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SAPS Mailing #63

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Counting the mailings and viding by four, we find that this issue rounds out the 7th year of publication for RETRO. For those who are wondering what "viding" is, it differs from dividing only in that the latter is not a typo. All clear there now?

Something

Mailing Comments

There now! I have finally put in Something beside Mailing Comments in this zine. Spectator 62: I think 360 pages is a nice comfortable sized mailing, and that 31 out of 36 is pretty fair representation, also. Particularly since 2 of the Immorals [Art and Nancy] were in the throes of preparing to move to Italy where the wild pizza grows.

Die Wis 7: Ah there, you bloody-minded peacemonger. Nice try, but you'll never ever convince a ban-the-bomber that unilateral disarmament is not a Fun Type Thing.

I hope you are all out of that legalength paper.

Spy Ray: I like your touch with the historicals: "...the Army of the Potomac deployed about a mile and a half north of Bob Pavlat's house..."

Pot Pourri 26: Your Army series is something I look forward to in each mailing. One of these times I want to read through the entire lot in sequence. I hope you'll decide to reprint in SAPS the early installment(s?) that have appeared elsewhere.

Coconino 2: Always at past Conventions I have attended the Banquets; five at WorldCon and five at regional Cons, to be precise. ChiconIII was the first time I wore a coat and tie to one of those feeds; it is also, I think, the last time. It is a matter of physical discomfort in two respects. I am miserable with the nerves and veins at the sides of my neck constricted by a buttoned collar. I am also very uncomfortable when overheated by excess clothing, and as we all know, temperatures at social events are regulated for the benefit of the ladies, who dress lightly at such times. So I am comfortable in an open-collar sport shirt (no undershirt) and this is what I wear in daily life except for duty-occasions such as weddings and funerals. In the past I have had to wear the blanket-and-noose more often, but some years ago I said the hell with this nonsense and dropped away from groups and associations that required it.

It has been my feeling that we all attend Conventions for enjoyment. Traditionally the Banquet is the High Point of the Con. We all realize that we are paying quite a markup over menu-prices, for the Banquet; besides tax-and-tips we are paying for the dinners of the speakers and their wives-- Lord knows they earn that free meal. But I be damn if I will pay good money to put up with physical discomfort. Not again, I won't. [I got hooked at Chi because Elinor promised to make me a special shirt, with collar modeled after that of a sport shirt I had. It didn't come out right, though.] Either the deal is for fun or it is for looking "good" to the photographers. In the latter case, Con Banquets can go into my memory book alongside of lodge meetings, fraternity-alumni lunches, and other events I haven't been anywhere near in some years. I figure the stuffed-shirts will get along very nicely without me. And vice-versa.

Niflheim 2: Yes, Dave, there is a George Jennings; I always get him confused with George Spencer and someone else whose name I can never remember at all, but he really exists, if you can call it that, in Texas. He & somebody put out a big zine with no title once, full of material by fabulous fans like Richard Koogle.

I hope you've been getting the CRYs with Jerry Pournelle's series of articles on thermonuclear strategy. Knocks out a lot of common misconceptions, Jerry does, and I think you would dig his approach.

Resin 12: I had not realized there had been so many Norse expeditions to "Vinland". Seems odd that they would not somehow have set up a colony that stuck.

Outsiders 50: Blanchard in '66! What kind of a deal are you getting from the management of the Convention Quonset? Maybe the Con Committee could go into business with its own bar, and make more money than any WorldCon in history.

Wrai, 250 grains sounds awfully light for the .45-70. The standard military load as I recall was something like 405-gr, and I knew a guy who reloaded with 500-gr slugs.

I hope you list some of the proposed Blanchard in '66 (!) Con Committee this time. Without going to the files, about all I can recall are George Willick to handle the Hugoes, and Richard S Shaver for Guest of Honor. You're off to^a fine start there. And I like the idea that Earl Kemp and Don Ford have to wear a tuxedo to the Banquet.

The Wild Colonial Boy 2: I dug the title-ballad and the background info on it, too.

Martin James' story seems overly obscure, but not bad for his age.

I hope a copy of "The Barrett Chronicles, Pt 1" somehow goes to Jim Caughran, onetime Traveling Giant whose one great sorrow is that he has never even been to Hong Kong. ### Yes, it is told in the council houses during long winter evenings that SAPS did indeed have its first mailing in 1947 and has averaged 4 mailings per year since that time. I say "averaged" because schedules have been shifted a few times with the winter mailing being sometimes December and sometimes January, so that there must have been at least one 5-mailing year and one with only 3 mailings. Come to think of it, I joined in a 3-mailing year! Howard shifted from the Mar-June-Sept-Dec sked to a Jan-Apr-July-Oct system still in vogue, with the July '56 mailing.

