

NULL-F 45



NULL-F #45 is published for the August, 1968 FAPA mailing by Ted White, 339, 49th St., Brooklyn, N.Y., 11220. It is available only to those non-FAPAns whom I choose to give it to, in my usual arbitrary and capricious manner. (It helps if you happen to be visiting me at the time.) The cover is one of a series of tarot deck designs by Russell Fitzgerald, and is copyrighted 1968 by R. Fitzgerald.

:: QWERTYUIOPress ::

SOME UFFISH THOTS

I delivered NULL-F #44 to Bob Pavlat Friday night, May 10th, and he gave me my copy of mlg. 123 the next day. I was down for the Disclave, and I found this year's the best Disclave in some time. The combination of people and place jelled well, and I thoroughly enjoyed myself.

Only three days earlier I'd given Robin the shock of her life. She returned home from a shopping expedition to find me in my office, back to her, watering the plants in the front window (both endives and swiss chard doing well, thank you). She came in and we swapped the usual 'How'd it go?' small-talk, and then I turned around. She gasped, laughed, and then collapsed in my office chair. "Let me look at you!" she kept saying.

I'd shaved my beard.

The last time my chin and upper lip were naked was in the early months of 1963, while I briefly held down the foreign desk at Scott Meredith. Robin had known me for about three years, but never seen my chin.

"You don't have a weak chin at all!" she exclaimed.

"Of course not," I said. "You didn't believe me when I told you that, did you?"

"It's very nice," she said. "You even have a dimple."

I'd not taken off all my beard. I'd kept a neatly shaped and trimmed set of 'mutton chops' or extended sideburns. I'd never worn these before, and I thought I'd keep them until I got my Annual Spring Crewcut -- my hair was entirely too long if not balanced by some kind of facial fuzz.

"I feel old," Robin said. "You look ten -- twenty years younger!" I'm almost nine years older than she. "Oh, my! I'll have to get used to you all over again."

Me too. With mutton chops and my 1965 weight-gain (up to 175-185 from my traditional 145), my face had lost its lean look and was rather rounded. Every time I passed my reflection a stranger stared back at me. "You look so much jollier," Robin said. "I can see your smile, now." It was getting increasingly sheepish; I was embarrassing myself.

That night we went to the New York Comic Art Group monthly meeting. Various people like Larry Ivie, Gray Morrow, Wally Wood, John Benson, Steve Stiles and Roger Brand all did double-takes. "I wouldn't have known it was you, Ted, if you hadn't come in with Robin," was a common remark. I expected it then; my appearance was as new to me as to them.

But when I strolled into the Disclave party Friday night I'd had several days to become used to my New Look. So the sudden stares and double-takes kept surprising me. "My ghod, Ted! I didn't recognize you till I heard your voice!" Noreen Shaw said. Barbara Silverberg kept giving me bemused stares, and finally told me I ought to keep my hair at its present length and keep my mutton chops (so far I have): "It looks very nice." Lester del Rey seemed puckishly amused. Bob Pavlat and Bill Evans were both reminded of my Younger Days in WSFA, before my first beards. Girls kept looking at me. I felt ten years younger.

But shaving my chin and upper lip was a painful experience. Monday I went out and bought a Norelco Trippleheader electric shaver. I don't know how long I'll try to maintain this appearance -- for a while yet, I imagine. Maybe even through the Midwestcon. But I imagine my beard will be back by the time you read this.

FAPA NOTED

HORIZONS: Warner - You ask why, if ERBdom won a Hugo, the Burroughs series didn't also win one at the Tricon. That's a question only voters and Tricon administrators can answer. I have heard conflicting stories about Tricon vote-counting, one source stating that votes were arbitrarily counted or not counted -- and that, having let the Burroughs nuts get an insignificant fanzine Hugo, counters ignored other Burroughs votes. I've also heard that this was said (by a Tricon Committee member) only as a joke and was not intended to be taken seriously. So there you are.

Our NyCon3 Final Report will give an accurate accounting of the Hugo voting, Harry, but I can tell you that you ran a strong second for Fan Writer. I'm told (by Bill Donaho) that you and I pulled the most nominations for this year's Fan Writer Hugo, and that the race is between the two of us. I'd like to win, but I'd feel no shame in losing to you.

