

SO SAAARI

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PUBLISHED in time (I hope) for each FAPA mailing, by O. E. Saari, YMCA, Flint, Mich.

APOLOGIES & EXCUSES DEPARTMENT

The good composition rule book says never to begin with excuses and least of all with apologies, but my failure to have even a "how are you" in the two big FAPA mailings since I joined needs my acknowledgment at least. So you may think of the title of this pub as a sort of apology.

Also the foregoing paragraph may be considered as an apology for the title. With which little merygoround I now launch muself upon the stormy seas of controversy.

Chauvenet calls me "the new member with a reputation", but I think he's got a pretty good memory. For the benefit of the FAPA'ers who never heard of the guy, here's a little autobiog....Birthdate-place: 1918, Helsinki, Finland, in the midst of a civil war. Immigrant lad at the age of 10 with an English vocabulary consisting of two words, "yes" and "no", which served to answer every question. (The next word I learned was a 4-letter Anglo-Saxon one which the boys of Brookly used a great deal.) Started school in Brooklyn in the first grade and managed to climb to fourth in the first year, still flunking everything. No sooner had I learned to read English, after a fashion, than I discovered science-fiction in the form of an AIR WONDER STORIES in a Rochester, Minn., cigar store window. The cover did it, showed a huge, cigar-shaped airship splitting in two lengthwise and hundreds of people tumbling from the shorn vitals like flies. Took a while before I could get my older brother to buy one; after that I got them if I had to beg, borrow or steal. No fan needs to be told how that is; it's like an addiction to a drug....Minneapolis and the SFL -- first contact with fans, after six years of reading and re-reading every issue of s-f I could lay hands on. Still maintain the old Minneapolis Fantasy Society (originally SFL) was the finest bunch of fans ever assembled anywhere, but then, I'm prejudiced. Met Morrie Dollens, then publisher of SCIENCE FICTION COLLECTOR. Met Don Wandrei and Carl Jacobi. Got interested in writing; sold three stories to Tremaine's ASTOUNDING while a senior in H.S., then inertia took hold. Was graduated from H.S. in '37; went one year to trade school to learn to be a toolmaker. No jobs, so joined the CCC. Decided I could work my way thru college after all, so entered U. of Minn. in '39. Graduated June, 1943, with a B.M.E. degree, and have since eked out a precarious "2-B" existence at Buick Motor Division of General Motors.

LIKES: science fiction, math, and 3 or 4 women. NON-LIKES: Amazing Stories, and highly virtuous, religious, or moral people.

That ought to be enough of such stuff, and it'll not be repeated, I promise. The following comments on the Spring mailing will probably give you fiendish psychologists a better look into my character than any self-conscious autobiography.

COMMENTS ON THE SPRING MAILING

Anyone can see I must be new at this game, trying to make complete reviews. God! what a job. The mailing as a whole was interesting reading and I think -- even as I thought back in the old days when I used to read Johnnie Chapman's FAPA

mailings regularly -- that the club is the best thing s-f fans ever attempted.

PHANTAGRAPH: "Scrapbook" good -- more!

THE FAPA FAN #13; No comment.

QUESTO (Vol.3 No.4): A bit diminutive, and half of it in Esperanto.

MATTERS OF OPINION #16: "Temponautics" contains 2 more letters than "time travel" and is harder to say. There are rudiments of sense in Speer's classification, but his talk of "three dimensional time" sound like a little "sleight-of-mind". He takes the familiar symbols of cartesian coordinates and involves them in a hodge-podge without regard to their accustomed meaning or purpose. The 3-axis system of coordinates is much used in mathematics because it is an obvious means of locating an infinite number of points in space, and because it can be used to represent loci of 3 variables. "Variables" are symbols in an equation; plotting an equation of two variables with a two-dimensional system of coordinates is a great help in studying its properties; plotting three variables in a 3-dimensional system doesn't help much unless it's a space or volume problem; and plotting more than three variables obviously can't be done, since we can't visualise more than 3 dimensions. Speer's "system" doesn't deal with functions of variables, with loci, nor with points in space, so why go through the mental gymnastics of constructing 3-dimensional figures. Besides, I think there are other bases of classification which are equally important as his "duration", "subjunctivity" and "legality", and just as general -- "scope" for one (local, planetary, Solar, intra-galactic, or extra-galactic.) There must be others.

SUSTAINING PROGRAM (Spring 1944): Breezy and frank enough. Good reading, even that thing about law.

STATEMENT FROM FUTURIANS: Degler and the Cosmic Circle again. I've found an easy way to dispose of the CC stuff and the maids don't complain. Lay it to Ashley propaganda, if you will, but I can't see Degler as anything but a crackpot, and what good does it do to say a crackpot is sincere?....You could have reprinted the Palmer letter.

