

FAPA 87

THE RAMBLING FAP  
16



Ray Nelson

1st 11

Today is the 19th of April and here goes a last ditch attempt to make the 87th FAPA mailing. Cut stencils tonight (less time out for "Maverick") and publish during the week and maybe if I get this mailed by Wednesday it will make it three quarters of the way across the US in time to meet the May 3rd deadline. (And just why does the deadline fall on a Sunday this time? Unless you get mail deliveries on Sunday, it would seem to me that the most logical date would be May 2nd. Unless, of course, you'll accept early-morning Monday arrivals--like this--or perhaps you became confused over Mercer's day.)

At any rate, I'd better make the mailing this time. After Pavlat so publicly pointed the finger of accusation at me in the last FA (along with several others) I guess it's a case of produce or else.

W. MILDEW DANNER MEET W. GURGLE CALKINS "Athenodorus says hydrophobia, or water-dread, was first discovered in the time of Asclepiades." -- Plutarch. For those of you who still believe there has been only one major flood in historical times let me recount to you a few of my adventures during the past few months.

It all began innocently enough. When we moved out of the old barn we occupied last winter and into a relatively new duplex we thought we had things figured. The duplex consisted of two bedrooms and a bathroom on the upper floor, the living room dining room and kitchen on the main floor, and the garage and a small utility room in the "basement" which was sub-surface on three sides but opened out onto the street on the other with only a slight uphill grade. My room became the small room next to the garage...plenty far away from the tv set and normal traffic so that I could study or fan in peace. It would have been cold, being in the basement like that, except that the room also included the furnace and that kept me nice and toasty. Smug as the proverbial bug.

Until one day it rained.

Well, this could be a long and very sad story but let's keep it short, huh? You can guess what happened. The outside drain clogged when the gutters overflowed and the water just naturally made its way downhill into the garage and thence into my domain, carrying with it all sorts of mud and debris. John Quagliano was visiting us at the time and he and a friend did the best they could (I was in school at the time and knew nothing about it) but of course it was a mess no matter what they did. The only thing that saved it from being a real disaster was the fact that for no specified reason I hadn't put anything on the bottom shelves of my bookcases. Call it premonition or whatever you like...I know I didn't have any conscious thought of why or why not, I just hadn't put anything on the bottom shelves. Lucky.

Well, sir, right then and there I vowed to get some lumber and build my bookcases up off of the floor slightly, and until I could get this project finished I carefully moved what little I had had on the lower shelves up to higher shelves and proceeded to procrastinate as far as the pedestal-building was concerned. I'd have gotten away with it, too, only something very mysterious happened.

One night late I came up out of my room about eleven or so and went to bed ahead of JoAnn. She finished her shower a few minutes later and then remembered something she had left in the living room so she went down to get it. While there, she had a hunch or premonition or something and happened to open the door to the basement. Running water. Punning water? I had just dropped off to sleep when she dumped me out of bed and told me what was happening. Somehow...someswhy...by means of forces we still haven't figured out but I think Charles Fort would understand, the drain cock on our hot water heater had opened up and was spurting hot water all over the basement. Clean water this time, to be sure, but still water and too much of it. And let me emphasize that I had left my room not more than twenty minutes earlier,

it was perfectly dry at that time and the hot water tank showed no signs of leaking, and nobody but nobody had been in the room since. The door was closed and firmly latched and the odds against any person or animal (we have three cats) having been in there and accidentally opened the drain-cock are hundreds of thousands to one. I guess I should amend that statement to "any human person or animal"...but let's not get off on that tack just now.

At any rate it flooded. It wasn't as bad as the first time because, as I've said, the water was clean this time and everything was well up from the floor except a few reams of mimeograph paper I had somehow overlooked and which was pretty well ruined. But now my resolve to put legs on my bookcases was strengthened and the week after this second flood (it took that long to get over the colds we caught sweeping the water out of the basement and cleaning up most of that night) I took my hammer and saw and actually got it accomplished. More than that, I painted all my bookcases with a hard finish waterproof paint...from bottom to top.

Now, I thought, I was safe at last. The bottom shelf in all my cases was at least two to three inches up off of the floor and all the shelves were waterproofed from osmosis from below by the paint. Little did I know.

Let me give you a little more background. Directly above my room was the kitchen and in the kitchen was the washing machine. The washing machine had its water intakes off of the sink plumbing and exhausted the soapy water into the sink. The water exhaust produced quite a force so we had a heavy (I'd guess 10-12 lbs) brick sitting on the hose to hold it down. Well, as you've probably anticipated, one day the hose mysteriously worked its way out from under the brick and merrily proceeded to empty the contents of the washer all over the kitchen. Did anybody notice? Nope. The dirty water, following the law of gravity, found itself a hole in the kitchen floor and gurgled down into my room...this time flooding me from above!