You ask why "drug users" have "such an elaborate special vocabulary." Part of it springs from the same motivation as did Thieves' Cant -- the desire for a semi-intelligible (at best) lingo with which to baffle outsiders 'squares'. But more likely in this day and age is simply the psychological need for an 'inside' vocabulary that confers and recognizes status. Thus one user knows another and knows his benefides. It's part of being 'hip,' being 'in'. Illegal drug use is a secret society and the cant is a password. (Trouble is, the mass media spreads the cant so quickly that it's not a very trusty password these days.)

I live in an apartment in a long row of houses, and I don't feel the slightest urge to know my neighbors. I think 'neighborliness' grew out of rural necessity, itself an outgrowth of frontier necessity: you knew your neighbors because you needed them. Today, I need my neighbors like I need a hole in my head, and I'm sure they reciprocate. Result: big-city mania for privacy -- the real reason people 'don't want to get involved'. If I ever move out into a rural area again, I'll probably get to know and get along with my neighbors just fine.

I like stereo recording because it introduces an element of spacial clarity to music when properly used. But the real reason you should be happy stereo 'killed' mono is that now dealers are unloading their mono stocks at all-time bargain prices -- quite often as low as 97¢ for a one- or two-year-old record.

I can't make up my mind whether Gloria Dahlhamer is real or one of your better attempts at 'non-fiction' fiction. How about telling us?

SCROTE: Tapscott - It looked to me like Caughran was having inking problems -- like, plain ol' underinking.

I don't think that FAPA would be that much better off with the first-year energies of younger fans. In your case I prefer you as you are today, but in general I think that FAPA prefers staying power to neoish enthusiasms. We've had both, certainly -- and I can offer my first couple of years in FAPA as a good example of goshwow fanac -- but FAPA is not a frenetic kind of place. I think anyone who can last five years on the waiting list has demonstrated the staying-power we want. (One problem with such situations as Walt Willis' disappearance from the w-1 is that Walt was never that interested in FAPA, and never more than barely minacked for FAPA. I doubt he really cares that much, one way or the other. I know he didn't feel too keen about it when urged to rejoin the w-1 a few years ago. Sure, we'd dig having Walt with us -- but would Walt?) Nonetheless, I rather like your plan for bringing 'priority' w-1ers in. But its complicated structure is a compliment to

your years of experience as a Cult OA.

THE DEVIL'S WORK: Metcalf - I doubt very much that selling a story in chapter and outline makes much if any difference to its overall quality. Such writers as Robert Moore Williams write completed books before selling them, but still manage to find publishers. A good editor can tell a good book from a poor one by chapter-and-outline, and he can make sounder plotting suggestions when dealing with an outline, since the author is not already wedded to X thousands of words finished copy. Most editors prefer to read chapter-and-outline presentations anyway, since they can be read more quickly and more easily.

Editors occasionally get stung, of course, with books which don't match their expectations from the author in question. Some authors (like Michael Avalone) write brilliant outlines and lousy books. But you catch on to such writers. Sometimes you can demand a rewrite (the contract allows this); sometimes if the publication deadline is too close you shut your eyes and put it through, or -- if you're a conscientious editor like Terry Carr and you have writing talent of your own -- you rewrite it yourself.

THE RAMBLING FAP: Calkins - Your ruminations on 'taking it with you' suggest to me that if you really want to confound government and heirs and foil graverobbers, you should convert all assets to cash and specify it be cremated along with you. Once those bills have been turned to ash, that money is completely gone.

For years I've been quietly proposing exactly the sort of rapid transit you say LA needs, and which many younger cities with large diversified suburbs need. It is basically a diesel-electric bus, with a trolley pole and a single-rail guidance system. Electric motors drive all four wheels, which run either on open roadway or on a restricted rightofway of twin concrete strips, through standard rubber tires. While on the restricted rightofway, the bus picks up its power directly from an overhead line, and is guided by a center rail. These busses could be linked in trains at various intersections of the system. In still-outlying areas, they would use surface trackage. In denser areas, poured-concrete elevated structures. In major-density areas, subways. But in the suburbs the diesel engine would drive a generator to supply power to the motors in the wheels and the bus could wend its way through neighborhood streets. (A constant-speed diesel generator could be controlled for exhaust-emissions much more easily and effeciently than standard bus diesels.) In LA, freeway median strips could be used as main-trunk rail-bus lines.

