

FAPA 78

QABAL

FOUR

SPECIAL
TENTACLES-
ACROST-THE-
SEA-ISSUE

FAPA 79

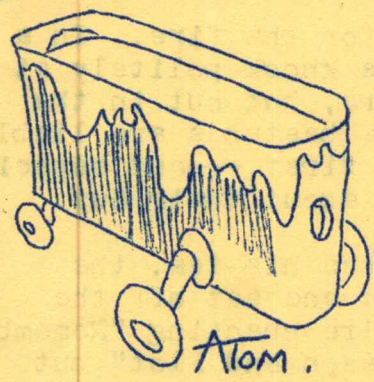
MAY 1957

REPENT!

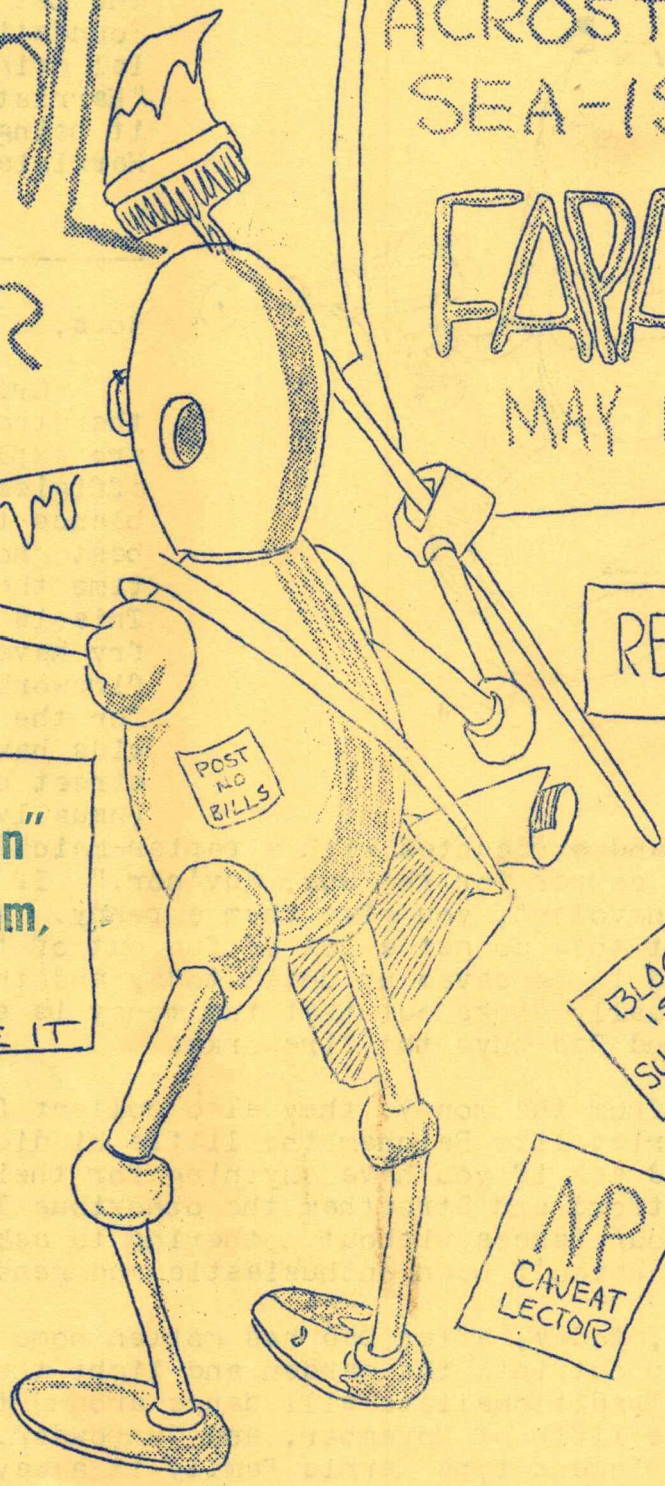
OLE
Chuck Harris, "Carolyn"
Lake Avenue, Rainham,
Essex, England
HE DONE IT