Well, what can you do in a situation like that? What would you have done? Myself, I took the cowards way out and moved. I'm not a superstitious man, naturally--not in this modern atomic age--but it's obvious to me that the other place was haunted by a poltergeist or a vile tempered water sprite and the best thing for me to do was leave them alone. So I did.

FAPANS I HAVE MET DEPARTMENT      Inspired by the accounts of others, I find in going down the membership list that I have met no fewer than eleven other members of FAPA and while this is not nearly as impressive as the record of some it still isn't too bad for a fan located in the heart of the Great FAPA Desert (cf. Dick Ryan) who has attended only one large-size convention in his life. The lucky persons were Ron Bennett, Bob Bloch, CM Carr, Ron Ellik (he turns up all the time), Bob Pavlat, John Quagliano, Wm Rotsler, the Lee Shaw half of L. Shaw Ltd., Bob Tucker, both Ted and Sylvia White, and (very briefly) Don Wilson. I hasten to add that I may have met one or two more at the 1952 Chicago convention but my memory is very foggy in that regard...that was one of the lostest weekends I have ever had.

And having met this odd assortment of characters I feel duty bound to give the more fortunate members of FAPA some sort of description of each so that if they ever see a strange-yet-familiar face at the front door some day they will know whether or not to open the door. (A word to the wise in this respect...FAPAns living on the west coast, particularly in the Seattle, Berkeley and Los Angeles areas, should be extra careful in this respect this summer because I plan to be in those areas during the months of July and August. You have been warned. But back to the line-up.)

Bennett is a British sort of character who speaks in multisyllables most of which are incomprehensible but have a definite Irish accent. This is only fair, because Walt Willis (escaped last mailing, before I counted noses) speaks with a definite

British accent. Still, neither Willis nor Bennett were as bad in person as was my encounter with Bob and Sadie Shaw...and I'm still not sure that was their name but the man kept pointing to "The Glass Bushel" in his bound copies of HYPHEN and ate everything in sight so Bob Shaw is a fairly good guess. That doesn't prove that the woman was Sadie, of course. But Bennett, as I have said, was much better. With Pavlat translating I could understand what was being said most of the time. Ron is a very personable, likeable guy with a truly humorous sense of humor and if I may say so at the risk of disPLOYsing him he is much more presentable in person than in print.

Robert Bloch is a nut. I say this with very good authority because although I met him only briefly at the Chicon I have heard many, many things about him from his one-time friend and agent, Bob Tucker...from whom, incidentally, he stole the ideas for most of the stories he later wrote under the penname E. A. Poe. If this is not enough, it is also well known that Bloch has visited Dean Grennell several times and you know what they say about birds of a feather.

I met GM Carr at Chicago in the days when I was a young and serious opponent of the N3F and she was a dedicated adherent of the cause. I remember that she gave me an application blank and I made a paper airplane out of it which was then flown from the window of an upper floor...but there is absolutely no truth to the rumor that I also dumped out several hundred other application blanks, thereby recruiting most of the NFFF's present-day members. Shortly after this, GM (who, incidentally, is a very pleasant personality when not in print) caught her head in an elevator door and I heard no more of the incident. Or her. Come to think of it, it wasn't until after this that she became so obnoxious in print...maybe that bang on the head had something to do with it?

Ron Ellik, contrary to public opinion, does not have a bushy tail...at least he kept it well concealed the two times he has been here if he does. He does chatter all the time, though, and is the ideal person to run fandom's most successful newszine since he is just loaded with all sorts of fannish news and trivia, all of which is very interesting. He seems to have a flair for sorting the most interesting items from a bunch of random happenings and presenting them well. Ron and I also belong to the same club. We are both (a little fanfare music please) Marines.

Bob Pavlat is just about my wife's favorite FAPAn...which makes me wonder just what might have gone on that night you stayed here that I didn't know about, Bob. He is an excellent linguist and can translate English-as-she-is-spoken-by-the-English very well indeed. He is also a timebinder...one of those persons so vital to the continuity of fandom who can remember all of the happenings of fandoms past and link them to fandoms present so that we may have a fandom future.