In Connecticut a modified version of this has been tested: the "Hi-Rail" bus. It is an almost-ordinary bus which drives up on the New Haven railtracks and drops a set of small guidance-wheels that hold it to the rails until they're raised again. Fascinating.

TERMINUS TELEGRAPH: Scithers - Obviously, many w-lers want to join the FAPA of the BNFs, and don't want to share it with no one but fellow w-lers. But the notion that fifty-five "of the present membership" would have to drop out before w-ler #55 joins is, of course, absurd. A lot of new FAPAns don't last out their first year, and of course w-lers ahead of #55 may drop off the list or fail to respond to the Invitation.

I think emphasizing words like t h i s looks lousy. In printing it happens only when words must be spaced out to justify a line -- often in newspapers. An underline is much more emphatic.

SNICKERSNEE: Silverberg - Actually, you (and we) were just lucky that the Montreal subway strike didn't include all the various outlying bus lines. We went up to Expo the next to last week, hoping to have done with huge crowds, but even in the wet and frigid weather people managed to throng about quite a lot. It didn't occur to me to check out a VIP pass -- how did you get yours? Of whom did you inquire, and what were the necessary proofs of your legitimacy? Now it looks like Expo, in all but name, will be back with us this year, and I hope to drive up again. A pleasant drive, and I do want to ride the metro.

I can go you one better: I'm a WASP of undisputed Anglo-Saxon heritage, but in marrying Robin I picked up the same sort of identification with Israel and Jewishness in general. My children, after all, will be Jews, I see a fair amount of my in-laws, and the Jewish heritage fascinates me. Even watching the movies in Israel's Expo pavilion was an emotional experience, with me coming out feeling an ersatz pride in it all.

GODOT: Deckinger - "Can pornography, even 'semi-pornography' be obtained at a newsstand?" Yes. Presently better than half a dozen publishers, including the revived and New York-based Olympia Press, are eagerly putting into print (for \$1.75 to \$2.25 and up) all the hardcore pornography they can find. Most of the 'classics' of Victorian porno and Olympia Press (Travellers Editions) porno are now available from several publishers, including Greenleaf (Hamling), Brandon House (Milton Luros) and Collectors Editions. Most are cheap photocopies on cheap paper; and must represent an enormous profit. They are on all the stands, both in midtown Manhattan and here in my Brooklyn neighborhood. Whole stores are devoted to them on 42nd St, and bigger, fancier bookstores also carry them. Censorship of written pornography has, de facto, disappeared.

In addition, "nudist" magazines pushed back visual taboos a few years ago, until one such magazine apparently found itself obliged to publish a full-page, bigger-than-lifesize photo of a female pubic region, unretouched. But these photos were only nude -- not deliberately erotic. No sexplay or eroticism was shown. A few months ago, the 42nd St. shops started handling photos (sold in packets of eight, for \$3.00) of women in spread-legged poses which would be normally classified as fringe-hardcore porno. Most recently, photos have appeared, on the open market, of women making lesbian love, using dildoes, and etc. Pretty much pure visual porno. They lack only men. (Simultaneously, male homosexual porno is on the increase, with packets of photos of men in provocative poses -- never with erections, but some suspiciously semi-tumescent -- selling briskly.)

When I was a kid, this stuff would all be considered top-rate stuff, since it is technically better produced and the girls are far more attractive than they were on the battered decks of porno playing cards we passed around. In fact, I never saw an attractive girl in a pornographic photo until relatively recently -- which may help explain why for all its salaciousness I never had a high regard for the porno of my day.

Even that Underground FAPA Classic, The Alter of Venus, is now available on the newsstands, by the bye...

Good TV? Many of the specials are quite good. But among the regular shows, I'd rate "I, Spy," "Ironside," "N.Y.P.D." "Laugh In," "The Jonathan Winters Show" and Woody Allen's "Kraft Music Hall" Good. I've left out "The Avengers," since it seems to have fallen badly.