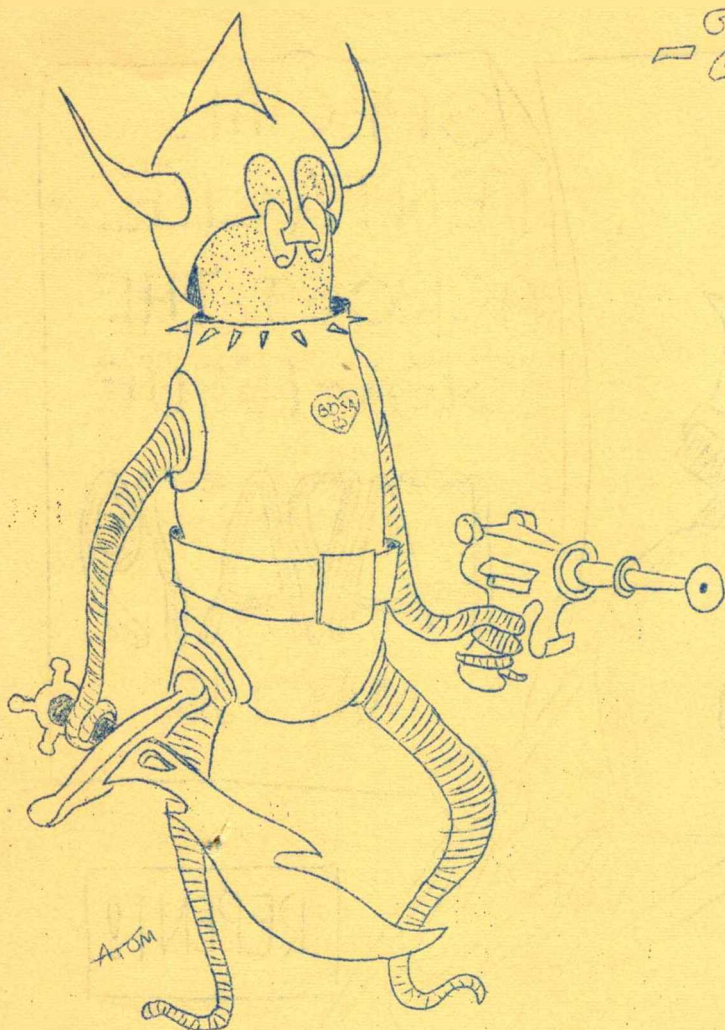
BLOG
IS
SUPERB

MP
CAVEAT
LECTOR



Atom.





PUBLISHER'S NOTE:

This issue of QABAL (no "U") is devoted to Keeping The Harris In FAPA. This is a side-branch of the Let's Put The X Back In Xmas Foundation. What follows is material originally scheduled for the "Harristuff" Department in Grue, it being about the only authentic Harrisia on hand.

---dag

5 November 1956

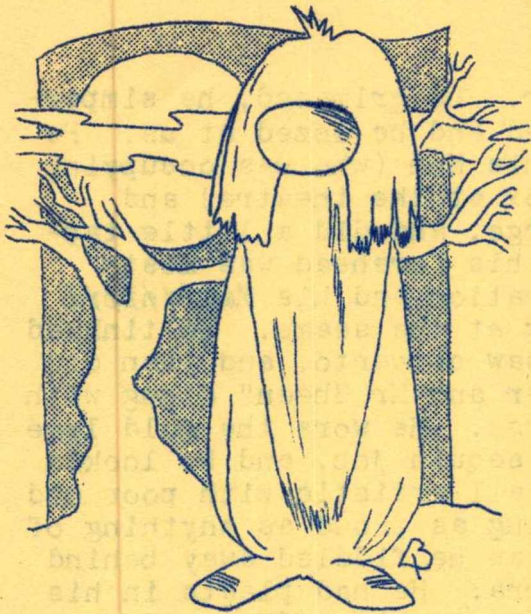
Boss,

Grue arrived today. Out in the streets the maddened populace are exploding crackers and burning effigies that bear a close resemblance to jolly James White in his best ghoodminton outfit. This time though, it isn't your fault. This is Guy Fawkes day. The small-fry have bonfires and assorted fireworks in their backgardens. For the last five weeks or so the kids have been standing at the street corners with their "guys" (usually Dad's old suit stuffed

with paper and surmounted with a papier-maché mask) asking passersby to "Spare a copper for the Guy, gov'nor." If you know the kids, or if you feel benevolent, you give them a penny. They don't get very many pennies, but they do get a lot of fun out of the business. The coppers are supposed to be saved up until today and then spent on fireworks, —but it usually works out that the money is spent right away in the sweetshop and Dad buys the fireworks.

