

MELIKAPHKHAZ #59 another roadmarker from Lon Atkins, 9942 Voyager Circle, Huntington Beach, CA 92646. July, 1977.

A curious conundrum I have. Much to write about, but little of interest to SFPA. Who here cares about the battles of software reorganization or the esoterica of a graduate business degree? Yet those two topics have dominated my waking hours for the past two months.

I owe SFPA three pages. It seems that Gary chooses not to count Wilderness, although those issues had circulated only to contributors (i.e., players). With this paragraph I'm asking for a reevaluation on Gary's part. Although to be safe, I will do my loyal activity this mailing. (What say, Gary?)

Speaking of reevaluation, I'm changing my position on the latest Buffett album. I like it. My mood must have been bad when I wrote that pan. The album is playing even now, and it passes with flying colors. I still feel it lacks the intensity of earlier work, but it fits well with the laid-back feeling of weekends.

Just got Joan Baez's "Diamonds and Rust" album, mainly for the first two cuts. Most of the others are routine for Baez. Good. The first two, her own title cut and Jackson Browne's "Fountain of Sorrow" are heavy numbers. I must have played them two dozen times in the past week.

Music is one of my constant vices. Like water, it fills up the low places and buoys up what will float. Rythmn threads around my bones and animates me. Melody cushions. Lyrics I choose with my mood or against it.

Well, 'nuff intro. I don't really have the right motivation to do mailing comments this round. Perhaps some new Atkins faan fiction will suffice instead.

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THE ULTIMATE MULTIAPAN

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Some years ago, when I was fully committed in the holy crusade of apa membership, I took on the challenge of becoming an omniapan. Some say that only a neo, a political wheelhorse, or a fool would undertake such a task. I wasn't a neo -- nor a politico -- so the last term must have applied to me. In retrospect, I must plead nolo contendere. I was single, employed in a clerical job that left me free access to a typer and the classical fanzine reproducing media, including ditto and xerox. Frankly, a couple of setbacks in other life-areas had left me with a thirst for achievement of some sort. This madness was merely on hand.

Now it should be understood that "madness" truly described my predicament. After my first bravado charge onto the wait lists of all known apas for which I qualified, I began a systematic investigation of the whereabouts of those secret apas, usually short-lived, that infest fandom. I undertook to qualify myself, albeit fraudulently, for the "credential" apas that huddle behind paper walls against the barbarians in the mountain passes.

Establishing a dummy mailing address in East Overshoot, Texas, in order to qualify for SFPA (Southern Fandom Press Alliance) was a mere nothing compared to my painstaking forgery in fabricating an identity under which to enter PQQF (Publishing Order of Old Farts). At least I can admit that my membership in Apa H was ethical -- or, more properly, socially acceptable in the prevailing clime.

These labors occupied the best part of three years. None should be so foolish as to presume that there are only a few apas. They hide in the nooks and crannies of our beloved science fiction

fandom by Spock and Nader, by Lovecraft and Milne, by Christy, Stout and the MacDonalds all. By foods and wines, by gamesmen and anachronuts, by local clubs and conventions of every sort. By comic magazines and pornography. By Great Apes and Lesser Rock Groups. By drugs. By golley.

My unvarying rule when encountering these perversions of nature was to judge the apa as viable for my purposes based upon the ratio of its membership in the mainstream of fandom. My scale was the rigid and unbending ethical sense which I possess. I called them, so to speak, as I read them. (Those wishing more enlightenment on my position towards perverted apas are invited to study my article "Throw the Bastards Out", which appeared in a recent issue of AWRY.)

My penetration into these multifarious press organizations was slowing as I conquered the bulk of manifest targets. My attention began to focus more narrowly on the remaining apas. This was accompanied by a detailed study of the stratagems that would lubricate my entry. It is no understatement to say that I felt myself to be the foremost fannish authority alive.

During the intense period of my campaign it had been necessary to devote my full energies to this passion. My job was sacrificed in favor of the largess of the state. I even begrudged the time I spent in lines, awaiting remuneration for my labors. While the State of California might not be aware, I fully recognized the unique sociological contributions I was fashioning. If the study of subcultures is venerated in academia, I was due worship when emerging from this fannish submersion. A baptism of our time.

In order to gain access to the most closed of apas I was forced to light my name in neon. My prolific typer soon serviced the genzine herd with articles and letters of density unparalleled, both in number and content. I launched and vigorously pursued a genzine, newsletter, and personalzine of worth. (In some remorse at the deceit -- and elation at the cleverness -- I must admit that the art work which appeared under my name was in reality drawn by a nephew of astonishing talents. He is now gainfully employeed producing full-length adult cartoons and has requested that I withhold his name.)