"I, Spy," has not been renewed, so there will be no more of it. But the three years were good years, even important years, and I'd rather see them quit while they're ahead than let things slide. "N.Y.P.D." is my nomination for the most brilliant half-hour on television, and I was pleased to see in a recent TV GUIDE that it will be back next year after all. It is uncompromisingly faithful to New York City, and its plots are adult. I really don't know how it has become so successful, since these very virtues are what normally put the kiss of death on a NYC-based crime series.

My "Wednesday, Noon" was based on a Spirit story of the early fifties wherein the sun novas. The gimmick is a lot older, sure, but that's where my direct inspiration came from. Quite coincidentally, Jim Sterenko did a "Shield" story for Marvel that came out the same month, based on the very same idea. But then, all his recent "Shield" stories have been Spirit-inspired.

None of the Ellery Queen novels which do not use the Queen family are written by Ellery or Queen these days. They are written by Scott Meredith clients. Lesser (who changed his name legally to Stephen Marlowe) may be among them; he wasn't in 1963. Dannay and Lee exert closer control over the proper "Ellery Queen" books, but I suspect these are farmed out too.

Ted Mark is a real person, unknown under his real name. Paul Fairman's S.T.U.D. books are simply Lancer's way of recouping on the loss of Mark. (I doubt they lost much; I think that boom has broken.)

I suspect Diana Rigg's departure from "The Avengers" has permanently ruined it, since the program also changed producers and hasn't had a half-way decent script since. Miss Rigg was more than simply "a charming creature," and the best analogy I can make is this: can you imagine Bobby Darin filling in for Bill Cosby in "I, Spy"?

Pretty convincing proof has been offered that 'speed' drugs cause permanent brain damage. Now, if you don't consider 'speed' hallucinogenic, I guess your statement will stand.

HELEN'S FANTASIA: Wesson - noted

DOORWAY: Benford - I find I sprinkled a lot of checkmarks through your mailing comments. Most are related to pro topics, so I may smorge them together a bit.

You note that the Nebula Awards volume edited by Harrison & Aldiss "contained remarkably little of the usual back-scratching pros so often indulge in when given a chance to comment on the field." I think you're totally wrong. I went into this in my column in PSYCHOTIC 26 (which you've seen by now) and I think I sufficiently documented the ways in which Harrison and Aldiss scratched each other's backs. Since writing that piece, I've started to wonder if William Dexter and John Norman (two authors of dreadful books heartily endorsed by Harrison & Aldiss) might not be pseudonyms of Guess Who.

But your point seems to be that when GALAXY or IF prints a rotten story by van Vogt or H.L.Gold, it's backscratching -- that if the same story was submitted by an unknown it wouldn't be published. I think you are right in that last point, but wrong in your reasoning. I doubt very much that Fred Pohl (or any other editor) is interested in scratching backs. He is interested in putting together a magazine which will sell. I've heard that two names on the cover will draw better (for Pohl's magazines, anyway) than any others: Heinlein and van Vogt. H.L.Gold and the others whose backs you suspect are being scratched have one single element in common: they are Names. Marginal stories by Names will be

bought simply because of the selling value in the byline. This brings up two related points: why are these names selling?

The first reason is, I think, a factor of divergent tastes. You and I are sophisticated readers. We have read sf for a number of years. But most magazine sf buyers and readers are recent to the field -- the cited turnover figure is five years for the average reader. Therefore, ideas which are oldhat to us will be fresh to many readers, and writing which annoys us will be overlooked by those other readers. Just look back on your first year or three of sf reading, and try to remember your own tastes.

Then too, some readers will always prefer, say, Robert Moore Williams to Roger Zelazny. There is no reason why at least one magazine shouldn't be edited for them.

Secondly, many of the Names who still sell are trading upon once-glossier reputations. H.L. Gold used to be fairly well thought of. If he is writing punk stories today (I wouldn't know; I haven't read any) his reputation, like van Vogt's and Farmer's, will begin to slide. And sooner or later he won't be a Name any longer. That, sadly, can be a tragic state of affairs for a writer -- we ought to be glad Raymond Chandler died before publishing The Poodle Springs Affair, for instance.