John Quagliano is a giant of a man...a Notre Dame graduate and just the sort of guy you would picture playing end for their football team. Tall, dark and handsome fits him ideally to a T...unattached females take note. He is a very pleasant, affable guy and carries on an extremely interesting conversation but is apt to give you a crick in the neck if you do not keep him seated at all times.

I met William Rotsler on his home grounds in Camarillo when he was still a settled family man and walnut rancher and although he did not give me any illustrations at the time I nevertheless did not hold it against him as I managed to give him instead several gross of old fanzines and FAPazines. He expressed delight but Abney did not. Just the same she fed me an excellent meal and they plied me with witty conversation until I had to leave, which was much too soon to suit me. We did not go dump-shooting which is one thing I hope to remedy this summer if I can find Bill.

Bob Tucker is also a nut...this on good authority from Robert Bloch, from whom he pirated the idea for a story of a Chinese doll and has never paid a royalty to since. I remember Bob best because he turned out to be just the exact opposite of the vile

pro and huckster he is often pointed out to be to frighten neofans into being good and minding their elders. At the Chicon I found occasion to watch Bob's huckster table for him when he was called away to the phone and while doing so I managed to sell a copy of his old BLOOMINGTON NEWSLETTER (in the days before Ron Ellik and Terry Carr) for 10¢. It was probably the only sale he made all weekend, poor fellow, since he also served as fulltime bartender in the bar (down in the bar, that is) yet he generously split the profit with me 50-50 for my time and effort. I still have and still treasure that 5¢ coin, minted in Bob's own back-yard mint.

Ted White is a thin, intense person, not at all as I had pictured him, and Sylvia is a slim blonde who is apt to give viewers an intense sort of air as they picture her. Ted wore an intensely black beard at the time he was here--now long since shaved, I understand--and this may have given me an entirely different impression of him than is true of the real Ted White. What do you look like sans whiskers, Ted? Sylvia is a doll and those of you that haven't met her are just out of luck because my wife won't let me give a description here.

Lee Hoffman (as she was known at the time) was very preoccupied with Walt Willis at the time I met her and as a result I do not know her very well. She stands out in my memory for her blouse at the Chicon. Now wait a minute...let's not read into that things I did not mean when I wrote it, however true or false they may be. I meant that the blouse she wore was made out of  $8\frac{1}{2}$  x 11 sheets of silk upon which she had printed a number of pages from the most recent issue of QUANDRY. An outstanding achievement (and there I go again...)

And I'm afraid, Don Wilson, that I know you not at all. You may not even remember the night I visited your place in Santa Monica...I know it is only a vague blur in my mind. All I remember is that you were secretary-treasurer at the time, the FAPA deadline was the next day, and I was suffering from a horrible case of the flu and carried my FAPA bundle to your door with my last ounce of strength. Perhaps I'll get a chance to visit you this summer?

THE 80TH MAILING WAS A LONG TIME AGO      In that mailing I published the results of my first FAPA poll. Part of these results included the mention that FAPA's biggest member was 6'3" tall and weighed 230 lbs. At that time I was second or third, I know not which...at any rate, about 6'0" tall and 235 lbs heavy.

Be it hereby known, then, that since that time...well, since December of last year to be more exact...I've lost some 40 pounds and now weigh 195, with ten pounds more still to lose. Seems the doctor and I decided about the same time that I was getting a little too big for my own good and so we did something about it. Poo to those people who say that losing weight is difficult. It's not at all once you decide you are going to do something about it and then stick to that decision.

Meting does have its problems, though. For instance, I have only a half dozen pairs of pants I can still wear, and most of those are old pairs that I haven't been able to get on again until now. And as of this writing, with ten pounds more to lose, even those are getting too big. It really poses a problem. I can't afford to have things cut down until I reach my bottom weight, either, so it looks like I'll have to start wearing suspenders...or else train my reflexes to work fast whenever I feel a draft.

I'm going to dig out my Marine Corps uniforms one of these days and see if they will fit once again. I haven't weighed under 200 lbs since the ill-fated day in 1953 when I decided to enlist and I wouldn't venture even a guess as to when the last time was that I was at a mere 185.

Ellik, you'd never recognize me now.

NEITHER SNOW NOR SLEET DEPARTMENT

Boyd Raeburn to the contrary, this recently past winter was relatively mild...at least it was in these parts, Boyd. Very little snow, it seemed, and only a handful of truly cold days, and the Christmas season was particularly balmy. Almost the way that popular jazz singer, Crosby, tells it.