Apart from the money, they also collect fuel for the fire. In a select district like Rainham the little kiddiewinks knock politely at the door and ask if you have anything for their fire, but out in the stews of Catford and Streatham the obnoxious little bastards are liable to rip up your fences without bothering to ask you first,—and especially if you haven't been enthusiastic and generous about their Guy.

Anyway, today, after Dad has gotten home and had his tea, the family troop out into the garden and light the fire and set off the crackers. Traditionalists will dance around the fire chanting "Remember remember the Fifth of November, and Gunpowder, Treason and Flot" but in the non-Dickens-type Harris family it always finished in a fight instead of a dance because my younger brother always had to be persuaded that it was the prerogative of the eldest son to set off the rockets and light the Catherine Wheels.



- III -

Ghod knows how it all began in this form with the bonfires and the crackers and whatnot, but the original ruckus started 'way back in 1605. The dastardly Papist Guy Fawkes Esq loaded the vaults of the House of Parliament with load upon load of gunpowder—36 barrels full—which is certainly going the whole hogshead. Guy Fawkes thought that James the First was a genuine 22 carat, triple-distilled sonofabitch (which he was) and planned to elevate him alongside his Ministers and Government just as soon as they arrived in the Chamber.

Unfortunately, somebody blew the gaff, Fawkes was caught in flagrante delicious and we didn't become a republic after all. Personally I've always felt a little sorry about it all. I know just how he felt. (Anyone ever written a Wheel Of If yarn on an England where they did not catch him?)

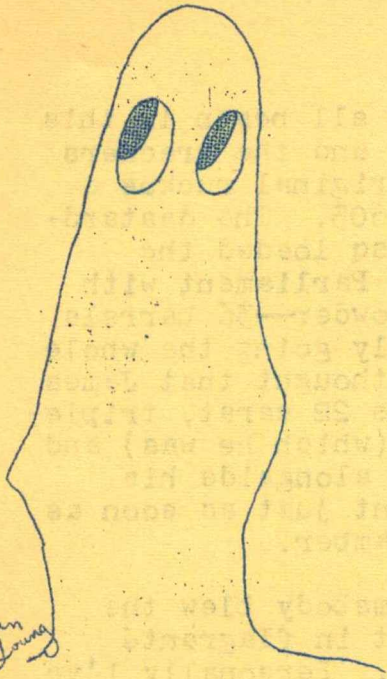
Since then though, they've never taken any chances of it happening again. Just in case people get ideas of having another go, the vaults of the Houses of Parliament are searched by the Yeomen Warders (the Beef-eaters that I told you about), before Parliament assembles on November the Fifth. They know quite well that even anarchists play the game as long as they are British-born and that it just would not be cricket for us to have a go on any other day, dammit.

Here we go nuts in May, period

All right, I'll tell you about Liberace. He was a little upset when he arrived because his fanclub reception committee was out-marshalled and outscrambled by a rival organisation—"The We Hate Liberace Fan Club," This mob (mainly students out for a laugh) was waiting at the docks carrying banners emblazoned (a good word) (verily) with "We Hate Liberace—Charlie Kunz For Ever!" (Kunz is a mediocre English piano-player who was in his prime around 1930). The Maestro, understandably, was a little peeved and especially so when The Press appointed itself as honorary members of the WHLFC and gave him the Treatment. However, he soon perked up again and was heard to declare that "Lunnon was wunnerful, just wunnerful" and that he loved every single one of us and wished he could take us all back home with him. Also that he "will never, never forget us." (Well, maybe you'd like it if he'd take the British Liberace-fen off your hands but we don't want them here neither. We're just about to get the breed stamped out now; he's no longer on tv and for all I know Gertrude M. Carr is the last of the surviving 'otchy fans...I think I heard rumours that even she is switching to Presley. When do you plan to send us Tommy Steele??)