AMBITE OF INVIT (Spring 1944): Well, well, my old Editor! With all due awe and respect I scanned this pub very thoroughly, but couldn't find anything that went against the grain, tho LBM's "Reflections from Troubled Waters" smacked of the soapbox....What else can you say about a musical piece, boys, save that "I do" or "I don't" like it? Any argument like this is bound to follow the political argument pattern, either ending in stony silence or the participants shooting each other. Not that I didn't enjoy reading about it!...."We Gotta Hang Somebody" -- only a moron could like this, and I guess that proves I'm a moron. I've had a taste for this low humor ever since we used to sit at SFL meetings and laugh our bellies sick over similar stuff written by Chapman, Blakely, Benson, and others....Some day I'll print Johnnie Chapman's "Tom Swift and His Doeseverythingakabob" in a FAPA mag.

BLITHERINGS #1: "Rocket Port" by Gardner is a gem; the noise angle I have never before seen mentioned, and it never occurred to me that rockets would be so noisy. And they most certainly would be....I don't like your abbreviated spelling. Other fans have come out with outlandish spellings, trying to sound futuristic or purporting to simplify the English language, but few adopt logical systems of deletion. As one who had to learn it pretty fast, I'll admit the written English language is a mess, and correct spelling is a joke save that it's the only way of attaining uniformity. But abbreviation won't solve its fundamental difficulty --

the fact that the "sound" of a letter in a word follows no logical rules, and correct spelling has to be drummed into our school kids when they could be learning better things. (In Finland, as in many other countries, spelling is not taught in schools. I finished two grades back in the old country, but still find no trouble in spelling Finnish.) English may be and will be improved by eliminating a lot of the useless letters out of words, but indiscriminate amputation of words by individuals simplifies nothing.....I'm just taking this opportunity to air a pet peeve. Enjoyed Blitherings a lot and wish I could have read it without being annoyed by the abbrvms.....Incidentally, ever try writing English using the phonetic spelling, the one which occurs in parenthesis in Dictionaries to aid in pronunciation? The results look very futuristic.

PHANNY: I never thought one fan could bat out ten pages entirely on his own and have every word make sense, but here it is! As far as I'm concerned, this was the best one-man job in the whole mailing.

HORIZONS #18: I've been doing a little rereading of the old "golden age" issues myself, and would advise you to try it anyway, Harry, even if you fear disillusionment. You'd find a lot of the old classics still seem pretty good to you. Try Breuer's "Paradise and Iron", Wallace West's "The Phantom Dictator", Binder's "Robot Aliens", Campbell's "Invaders from the Infinite", Harris' "The Man from Beyond", Hilliard's "Star Death" stories, Francis Flagg's "Cities of Ardathia" -- I could list many others that didn't disappoint me in the least when I read them recently, and my opinion of them in the old days was supercolossal. The only disappointment is the realization that few of these stories could find their way into the modern science fiction magazines. Don't reread any of Fearn's stuff if you liked it in the first place; leave well-enough alone. "Mathematica" gagged me and once I thought it was a pretty good story.....Hooray for the kick against Foreign words users, and very sensibly put, too....."Decade" -- well, somebody's talking about science fiction at last! This reads somewhat like an essay of mine I was going to publish for this FAPA mailing, entitled "The Tremaine Era", which turned out to be just another of those nostalgic things better left unseen. I hope Harry isn't right when he says ASTOUNDING may not be with us much longer, but one who's lived -- and just barely -- through most of the vacillations of the s-f fortunes can't be too sure of the permanence of anything. I remember well when the Clayton ASTOUNDING died a lingering death and when the old Gernsback WONDER wheezed its last; things like that leave scars. If ASTOUNDING PASSES I'll commit harakiri in the blazing ruins of my s-f collection.

FANTASICONGLOMERATION: Cover, a classic. I shall frame it and put it on the wall but am afraid it'll frighten the maids.

XENON #1: Nifty getup for a newcomer -- much better than the mess I'm afraid this is going to be. Contents were a little meager, but I know how he feels.

FLEETING MOMENTS: Poetry usually leaves me flat, but no objections, as others like it and will no doubt judge its merits.

LIGHT (Spring 1944): Worry no more about the Ashley atrocity, Les -- Al wouldn't turn a poor sick dog from his door. I was at that "Michiconference" (which it really wasn't, you see) and know that no fan present could accuse Al of lacking generosity and hospitality. I think Degler must have seen the piles of furniture to be moved and figured it was time for the Cosmic Circle to roam.

