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THE FANTASY AMATEUR PRESS ASSOCIATION

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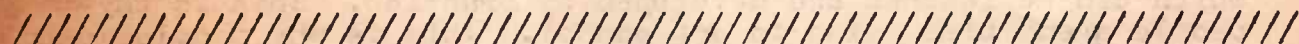
There being something horrible in the thought of letting a mailing go by without a Plenum, I must needs sit me down and bat out something, even though it be but a single-sheeter.

I wasn't kidding when I said that my fan activities would be cut down after the Philcon. Hardly a letter has left this house during the past month.

Things show no sign of easing up until October at least. The University has a method of medieval torture known as a "preliminary exam" which takes 3 days to do and 3 years to prepare for.

(The hell with it. I'll get there somehow.)
~~This is why I do not think I'll go to the Torcon.~~

It breaks my heart utterly, but this summer I must find myself a hole to crawl into and pull over me.



Lets talk about you for a change.

I was all set to raise hell with the quality of the past several mailings, when along came C.B. Stevenson with his post-mailing ORACLE and stole my thunder. But how can I remain mad at C.B. when he says such things about Plenum, causing me to blush from ear to ear.

But at least let me make an echo.

Fellows, the FAPA smells.

It used to be that although we didn't go in very much for fancy format and mimeographing, we did insure that our publications had some thoughts in them which made up for the lack of prettiness. It was the contents, not the appearance, which counted.

Now it seems that the only thing that counts is to get the proper number of pages into the mailing, never mind what we put on the page, never mind what it looks like.

What a miserable waste of mimeograph stencils.

The Burbee Bedside Postmailing helped me put a finger upon one of the faults of many FAPAFans.

I received this package of crud and started reading it, one page at a time. I read stuff by Burbee, by Laney, by Ashley, and I had a few healthy giggles here and there. There is nothing especially world-shattering about anything in these publications. It is plainly and legibly mimeographed, no attempt being made to be particularly dramatic in format. The writing speaks of nothing in particular, but froths along in that style which belongs strictly to Burbee, Laney, and Ashley.

Then I came to a page done by William Rotsler. In appearance similar to the previous pages, it flopped with a dull thud upon being read. An item contributed by Len Moffatt laid a similar egg.

The sudden contrast between the lightly-stepping humor of the Laburbley trio, and the plodding efforts at funniness by the others underlines the cause of some of the sadness of many FAPA ventures.

STYLE is the keyword. Some have it and some don't. A person who has style will put out by sheer instinct a fanzine which presents pleasure to the eye and to the intellect. A person without style will lunge frantically here and there attempting to make an impression, but will produce only boredom.

While style comes instinctively to some, it is a thing which can be learned and developed by practice. This is why people spend time going to art school. This is why people go to the trouble of learning how to write.

Precisely what constitutes style is difficult to define in a finite number of words. A person with an eye for style can detect it when it is there, and that's all there is to it. It hangs on the turn of a phrase, the choice of a word, the distance of your indentations, the color of your paper, the kind of lettering you use, the amount of ink you apply, your choice of topics to discuss and your choice of viewpoint in discussing them.

The first prerequisite in producing a work of style is to have complete mastery of the technique of the craft in which the creation is being performed. When you play the piano, you must be able to play scales before you can do what you want in the way of interpretation. When you paint, you must know how to handle your brushes before you can competently attempt to create a piece of art.

Likewise, in creating a fanzine, you must know how to mimeograph before insulting us with the results of your labors.

This sounds like a platitude, but how many contributions to the mailings appear without the slightest care being taken towards the mechanics of the mimeographing?

As a horrible example, let us examine Len Moffatt's publication, MOONSHINE: The cover, indeed, is an effort at style. The pasted-on moon over the black background makes a novel effect, but is spoiled by the prosaic form of the stencilled title.

Looking inside, we find the most slap-hazard mimeographing ever to meet our eyes. No sign of slip-sheeting. No vestige of correction fluid. A solid, monotonous page of brown ink without white space to relieve the eye-strain. Even the writing of a Thomas Wolfe would be burdened by an insurmountable handicap under such circumstances.

I now lay down two rules which I consider to be the barest minimum for a decent fanzine. That is, I consider these two necessities to be automatically a part of a good fanzine before anything else is done, just like good cloth is necessary for making a suit before you start cutting it.

(1) Clean mimeographing. This implies a good typewriter, good stencils, use of correction fluid, use of slip-sheets, good paper, and good and abundant ink.

(2) White spaces on the page. This means margins at least 3/4 inch wide on all four sides of the page, and a space between paragraphs. The inter-paragraph space is something which very few FAPA publishers use, and yet it makes a world of difference in the appearance of your magazine. It means the difference between, "ho, hum, here is another fanzine I have to plow through," and "Well, this looks like something interesting."

When you spend your money in publishing a fanzine, which reaction do you want your readers to have?

It is sometimes difficult for me to fathom the mental processes of those who put out shoddy work. I can speak for myself, and I say that when I sit down to put out a Plenum, I do so with the deliberate intention of making a piece of work which I can be proud of, one which will be read and enjoyed by those FAPA members outside of the small circle of self-styled "uneducated slobs." My standard of achievement is that when I finish the work, I can take up the completed Plenum and enjoy reading it myself!

Do you people enjoy reading your own fanzines? If you made sure that you did, then perhaps I might enjoy reading them, also.

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Concerning probabilities:

Stan Woolston, in Moonshine, brings up the old business about the probability of all the atoms in a piece of matter suddenly moving in the same direction, with the resulting motion of the body as a whole. This is something which people have been telling me for a long time, and it occurs to me at this moment that this is a lot of boloney.

Some day when I know more about statistics I may be able to demonstrate just why this is boloney. Right now I just have a feeling about it.

In the first place, when a molecule of a gas reverses the direction of its motion, it does so by colliding with another molecule. The second molecule must wind up moving in a direction opposite from the first one. How then, are we to get all of the molecules moving in the same direction? At best we could get half of them moving in one direction and half in another. But even with this picture there seems something wrong.

It must be realized that when we speak of the random motion of a number of molecules, our use of the word "random" merely implies our ignorance of the detailed motion. We must not let the word random lure us into believing that this means lawless motion.

The molecules and atoms do move according to definite laws. True, these are the laws of quantum mechanics which say nothing definite about the position or motion of individual particles, but only give probabilities for the particles being in a given state. However, according to a rule known as the Bohr correspondence principle, the laws of quantum mechanics must become identical with the classical laws of motion when applied to large-scale phenomena. Thus, in spite of probability laws applying to single molecules, when we talk about large clumps of matter we must realize that the chance of a measurable deviation from normal action is so small that it is completely negligible. Furthermore, the chance for a deviation from the normal motion is exactly the same at this moment as it will be fifty billion years from now. Let us not fall into the old fallacy that if we wait long enough, even a highly improbable event will take place. If it is improbable now, it will be just as improbable then. ... How about Chan Davis kicking this around?

A toast at this point to new member C.B. Stevenson and his fanzine ORACLE. (I gotta do something to repay the nice things he said about Plenum.) I hope that ORACLE will become a regular feature of the FAPA, to be awaited breathlessly with the others of the brain trusters.