He made two TV performances that will never never be forgotten

quatre



Jean Young

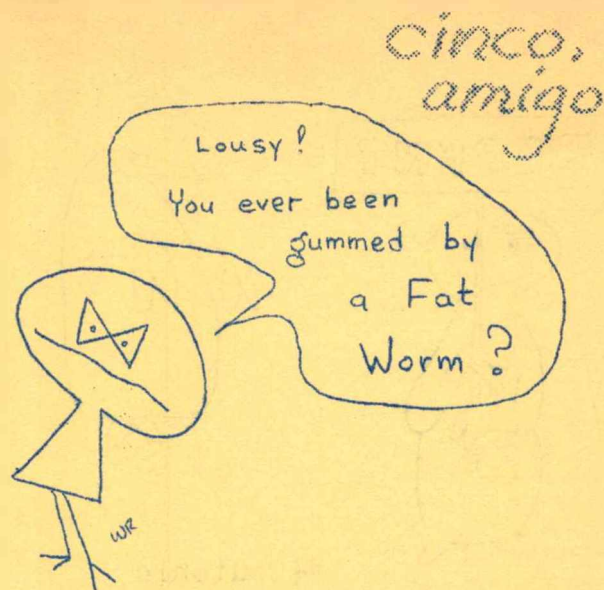
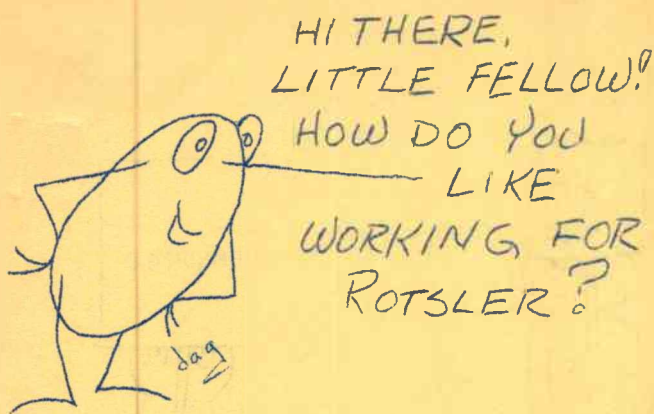
"Want to run barefoot
through my hair?"

by us either. He grimaced, he simpered, he winked and he oozed at us. He introduced his Mum (who was occupying the Royal Box at the theatre) and brother George, and did a little tap-dance until his forehead was misty with perspiration and his ~~Waldenford~~ was bursting at the seams. He tinkled out the Warsaw concerto, and then did "Mr Gallagher and Mr Sheen" along with brother George. He wore the gold lamé job and the sequin job, and he looked soulful and all artistic with poor old George looking as proud as anything of his brother as he fiddled away behind the candelabra. He had pleats in his shirt, ruffles in his cuffs, and was the very epitome of a fine cleanliving redblooded Americanboy. You would have felt proud, DAG, proud and honoured. (I'd have .→ I thought of you at that moment, bwah, as he did a little strut across the stage and then tossed back his head like a skittish mare in

heat. How fine, how memorable, how wunnerful, it would have been to have you here then. (First word on p.28 to you, sir!) You could be Mr Gallagher to his Mr Sheen with George's violin sobbing poignantly in the background (Oh, daphne!) and the old candelabra flickering away like billy ho,—or better yet, a little duet. He could easily teach you the words of I'M A YANKEE DOODIE DANDY. (Or I could teach him the words to THE SEWERS OF OLD RANDOLPH FIELD or maybe THAT RED-HEADED VENUSBURG GAL...→ And I'll drink to that! (Jawohl. Hoch!→

I will say though that the women seemed to like him, and I believe he had good box office figures for his shows in London. He didn't get the same reception in the provinces though, and his one performance in Dublin was reputed to be a colossal flop with less than half the tickets sold and the rest given away for free. I guess the Irish just don't appreciate real talent,—they just don't seem to have the same perceptiveness as the English. We really took him to our hearts though. He had more than 200 proposals before he flew home. One of them was from a woman, too. (What ever happened on that lawsuit he slapped on some British newspaperman for saying nawsty things about him? I saw him appear on some tv show as a guest not long after he'd been over there and his voice quavered with pathos and indignation as he told how this vile dastard had intimated that he was "An Unmanly Man"—which I thought was about as delicate a euphemism as I'd heard for a while—but of course he couldn't say queer as a plaster peach on the sacrosanct airwaves now, could he?→

Well, I do have comments on Grue of course but they'll keep for a page or two. I've been thinking about that letter-hook gimmick of yours, "if you could write like anyone, who would you pick," and it's a devil of a job to give a definite choice. Shakespeare maybe,—a terrible lot of his stuff makes me say "I wish I'd written that." Maybe Enid Blyton perhaps,—I doubt if you've heard of her: She's English and writes



Cinco,
amigo

children's books and nothing else. A sort of modern version of Hans Anderson who gives the kids a fairyland to believe in. Or, how about Sturgeon,—I think he has far more of the seeds of greatness in him than Ray Bradbury will ever have. (I'll drink to that and dash the glass in the fireplace to—as Kipling puts it—the commissary's delight) Thurber, WAW, Walt Kelly, James Joyce (then, maybe, I'd be able to understand Finnigan's Wake) (bet?), Ogden Nash,—hell there's a million to choose from. I doubt if any choice I made would keep me happy for more than about a week before I wanted to change again, but for this week I would like to be Hilaire Belloc.