YHGS: An attractive magazine, with straight margins 'n everything. Commentary on the systems of human thought was very interesting. I would put mathematics at the head of the list instead of in second place, for these reasons: rigor is the

keynote of all the systems, and mathematicians are the first and foremost apostles of rigor. Scientists are never happier than when supplied with mathematical proof for their hypotheses. Logicians look with envy on the wonderful results obtainable by mathematical methods, and use them to a great extent, though the vast generality of subjects makes rigor something to be aimed at rather than attained. (My main objection to formal logic is that students come from college logic courses full of smooth, plump, round words, steeped in symbols and fancy classifications, and unable to apply one iota of it to their other studies.) Semantics, the science of meanings, has left me pretty well alone, but it sounds like a good thing. Maybe some day two people in heated argument can stick to the same subject for a few minutes. Creative imagination is an elusive thing, and I've never heard it referred to as a system of thought, which I suppose it is. In the scientific field it would be the ability to see the true significance of observed data, to step beyond the tried and true paths and push the frontier just a little farther ahead, or to come along, like a miniature Newton, to telescope some confusing conglomeration of happenings into a beautiful little principle -- and the best man for this kind of work is one who has the mathematical method so firmly ingrained in his mind that his brain automatically rejects the multitudes of faulty ideas that somehow come with each good one....And mathematical method, like any lofty structure, depends simply on a solid foundation; from the oldest mathematical system, the system of positive integers, to groups, transformations, fields, rings and doo-hickies, the first thing done is to define the domain, state the rules, and prove the theorems....And so on. Lately almost anything I write sooner or later becomes an essay on mathematics....The rest of YHOS was very readable. Seems to me I remember Art Widner's name from 'way back in the Clayton ASTOUNDING'S "Reader's Corner" but may be mistaken.

BROWSING: Glad to see that some of the boys in England still keep going. How do they do it?

SARDONYX: "Fapafile" is one of the best items in the whole mailing. Chauvenet is a fluent writer.

WALT'S WRAMBLINGS: First read this on the train from Battle Creek...Walt's a lovable cuss, on paper and in person, and I know HE'LL take that two ways.

A TALE OF THE EVANS: "Hunches" -- no wonder Evans likes to play Blackjack. Might add that a similar "hunch" sense works for me in poker (the Battle Creek Boys must know about that by know, huh hyuh hyuh). Cliff Simak had some interesting ideas on hunches when he was discussing a story of his with the MPS -- don't know if these ideas were so apparent in the story, published in ASF...The Ol' Foo surprises me by being almost precise in his account of the Evans, Ashley, Saari argument on whether or not there is such a thing as imagination. That isn't cricket in reporting on an argument, y'know; you're supposed to distort facts a little to favor your way. It was a swell argument, really -- somehow we differed on whether or not "imagination" created something entirely new, or was always just a new interpretation deduced from old experience. The examples of imagination which were pointed out seemed to me to be simply logical deduction from obvious or observable facts -- Evans' winged horse, for instance. He said that no man had (probably) ever seen a winged horse, therefore the concept of a winged horse is entirely new. But look at it this way: I. A horse is an animal. II. It is possible for animals to fly, viz the bird and the bat. III. Therefore, barring other evidence to the contrary, it is possible for the horse to fly. The possibility immediately suggests the fact. Every case of imagination I can think of off hand -- science-fictional or otherwise -- is an extrapolation of this sort. Now, the fellow who first thought up that syllogistic pattern of argument really cooked up something; maybe he had imagination. But it's a rarer

quality by far than is commonly supposed. The fellow who wrote the story "Fifty Million Monkeys" in a recent ASTOUNDING had a good line on this subject with his "randomness" theories; maybe our brains are simply "randomness machines" which shuffle and reshuffle old ideas in order to get new combinations.

IN GARDE: Cover 'legant. Al's account of the Ashley Atrocity appears ample -- down with Degler!....Very readable mimeo job, apparently haste doesn't make waste.

MILTY'S MAG: A math fiend at last! Why didn't you dwell at greater length on tensors? I have a vague idea of what they are, but have never risen far enough up the tower of mathematical analysis to tackle anything as new as that. They don't teach Mechanical Engineers a helluva lot of math anyway -- I had quite a struggle to get in as much as I did of differential equations and advanced calculus. So discouraging to be batting your brains out on something they developed before the American revolution.....Any FAPA member who has any pet geometries or trick problems is hereby notified of an enthusiastic audience of at least one -- me.

FAN-DANGO: I had a heck of a time trying to find out who put this out....This talk of fandom's maladjustments has some basis in fact. But don't you find smug, properly adjusted extroverts almost intolerable at times? Usually their idea of what is fine in life is to get 'ahead" by putting on a good front and getting to know a maximum number of big shots -- correct, of course, but repulsive just the same. Give me a good introvert anytime.