I worked for the Post Office again, despite the many oaths I took last year not to do it again. But Christmas came and I turned out to be broke again so I put my pride behind me and once again bent my back to manual labor. However, this year I had a different job. Instead of clerking inside at the cancelling table or sorting mail to be delivered, this year I wound up renting my car and serving as a parcel post delivery man all over town. As it turned out, I was lucky--we delivery men worked twice as long as the clerks did this year--but at the time I had grave, very grave misgivings. Not only would this be outside work, subject to the whims of the elements, but driving on roads liable to be crowded and slippery as well and with umpteen dozen stops and starts at the most unlikely places.

However, it went very well and gave me another quick glimpse into the lives of the people who make up the Post Office Department...and the even stranger people to whom they deliver mail six days a week.

It is fun delivering at Christmas time...gives you a warm feeling deep down inside to bring somebody a package they've been counting on getting, not for the material thing it contains but for the remembrance it signifies. Don't tell me there's no such thing as the spirit of Christmas...I know there is. I'll always remember the little old lady to whom I delivered three packages on three different days. She was all alone and very old and so paralyzed and infirm that she could neither come to the door nor open the packages--I had to let myself in each time and then unwrap everything for her. A little irregular, perhaps, and I don't know what the Post Office Inspector would have said, but I was in no mood to refuse her requests. She was so glad each day that a different one of her children still remembered her again for another year that I could hardly listen without tears in my eyes. And of course with every package nothing would do but for her to tell me all about the person who sent it and how she had been so afraid she would hear nothing from that person this year...and on and on until my nagging conscience finally made me break away and get back to my deliveries.

The deliveries varied from the routine to the unusual...some I'd like very much to do again. Early morning deliveries were best. My heart still quivers a little to remember the slim young brunette in the pink peignoir...or the sleepy young wife in her pajamas...and I hardly dare remember the sexy creature who answered the door in just her skin alone, three-quarters asleep, reaching one bare arm among other things around the door for her package. I still cuss myself for my stupidity...why oh why didn't I think to tell her I'd have to come in while she signed for it?

But how about the little kids with the great big eyes at the sight of the mysterious packages in the mail? How about the German couple who got so excited when I came that their English lapsed completely and I never did find out what they were talking about...in words, that is, although their meaning was clear.

During my tenure of office I also discovered one new (to me, at least) measure of social success...a means of telling how far up the ladder you are compared to the people next door named Jones. Door-bells. The poor people or those with plain tastes ran to simple buzzers or continuous bells. The broad middle class had two-tone chimes. The well-to-do, particularly in the ritzier sections of town, had regular orchestras...playing four notes for the lower upper class and eight notes (ding dong dang dong, dong dang ding dong) for the very top of the heap. Only a very few places were so poor as to have no bell at all and about the same number were rich enough to put out only a large, ornate knocker.

Not all is sweetness and light at Christmas, either. I'm sure the Post Office Department did not deliver the package of garbage I found scattered all over the Police Chief's lawn when I got there. Nor did I detect a note of gait in the voice of the woman over on the west side who replied to my knock by flinging open the door, standing squarely in it and glaring at me for a moment before flinging out the only word I have ever heard her speak, a suspicious and belligerent "Yeah?" But then variety is the spice of life, they say.

Still and all, interesting though it may have been, educational as it was, helpful with the bills as it wasn't quite as much as it could have been, I am not, repeat NOT, going to do it again this year. I'm ready for a vacation. This year, for a change, I'd like to try my hand at being the guy who answers the bell, not rings it. And maybe sometimes I'll throw in a good loud sneering "yeah?" so the guy will have something to write about.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE WRENCH... While Salt Lake valley had only a modicum of snow, the Wasatch Mountains to the east did not suffer and I understand the resort facilities ran full tilt all winter long. I did spend a gay night of tobogganing in February and was all set to go into great length about it but the deadline grows near. I'll just mention that we had a hell of a good time...including, so they tell me, the girl who wrenched her leg, the guy who sprained his back, the guy who cut his head, and the guy who gouged his gonads. If the humor in this eludes you, think nothing of it.

I do want to mention my theory that whether or not you get hurt on a toboggan depends entirely on your philosophy, though. (I might also add that we do not use runs as such...just take off down the hill in any old direction though preferably one with a minimum number of trees.) In all honesty I would be perfectly willing to bet that I had more accidents and more crack-ups than anybody else that night and also got hurt the least all because of the state of my mind. Deplorable though it may be otherwise, in this case it helps. You see, most people that night went down the hill hoping desperately they would not fall off and taking every effort to prevent themselves from doing so, thereby being tense and strained when they did fall...and it was a rare person that did not. Now in my case, since I have never managed to get all the way to the bottom of the hill in possession of both the toboggan and my faculties, I expect to fall off. If I did not, then I would be tense and strained, but as it is I invariably find myself buried in some snowbank about half-way down the run in a state of complete relaxation and no injury.