You may ignore any screams of rage emanating from Belfast. Walter thinks that Belloc was a second-rate poet and a third-rate mind, but I've never trusted Willis since I found out that he prefers van Vogt to Heinlein. I think Belloc is better than Ogden Nash, and I'm quite certain I shall be happy enough until next Monday evening. The first thing I want to concentrate on is an epitaph as good as the one Belloc wrote for himself:

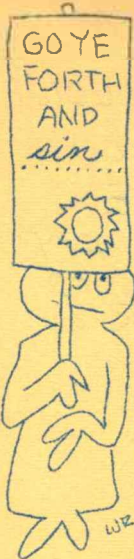
When I am dead, I hope it will be said,
"His sins were scarlet, but his books were read."

(If you deem succinctness a virtue, howz'bout "Here is Harris"?)
As soon as I've done that I shall look around and find somebody who needs me to leap to their defence so that I can write something like Belloc's "Lines to a Don." This was Belloc's answer to an Oxford Don who made disparaging criticisms of Belloc's greatest friend, G. K. Chesterton. Belloc was so furious he got out his vitriol and penned what I think is the greatest poetic diatribe in the English language. I can't quote it all, but here's part of it.

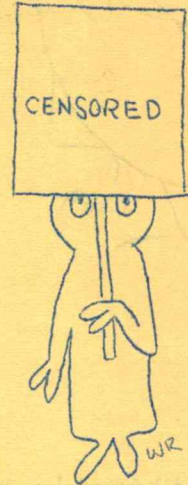
Remote and ineffectual Don
That dared attack my Chesterton,
With that poor weapon, half-impelled,
Unlearnt, unsteady, hardly held,
Unworthy for a tilt with men—
Your quavering and corroded pen;

(more—
over)

REPENT



SECHS,
FREUND *



*←Teutonic
pagnation here is not
to be confused with Harris→

Don poor at Bed and worse at Table,
Don pinched, Don starved, Don miserable;
Don stuttering, Don with roving eyes,
Don nervous, Don of crudities;
Don clerical, Don ordinary,
Don self-absorbed and solitary;
Don here and there, Don epileptic;
Don puffed and empty, Don dyspeptic;
Don middle-class, Don sycophantic,
Don dull, Don brutish, Don p edantic;
Don hypocritical, Don bad,
Don furtive, Don three-quarters mad;
Don (since a man must make an end),
Don that shall never be my friend.

We now skip twenty lines.....

Thou scapegoat Don, thou Don devoted,
Don to thine own damnation quoted,
Perplexed to find thy trivial name
Reared in my verse to lasting shame.
Don dreadful, rasping Don and wearing.
Repulsive Don—Don past all bearing.
Don of the cold and doubtful breath,
Don despicable, Don of death;
Don nasty, skimpy, silent, level;
Don evil; Don that serves the devil.
Don ugly—that makes fifty lines.
There is a Canon which confines
A Rhymed Octosyllabic Curse
If written in iambic verse
To fifty lines. I never cut;
I far prefer to end it—but
Believe me I shall soon return.
My fires are banked, but still they burn
To write some more about the Don
That dared attack my Chesterton.

I think an attack like that would make even Towner blench, but the piece that I love the best is that implied threat at the end,—this is just a preliminary skirmish, you wait until you see the next thrilling installment. As far as I know, there was no follow-up, and this makes it even better. I feel for that poor unknown Don who could never, never know when Belloc was going to give him the other barrel.

Enough of that or I shall never finish this thing. It was a fascinating question though and I shall be interested to see other people's choices. Bloch as Mickey Spillane or Richard S Shaver and Tucker as Kathleen Winsor, of course, hmmm? (You lose. Bloch chose to be able to emulate Françoise Sagan...as to writing style at least ...while Tucker surprised nobody by choosing Wilfried Myers as the prototype of his dreams). (I picked Edgar Guest...)