After the genzine world had caved to me, I found it wise to enter the convention whirl and thus gingerly approach, usually in the bar, those older faans who no longer read fanzines and publish only to maintain a hold on some regressive apa populated only by such kind. I shall refrain from describing the more amusing or grotesque room parties to which I was invited during this period. This material is earmarked for my memoirs.

As I broadened my ken and pursued these public objectives, which would eventually lead to three Hugo's and a Worldcon Chair, I fastened onto the trail of my nemesis. This demon, this fiend in human form, is directly responsible for the massive stroke I suffered, at my young age!, which has so devastated my fannish output for the past eleven months.

As with many momentous chains of events, it began innocently. My studies, which had broadened to include my competitors, the multiapans, revealed traces of a precursor -- a true omniapan. This mysterious individual was E.H. Hinkle.

Surely you recognize the name. One of the elite of First Fandom. A man whose name has graced a LoC to every major genzine at one time or another. A member of the oldest, most established apas. A man reputed to belong to the cream of secret apas. The man who astounded fandom by refusing to leave his home in Bear Paw, Alaska, to be the Fan GoH at a Worldcon in the sixties. A legend in his time -- but an omniapan? No, you say. You read the rosters.

Well, I said "No" also in the beginning. I read the rosters carefully. More, I studied the stylistic structures of the major apans. This is what first attracted me to the theory that E.H. Hincle was a true SMOF. A man who from his remote retreat in the frigid north exerted more influence on the fanzine world than any person alive --- including myself!!

This conclusion was forced upon me as I delved into the personal styles of the Great Apans. My first connection came with the bright young Canadian neofan Jack Noveaux. This newcomer had taken membership in no less than seventeen apas within a two year span. I was determined to discover what threat he might represent when I by chance compared his Coherence Index to that of other major figures whom I'd surveyed. He was only .004 off of Hincle's mark.

This in itself aroused no great suspicion. Neofans often imitate the Elder Ghods. What drew my attention was the fact that no one had ever met Noveaux except Hincle. This was per an account in several of their zines. I was alerted to a possible hoax by Hincle. This could be a real threat.

I reacted with disgusting lack of caution and wrote Noveaux a letter which included a gentle hint that he might be Hincle. I suggested that if I were right, my keenness might qualify me at last for membership in that most holy of secret apas, " ". There was no doubt in my mind that membership in " " would cap my efforts and swiftly bring me to omniapan status, as other holdouts showed signs of cracking within the year.

To my surprise, I received a curt postcard from Noveaux, telling me that he was flattered, but that I was crazy in the head. As Hincle himself had always responded to my multi-page letters with a mere card, I felt that my acuteness had been confirmed and denied simultaneously. I was unhappy with Hincle's refusal to play my game fairly.

This challenge was not refused. I continued to track Noveaux, and noticed an immediate shift in his Coherence Index. Now I was certain that Hincle was engaged in a hoax. What others might already exist?

Soon I had isolated the prime candidates. Freddy Goss, WKF resident in rural Oregon. Ida Rampozarcowicz of the outre apas and Little Coyote Falls, Montana. Mike Michaels, minacker in the "regular" easy membership apas.

No one had met them except themselves, or Hincle. This criteria of human contact allowed me to eliminate some of the more far-fetched hoax candidates, such as Don Markstein, Alan Hutchinson and Guy Lillian. Concentrating on the prime three candidates, I performed analysis that identified Hincle as the hoaxster. There is little need to elaborate on the techniques, but during this period I immersed myself in studies, with some detriment to my fanac, and obtained degrees in statistics and psychology from UCLA. I rest on my conclusions.

Six years had then elapsed since I began my quest. Many apas had died and many new ones birthed. My pseudonyms maintained a complete span of membership, with one exception -- " ". I knew beyond doubt that E.H. Hincle was my key to that elite organization. It held the cream of skimmed cream of fandom. If my sources were to be believed, the greatest fan writers of all time spent restless hours refining their work for inclusion in the slim quarterly mailings. I had seen a copy, briefly, and was convinced that I must belong.

My quest, the omniapan state of being, was now transcended by a desire to join this incredible group. Consequently, I attacked the Hincle problem with redoubled energy. Hincle, bless him, had won the Egoboo Poll of " " for six years running. I knew that his enormous influence was sufficient for my entrance into Heaven.