In fact, I was uncomfortable only three times. The first when I went down on a toboggan on my stomach and got the freezing cold spray in my eyes all the way down; the second when I went down the hill on my stomach without a toboggan and found out how much snow is likely to get down your pants that way; and the third time when I decided to try one ride standing up. The thing I disliked most about the last one was that after I finally collected my wits I had to walk all the way to the bottom of the hill and search almost an hour in the dark (this was at night, did I say?), all alone, for my runaway steed, and then tramp all the way back up again pulling it behind me. Climbing back up is hard enough...walking down as well only adds insult to injury.

HOW DEAR TO MY HEART Harry Warner, among others, has in recent mailings discussed some of his childhood games and in so doing recalls some of my fondest memories...and me with my childhood but barely behind me (and some won't even grant me that much).

We used to have rubber band guns too, Harry, but you don't mention one of our most important--the machine gun--so I wonder if it was invented in your area? It had a rifle stock with one to two dozen notches cut in the top, each containing a stretched rubber band, and underlying all of these notches was a long string extending to the

rear of the stock. Pulling up on the string released the bands from their notches, a slow pull firing bursts of only one or two rounds and a quick pull firing off the whole magazine in one burst. It was a major weapon and the man who would attack one of these with a single-shot rifle or pistol was either fool-hardy or blindly optimistic.

In grade school at Daggett, California, we used to play tag on top of an old gravel sorter standing a mile out in the desert away from the school. The person chosen to be it was locked in the pillory (we were studying early American history) and released by the teacher after exactly one minute (this taking place during the noon hour) during which head-start we all ran like hell and climbed up the thirty feet or so of conveyor belt to the top of the crusher...the only way to the top, I might add, and strictly one-at-a-time traffic, so our one minute headstart was none too much with the bottleneck at the foot of the belt. But every time I think of this game I shudder. I cannot understand why nobody ever fell or was accidentally pushed off in all the time we played that game, and it could have happened so easily.

Ordinary games, somehow, didn't appeal to me until I had changed them around a bit. Hide-and-go-seek and tag did not seem to be much fun individually, but I loved the composite called hide-and-go-tag. The plot was roughly the same...everybody else hid while one guy was it, but in this case when he spotted someone he had to tag them to catch them. If they could escape and hide again they were free to do so. To catch the fastest runners, another gimmick was added. Each person tagged helped the person who was originally it to get the others, until eventually it was all of the gang against the last guy. This meant that when you did pick a hiding place it had to be from everybody, not just the guy covering his eyes. This we also played at night only.

As we did my all time favorite, "werewolf." This game required four people to be played at its best...three hunters and one wolf. The wolf took off first and hid within limited but quite large boundaries, the three hunters setting off after him as soon as he howled. As long as any two hunters were in sight of each other they were safe and if they touched the wolf during this time he was dead. If, on the other hand, they were out of sight of the other two and the wolf touched them they were the dead one. And I assure you that when you are systematically combing an area and have to go around both sides of a house at the same time, one side gets two persons and the other side gets only one. If you all three go around the same side, sure as hell the wolf slips around the other and you'll search all night for him in vain until he chooses to howl again. Or slip up from behind to try to pick off a stragler.

This was a war of nerves...and at that time we more than half believed there were real werewolves somewhere on earth and after a while it became difficult to separate imagination from reality. Oh yes...contrary to normal werewolves, we played this game at the dark of the moon, the darker the night the better. At the time we were living by Bryce Canyon, almost a wilderness area with absolutely no lights in the sky from towns or other houses or anything else but stars. And the nights were black as black, believe me. On top of this, the wolf in particular was known to black his face and hands with dirt and wear extra dark clothes. I was so well disguised on one occasion that when I was taken by surprise and almost discovered in an open field I fell to the ground in the rather high grass and weeds and stayed as still as I could, counting on the dark to hide me. The three of them actually walked by on all sides of me--including my dog--and my brother stepped on my hand without knowing it. I couldn't resist rising up immediately behind them and howling, thereby risking immediate capture, but the effect of my materializing from the very earth so unnerved them that they all screamed and ran and I disappeared in the other direction before they could settle down, quite pleased with myself. And then...but the eleventh hour is already half gone and if I want to make the mailing I have time only to mention hurriedly that this has been a STARFLAME PUBLICATION.