I notice that the Joan Carr/Sandy Sanderson hoax is still producing echoes, and I think that this is an opportune moment to confess that Charles Randolph Harris is also non-existent. Truly, he is just a figment of that fertile Willis imagination, and I don't think that anyone has ever suspected it.

We were sitting there in the O'Bleak Attic on one of those bright summer days in the middle of our Burbee period. Walt, trufannish as ever, had rolled a stencil into his typer, and I was sprawled in the armchair poring over the 3D supplement of naked women in PARIS HOLLYWOOD. I had already told him that I'd be happy to collaborate on a fabulous Burbee-type one-shot as long as I didn't actually have to do anything and providing my name was listed in the credits as co-editor, and I was looking forward to a quietly stimulating afternoon with him handy to translate any French verbs that I came across that weren't included in my vocabulary.

Well sir, he beat out a couple of lines real fast, (it was probably "170 Upper Newtownards Rd etc...") (You're a fine one to talk about the way I spell Newtownards) and then turned and asked me what my full name was. "Huh?" I said. "Your full name," he said. "This is to be a Burbee-type one-shot. Burb always refers to Laney either as Francis Towner Laney or as Towner. We will conform with the tradition and I will refer to you by your second Christian name."

Frankly, I didn't know what to do. I had figured on the Burbee role for myself, but if I mentioned it now, he'd probably agree right away and then make me change places with him and start the one-shot off. That was just about the last thing I wanted to happen. Madeleine had just fed me a Shaw sized lunch and I didn't feel like anything as energetic as stencilling.

There was another thing too. Towner is a sort of exotic name, and always seemed to fit perfectly between the Francis and the Laney. It had—what is the word I want Meyer—yes, zip. It added stature to the man. That Towner, slap in the middle of his by-line, gave colour to his writing that would never have been obtained by a Francis Elmer or a Francis Cecil. Against that, my given name, Richard, seemed humble, common, prosaic.

"Come on," he said. "What's that bloody "R" stand for?"

"Randolph," I said hurriedly. It wasn't perfect, but at least it was a little further out of the rut than Richard would ever be.

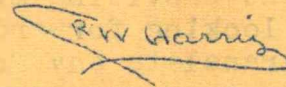
He made no comment. After all, no Walter Alexander is in a position to sneer at a Charles Randolph. He turned back to the typer and stencilled "Edited by Walt Willis and Charles Randolph Harris," and I became the fan who never was.

I wish now that I'd said "Rumpelstiltskin." Some people will believe anything.

"He's a prominent Atheist layman."

Zeppelins. The earliest thing I can remember is being held up to see the R.101 when it was on fire over London. That must have been about 1931,—I would have been about 4 years old, and you can't really expect an eye-witness report about it. I was reading a book about dirigibles by Nevil Shute quite recently, and he insisted that it was the human factor that caused the accidents that gave them such a bad reputation, and that the lighter-than-air principle was, and is, still sound. After all, there were literally thousands of barrage balloons over London during the war, and I think they were all hydrogen-filled, but I cannot remember ever seeing one of them explode or catch fire.

As always,



{Grennell, now, filling out the stencil: I too have been reading a book on dirigibles, Harris Old Turnip...so new that it was not yet published when you wrote the foregoing. It is "Ships in the Sky," by John Toland (Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1957...could be \$5.00, not sure, copy I have here cost the FdL Library \$3.36 but they get a discount from the bookstore...library number if you'd like to check the one where you are is 629.13 T57). The wondrous thing, as nearly as I can judge from all this, is that people kept working with lighter-than-air rigid ships as long as they did, disregarding the never-ending stream of set-backs. This book reads like intensely interesting fiction and I can hardly put it down despite the fact that I am simultaneously reading "Zotz!" by Walter Karig and "Tomorrow Plus X" by some hack from Illinois (Tucker's "Time Bomb" in paper covers if you must know). The most startling thing I've encountered in Toland's book so far is that a bloke name of Dr. Solomon Andrews invented an airship during the Civil War that could sail into, cross or with the wind, up or down, at will. He wrote a book on the principle he used, demonstrated a couple of models, formed a company which promptly went broke and, eventually, died. To this day, no one has been able to duplicate his feat of going motorless into the wind, the book notwithstanding. In 1897, a Swedish engineer tried to free-balloon over the North Pole and died in the attempt. His name: Salomon Andr e...marvelous stuff, co-incidence. Caveat lector, y'all, DAG}