As I accumulated my evidence of Hincle's hoaxes, I wrote letter after letter of flawless prose to Hincle. I courted his friendship with literary missives of such caliber as to have garnered a dozen Hugos. During that period he responded punctually with brief postcards of terse encouragement.

I was hurt by his failure to respond at length, but my growing awareness of the scope of his fannish operations gave me respect for his energies. Locked in the frozen waste of his Alaskan hideout, he had many hours of leisure to produce the fanzines, admittedly minac, that choked the pipelines of the world's apas. It was an incredible achievement.

By now I had determined that Hincle held 29 of the 65 membership slots in FAPA. That was his high-water mark, no doubt achieved over long years of attrition. There is less chance of detection in an apa where no one reads the mailings but waitlisters.

Even in restricted apas, Hincle frequently held multiple memberships under pseudonyms. He seemed to enjoy himself, being his own worst enemy in the Cult. I was astonished at this enormous feat. Instead of feeling threatened in my goal, I could only feel awed at the man's magnificent, colossal achievement. What actinic fires must burn in his psychic engines!

I was an engine myself, producing enough material to establish myself as an unquestioned BNF with only half my output. (The other half being hidden behind aliases.) Yet Hincle easily outproduced me three to one. Small wonder that awe pervaded me. I resolved to meet this paragon.

Only one thing first -- to assure myself of membership in " " and thus shake hands as a peer, an omniapan!

This goal a given, I rejected my earlier plans of forcing entry via Hincle. That would be, I felt, a violation of the new rules of the game. Instead, I turned my attentions to others on the roster. My intelligence activities had long since divulged the entire membership of this most clandestine of apas.

Bill Hart was my first target. A southward migration established me as a resident of the private adult apartment complex that Hart inhabited. Hart was now a successful writer of political satire and eschewed his previous fannish incarnation in all aspects except " ". This, however, had not removed his published fannish works from circulation. I had a complete run and mined the rich ores of his interests for nuggets with which to broach his shell. Within three months we were comrades on the volleyball court, poolside colleagues in bikini-watching, and philosophical scrimmagers on a variety of topics of intense mutual interest.

While this cultivation of Hart was going on, a postal campaign was being conducted to win over six other key members of " ". I shall not comment on my success here. Suffice it to say that Bill Hart placed my name in nomination for membership with the requisite three seconds.

By this time, Bill had franked some of my best material thru " ". My reputation in fandom at large was no impediment. That second Hugo had been most graciously received by myself, and the Worldcon bid I chaired had the support of the Insiders. My popularity was such, my talents so bright, that I was hailed in some quarters as a new Willis or Tucker. (Indeed, these gentlemen were two seconding supporters for " " membership.)

Naturally, I was accepted. The satisfaction of this achievement quite transcended mortal joy with the multiapan status. (Yes, I'd keep abreast of the field and its new entries while campaigning.) The quality of " " was truly superb. It contained the best writing in the world, as its members quietly boasted to one another. Quite tastefully, of course. " " itself was a coup of

immeasurable value. I now felt amongst the elite of quality, not mere quantity or physical stamina.

With my new mantle snug on my shoulders, I composed a fine letter to E.H. Hincle, appraising him of my intention to visit my fellow " "ers in the near future. I solicited an invitation to Bear Paw, Alaska, with inquiries concerning local commercial accommodations. Very specifically, I disclaimed any tendencies to one-shots.

Back came a postcard with no mention of the visit. It was if I'd not spent three pages approaching the topic. I was crushed. This smacked of disdain -- but perhaps it was only hermitic shyness. On this slender straw I built the platform of my reply.

With caution and tact I reminded Hincle of my intent. I suggested that if he were not disposed to receive me, perhaps he could be persuaded to join me in my suite for cognac and friendly discussion on topics of mutual interest. I stressed the informality and confidential nature of my visit. This was a pilgrimage to meet my fellows in " ". It would not receive vulgar press.

Despite my delicate proposal, Hincle responded negatively. His curt postcard dismissed my visit as not feasible from his point of view. "I'm too old and cranky for social chit chat," he wrote. "Besides, I'm too busy."

That last attracted my attention. Had I been so blind to the man's stellar output as to assume that he had time for anything else? My short visit would disrupt his schedule, dent his prolific outpourings, jeopardize some critical apa memberships. Against this terrible realization I stood frustrated, as a man before a great wall of granite.