FAN-TODS: "Yesterday's 10,000 years" could have stood a couple pages more.... this was another well-written well-mimeo'd mag in which I can't find much to argue about.

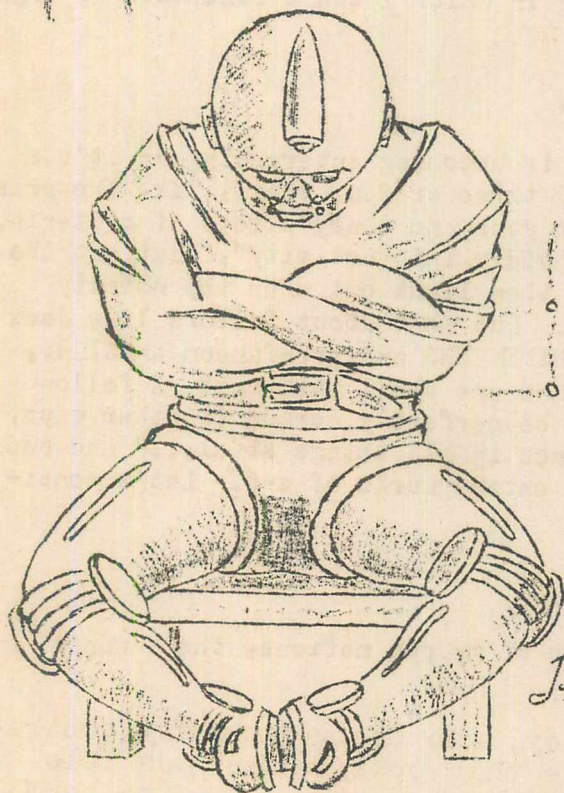
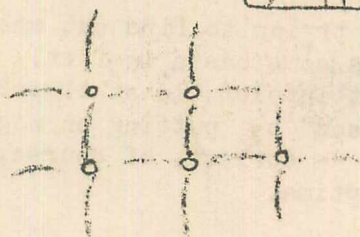
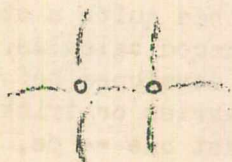
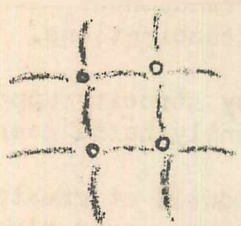
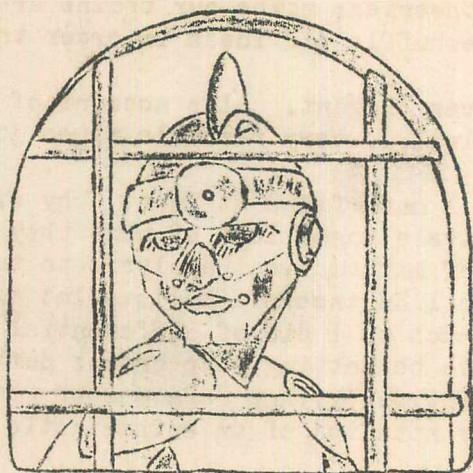
BEYOND: Nice mag, a little too poetic for me.

NUCLEUS: This talk of what constitutes a fan is becoming interesting -- it's a subject which seems to come up violently every three or four years, like the grass-hoppers. I think there are exceptions to both your and Laney's sets of criteria. True, some become "fans" overnight and "rush avidly into activity", blat out the essence of themselves in volumes of fanzines, then light out when the novelty passes or the controversies become too severe. But what about fellows like Jack Wiedenbeck and Al Ashley, who suckled on EXPERIMENTERS and pre-fandom AMAZINGS, who stuck through all the fat and lean years and are still sticking? A fellow with the true science fiction temperament can be perfectly normal in other ways, and doesn't always "begin with a wild exuberance in all things sfal..." and end with "a greater or lesser indifference to the entire world of s-f." Let's consider 15 or 20 years the acid test, eh?

SAPPHO: Beautiful cover.

Since I've used these reviews to air some of my pet notions, there won't be any "full length articles" in this issue.

A PLUG FOR OUR SPONSOR: Al "184" Ashley, who has generously contributed mimeographing facilities to make this publication possible (don't tell me about him; he's really a good guy) -- to be Vice President of FAPA. C'mon, fellas; he'll take it out on his cringing subjects at Slanshack if he doesn't win.....My gratitude to Jack Wiedenbeck for the cartoon on the back cover; otherwise I'd have had to quit that poker game and write something.



J.W.

"Poor old AA-194! His master came home drunk the other night and told him to 'go square a circle!'"