by a recording of "I'm afraid I can make no statement on this subject without clearance.") and issue denials in all directions. Now the local paper has struck again, in the gardening column of all places. *'Looking on the bright side, snow does bring some benefits to the garden. As it melts it undergoes a molecular transformation which produces deuterium oxide, better known as heavy water. This has a very stimulating effect on plant life...'* Even now I am preparing a snappy article for this same paper, about compost heaps and how they are liable to breed quantities of plutonium should their temperature be allowed to get too high. The best use for this unwanted plutonium, I shall say, is for discouraging slugs...

*this has been Langford fanzine number 73—is this a record? :: 19 Jan 82 ::*



CLOUD

CHAMBER

TEN

something for FAPA 178 (?) from Dave  
Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue,  
Reading, Berkshire, RG2 7PW, UK.

18 Jan 1982: Serendipity, I call it. Last week a colossal shipment of paper and unclotted corflu arrived to block up the porch; last night the final word of a Deadline Job was typed, whited out, retyped, rewhited and stuffed with a curse into an author-proof envelope; this morning the 177th FAPA mailing arrived to save me from looming idleness. Mere minutes ago my workroom's trusty piling system (normally a good imitation of what the computer people call Write Only Memory) hiccupped and threw out a copy of *Fantasy Amateur 177* received long ago. Deadline in hand, I had no excuse left...

The great retreat from mankind, which ended yesterday, had its roots well back in 1981. Have you ever heard of *The Omni Book of the Future*? This slightly repellent publication was (and to some extent still is) cunningly planned to recycle mounds of old *Omni* articles and fiction in the guise of a dynamic new weekly part-work which gradually built up into a colossal work of reference suitable for the amusement and instruction of your descendants even unto the fourth generation. That sort of thing. Eaglemoss Ltd, the firm actually proposing to produce and sell *BotF*, were widely experienced in the subjects of their partworks such as *The Living Countryside* and *You and Your Camera*, but not so hot when it came to esoteric subjects like fiction, or science. This was where I came in.

My exciting task as 'consultant' was to read all the fiction ever published by *Omni*, indicate which of the authors were Big Names, and give a black mark to any story by a Big Name which was felt to be too difficult or American for the planned audience. "You must bear in mind that we're aiming at social classes C1 and C2," they told me. "None of your intelligentsia. I see our average reader as, er, a plumber."

"I knew a plumber who liked all of Olaf Stapledon," I said cheerfully.

"Who's Olaf Stapledon?" they said.

I went away, read all the *Omni* fiction, and spent several weeks recovering. After my release from the intensive care unit, I took Eaglemoss a postage stamp on which were written the names of the stories I'd really really liked.

"But you haven't listed the Asimov story," they said.

"No, it's not particularly good Asimov," I understated.

"Yes, but we can't leave out the *Asimov* story, we need that for the first issue..."

Presently I found I was receding into the background as far as *BotF* was concerned. The former editor of *You and Your Camera* (which had conveniently folded) was put in charge—a man with long experience of bashing the prose of amateur cameramen into publishable shape. This sort of thing gets to be a habit, and one day I dropped in to say Hello and noticed the carcass of one of my recommended stories on a desk. It was Bob Silverberg's 'Our Lady of the Sauropods', and all over it were scribbles like *cut this bit by about a third and dialogue needs to be tightened up a lot here* (I suppose there wasn't a lot of dialogue in *You and Your Camera*, actually) and *can we cut all this philosophical stuff?* With great tact I and the other fleeting 'sf consultant' managed to point out that this sort of thing was Not Done, Old Chap, not to published stories.

Rather to everyone's surprise, the trial issue of *BotF* appeared at Novacon 11 (Birmingham, Nov 81). It was like a thin *Omni* without the ads—denying you that heady sense of adventure which comes on reading the real *Omni*, where every time you get hold of a story it vanishes like a lizard shedding its tail, dashing off into a thicket of ads for hideous and expensive objects. Ch, the hours I've

spent struggling through *Omni* like a white hunter in search of the mythical graveyard of the continuations... but I digress. The first *BotF* mysteriously listed me as a contributing editor, but there my connexion with it ended. Famous Peter 'Encyclopaedia' Nicholls wormed his way onto the staff as deputy editor, and five issues have appeared by way of testing for a national launch which may never happen. The happy side-effect was that Peter found himself unable to promote the cause of literature at Eaglemoss and also finish his new book *The Science in Science Fiction*, to be delivered by January '82 on pain of penalty clauses drafted by a lineal descendant of the Marquis de Sade. Thus it became 'our' book rather than Peter's, and thus dynamic hacks Brian Stableford and Yrs Truly have been toiling away at 30,000 word chunks of mingled technocracy and sf references. Until yesterday.

The most exciting part of my bit was trying to cite *Lucifer's Hammer* as an ever so well worked-out meteor disaster story. Unfortunately I hit a snag on page 96 of my edition, the bit where scientists are tossing off-the-cuff calculations back and forth faster than the average scientist of my acquaintance could locate the calculator's on/off switch. Why do I in my ignorant darkness work out that the  $2.7 \times 10^{28}$  erg impact energy mentioned would boil a bit over 1000 cubic kilometres of sea, while the book says *sixty million cubic kilometres?* (Spelt out, like that, in words, twice.) Jerry Pournelle has more PhDs than me, so the authors must be right. Please, someone, tell me what I'm doing wrong.

But this is ridiculous. I mainly wanted to write mailing comments...

*Mailing Comments:* I didn't loathe and despise anything on which I fail to comment below (though I could make an exception for my old pal Keith Walker). Just nothing to say. *OutOfTheDeadForest/Fyri* [This fanzine uses spelling reform O. Whenever I find that short neutral vowel spelt as 'e' when this makes no etymological sense, I change it back to English.]: English is compulsory in Scandinavian schools? Well, French is or was compulsory in British ones, but the teaching is so appalling that the course has no effect on 99% of us. The educational system made a special effort for deaf Langford, and just before I started learning French they installed an electronic 'language laboratory'. My notion of hell still includes listening to hours of inaudible and incomprehensible French phrases through headphones. As it turned out, even the pupils who took to this mode of teaching did badly in the subsequent national examinations. Nobody had told the examiners that mine was now a school devoted to conversational French, and they crassly set their usual written paper (which counted for 95% of the actual marks). *FantasyCommentator/Searles-Moskowitz*: this is an impressive piece of work all right. I suppose we all have nits to pick in the *Encyclopaedia of SF*—I notice myself that Gerald Kersh's *Night and the City* is given as *Time and the City* on p.329—but the person most interested in them would be P.Nicholls himself, and I hope someone has sent him the list given here? (Address: 23 Laurier Rd, London, NW.5, UK.) *PhilosophicalGas/Bangsund*: Has Rubik's cube been cited in a divorce case? Yes indeed. I quote from the newsletter of British cube guru David Singmaster: 'Rainer Seitz told me of a Cube-caused divorce case last March. He has sent me the report from *Bild Zeitung*, dated Bottrop, Ruhr region, 27 Feb 81. A 21 year old salesgirl was complaining that her husband no longer spoke to her, fled from visitors, never watched TV and no longer did anything in bed. Seitz volunteered to act as marriage counsellor by teaching him how to do the Cube, but nothing came of it. Seitz also reported that a woman with a large black eye came to a demonstration. Her husband had got two faces correct and she had disturbed it while he was at work. She had been given two days to get it right again!' Personally, though unable to cope with these revolting children who