First reactions involved scenarios of bursting unannounced into Bear Paw and pounding on the door of Hincle's retreat. When he opened the door I would announce, "Hi, brother! I'm a fan!"

This confrontation seemed unlikely to produce my day dreams of a grand meetings. As I revealed the depth of my pain-staking research, the great man would acknowledge my youthful brilliance. We would bow in mutual respect. While I sat warm in the satisfaction of recognition, at last, for the true scope of my accomplishment, the exalted Hincle would discourse on his philosophies and ask for commentary as a peer.

No, the door-pounding approach was out. I then set myself the problem of discovering Hincle's motivations. Isolated in frozen Alaska, north of the Arctic Circle, his greatest need would be the companionship of lucid, intelligent individuals. This was the reason for his joining of many apas. This was why he sought the highest goals in that field. In the intellectual backwaters of Bear Paw, the postal service would serve as messenger between Hincle and the brightest minds of the fan world. What an appetite he must possess!

So I fashioned my strategy from the needs of the master. The greatest treasure of this man must be his " " mailings. As each arrived he would drink it with his eyes like nectar of the soul. No more precious bait could I offer him as an inducement to allow my visit.

It therefore followed that I must become Mailing Editor of " ". Fortunately, the worthy denizens of this forest were old fans and tired. Young eager blood to perform the toil of collation, bookkeeping, mailing.... that young blood was welcomed.

In slightly over a year from the genesis of my idea I was appointed Mailing Editor by acclamation. Thus I was able to write Hincle that my long-delayed trip to Bear Paw was at last to become a reality.

I would arrive for a brief interlude bearing the very latest " " mailing. This speediest of deliveries would allow us to meet, finally, and for a short time exchange anecdotes of mutual interest. I hinted that I had information about certain apans, all pseudonyms of Hincle, that I wished to discuss with him before making such knowledge public. Indeed, I maintained, discretion might prove the best course.

Hincle responded with an gruding OK. He provided instructions to reach his domicile from the airport, but cautioned that he had no overnight accomodations. This, I had expected. With elation, I made the necessary airline reservations. The last 220 miles, it seemed, must be achieved via Grizzly Airways, a local charter service. So be it.

On the appointed day, I assembled the " " mailing and discharged my obligations to all but Hincle. His mailing was packed securely in my bag as I left Los Angeles International, airbourne for the frigid north.

The trip on Grizzly, a light Cessna, was disturbing. Safe landing in Bear Paw caused rejoicing for more than arrival in E.H. Hincle's hometown. I comforted myself with thoughts of the fabulous " " mailing I was bearing. It represented one of the better aggregations of recent years. The image of Hincle's imminent delight reassured me through the rocky landing.

I journed to his home by snow-tired taxi. Evidence was that it also doubled as a freight transport. The cold cut into my bones and set me shivering. Perhaps some of it was excitement, though I felt beyond that after my experiences. Only meeting the master, Hincle, could so invigorate me.

I stood on the steps of his weatherbeaten house and shrunk from the deadly cold. I knocked a respectful knock. After an eternal minute he opened the portal.

Hincle was a huge, bearded colossus. "Get in, gawddamnit!" he shouted. "Warm air is escaping!" I stepped into the house. It was the archtypical fanden -- typers (three), mimeo, ditto, books, clutter, beer cans.

Hincle returned swiftly to a typer. His fingers flew faster than any human's I've ever observed. Without breaking cadence, he tossed over his shoulder, "Well, you wanted to talk."

I hesitated to speak. It was not much warmer inside than out. An iron stove stood along one wall. I moved toward it. "Perhaps you know, sir, that we two are the only human beings ever to have reached ominapan state. I realize it may come as a shock that I have penetrated your ingenious facade, but that will be explained later. What is more important now is the moment."

"Screw the moment!" he bellowed. "Did you bring the " " mailing? I need it."

This was the pinnacle of my visit. E.H. Hincle would devour the mailing and then we could debate its incomparable offerings as a prelude to the revelations that I planned. My heart, literally, leaped. I extracted the precious mailing from my bag and with unrehearsed ceremony offered it to Hincle.

He took it in a gulp. "Thank God, an apa mailing!" he exclaimed. With no delay he took the pearl and opening the iron door on the stove, hurled it inside.

"Gets damn cold up here!" he elucidated. "If it weren't for fanzines I'd freeze to death."

As I choked on my words, feeling the grip of the Greater Cold clutch my fannish heart and throttle it into defeat, I recall realizing with horror that the greatest apa mailing of recent years was dying.....unread.