As for writers living in New York: You're overlooking the whole matter of personal contact and the ebb and flow of ideas. Back in the Forties, Campbell was famed for the personal bullsessions he'd hold with writers. Asimov mentioned that the Three Laws came from Campbell. I suspect John wishes a new bunch of writers lived in New York so he could hold bullsessions with them. On another level, it's handy to be able to talk with book editors. I've sold at least one book on the basis of a twenty-minute conversation with an editor -- no outline, no sample chapters, nothin'. In a more recent case an editor liked what he thought a proposed book of mine was about, but wasn't sure I was thinking along the same lines. A couple of telephone conversations helped.

Sure, you can do this by mail from anywhere in the world, but there is an immediacy to being within local phoning distance, and this works to your advantage with an editor, even if he is never consciously aware of it. (And I've left out things like spot assignments, which may come up simply because you're on the spot and available...)

As an editor of a commercial magazine, Moorcock is incompetent. As the editor of a subsidized 'little' magazine, with a circulation of eight thousand copies, he is no doubt, as you say, a Giant Towering O'er Us All.

Your comments on Bug Jack Barron are dated. As you now know, Terry Carr did indeed bid for the book for the Ace Specials line. And my impression is that Terry was interested in the book's content -- not its style. Since you seem to believe that the book is being batted around because of its controversial content, I wonder how much (if any) of it you've read. From my own samplings and conversation with others, I'd say the style of the book verges on the incompetent and only its 'story' has led to any interest in the book.

(To call Spinrad a "calm" writer strikes me as your most ironic remark -- but then, you wrote that before Norm began thumping his chest in PSYCHOTIC, I presume.)

I think what bugs you in Blish's writing and criticism is simply that he is too self-consciously intellectual. I think it is the intellectual content of sf which first attracted him to our field, and which still holds him here. I agree with your general reactions to his work.

BOBOLINGS: Pavlat - You say you really missed seeing the Army-McCarthy hearings on tv. I wonder: did you see the recent reruns this spring? I too missed seeing them the first time around; we watched them at a Fanoclast meeting, and I think we were all a little stunned at the vivid reminder of McCarthy's single-minded viciousness. The Army counsel was Joseph Welch.

SALUD: Elinor - Instead of cremation -- they won't let you have your ashes strewn in the wind anyway -- why not donate your body to science when you die? That way you'll at least know the satisfaction of having helped your fellow man in even death.

I have not learned to love Tara King. Put bluntly, I don't even like her. I don't like the personality she evinces, I don't like her hard-eyed makeup, and I don't like the scripts which have been written for the Avengers since she joined the cast. In fact, none of the shows since the advent of color strike me as being up to the level of the black & white shows I saw, and the change of producers with Miss King's arrival seems to bode ill.

On the other hand, have you seen "The Prisoner"?

"I can't imagine anything less interesting than public transportation, myself," you say, but think for a moment: don't those old cable-cars in San Francisco touch your romantic nature at least a little bit? Granted, Seattle doesn't offer much public transit to get enthused about, but a city with (for instance) subways is rich in lore and mystique.

I have a feeling that the audience for the tv "Man From UNCLE" and the books does not by any means overlap 100%. And since the books must compete with other mystery series books on the newsstand, they must obviously not close themselves off from the non-tv-watcher by being over-esoteric.

I agree that Jim Thompson's Ironside was a sad disappointment. I bought it because it was Thompson, and because I like the tv "Ironside" -- despite my usual prejudice against tv-novelizations (most of which are hacked out in a dreadful fashion)(since the author rarely gets a share in the royalties, what does he care whether the book sells or bombs?). Unfortunately, Thompson proved no better than the others.
Sigh

But, Ron Ellick's TAFF report was published...in a series of fan-zines (SHAGGY?); I remember reading it.

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THUS END my mailing comments, despite the fact that I didn't comment on your zine. These last few pages have been written at the Last Moment again, and probably suffer for that fact (as well as the fact that the Republican Convention is playing in the next room -- God, what incredibly doltish people!). Oh well. Next issue may be bigger. Or, then again, it May Not.

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LETTERS: We received a postcard from Redd Boggs which we threw in the wastebasket, and a letter from Larry Jannifer in which he defends himself against my scurilous charges against him in my NyCon report (remember that, folks?). It will be prominently displayed, uncut, in our Next Issue.

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I didn't grow my beard back after all. Disregard all rumors to the contrary.
-- Ted White