Did Doug Nicholson invent his "disability theory of fandom" independently, or had he heard of the more-or-less "famous" Handicap Theory evolved by Jack Speer sometime in the late 1930s? Since the "truth" of either proposition depends mightily upon the definition of terms, Jack's version has a great advantage as to provability; Jack can cite anything as a handicap if it leaves you dissatisfied with a steady diet of TV and your daily newspaper, as your ration of communication and ideas. A strict definition of disability, even if emotional, circumstantial and social are added to Doug's classes of "physical and mental", makes his formulation applicable to a great deal less people than can be cited under Jack's version, which can be (and has been) stretched to cover persons who are considered reasonably happy and successful both by themselves and by others. It is true that physical disabilities have influenced a number of intelligent and talented people to put a lot more time and effort into fandom than they would have done otherwise, in all likelihood, in the same fashion that literature and art have gained in similar case. But-- and here, I think, is where both Speer and Nicholson miss the boat-- the basic attraction and enjoyment here is precisely that the person with the disability can in fandom override and negate it in fannish dealings, dealing on perfectly equal and no-handicap terms with the rest of the fannish world. I doubt that this attraction would exist to any great extent if everybody or even a majority of fans all uniformly had a leg in a cast up to the neck, say. Seem reasonable?

Collector 32: The homebrewed African cannon sounds familiar but I may have it confused with the rifles the natives were making in India last century; also a fieldpiece or 2, I think. These JDs with their zipguns are nothing but pikers, I guess.

I agree that by reasonable objective standards the Hothouse SERIES should not have been eligible as Short Fiction. I agree even more that in a case of this kind it is not worth it to buck the electorate, no matter how unreasonable (within limits) they may be in their voting. The limits? The Committee has to play it by ear, is all.

I missed Paul Smith at Chicon, so I guess there is something to be said for that cockeyed hotel layout at that. I saw Paul Smith at PittCon and my theory is that many years ago he started out to an American Legion Convention and wound up at an S-F Con by mistake, and that he has not ever yet discovered his mistake. I am sure that Paul S was not at SeaCon because our layout was such that if he had been there it would have been impossible to miss him, and to my knowledge nobody was thrown into the swimming pool. The man is quite high on my all-time list of Slobs I Have Met, and I toyed with various possible ways of tricking him out of attending Seacon, but the trouble was that there were two Paul Smiths on the Pittcon roster and I didn't know which one he was. However, neither of them joined Seacon so all was well. That man should be prohibited by law.

When the Gods Would Sup 6: You make North Africa sound like a real pisspot, just like everyone else who writes about it. May you emerge from there soon, and hale.

A man of 80 would have 1/4 the IQ he had at 20? Well, maybe, if he lived wrong, but you have the test-scoring just backward: below 16 (or whatever) an age-factor is applied to raw scores; the same score gives a lower IQ up to 16 and constant after that.

Pleasure Units 3: You, sir, are digging the essence of this sterling group so well that if I had not met you in person I would suspect that you were one of the Old Guard in a clever plastic disguise. Well, maybe you are, at that. A very good point, that MCs require switching the line of thought rather than just following one main line as is the case with the article or essay. I wish I'd thought of that...

Well, thanks for the vote of confidence, but-- er-- the reason I can't bring SAPS up to date on Hardwick is that --er-- I don't hear Hardwick these days. The trouble is that I have just 30 minutes of listening time in the morning, and a long time ago when the station assigned 15 minutes of that to a bobble-jawed newscaster, so that half the time the "episode" would begin just as I had to leave for work, I gave up in frustration. So you fill in the group, and specifically including me; I'd like to catch up...

I get the distinct hunch that Dorf's letter is putting us on, as is his wont.

Air Mail Special: I don't know what you wild colonial boys were drinking thru the porthole, but put just a little bit more turpentine in mine, please-- fo' smoothness.

Real swingin', for the most part, though.

Yezidee 2: Hoo boy; I'd purely admire to hear from the folks you housed at "Rincon" for the Fair here. I expect that's more like RENTON. It is also closer to the Century 21 grounds than are the north City Limits, Renton and Seattle being back to back somewhere this side of South 100th and Seattle running out to North 145th. O well...

Slug 4: Dammit Wally, I can't write for laughing. Did the fungus ever get cured?

Flabbergasting 25 (misnumbered 24): Did you ever get cured of the fungus? Who got the joint membership, is what I would like to know? Just be glad this isn't FAPA, is all.

I agree with you on several items that would not (my agreement would not, that is) make much sense to the reading public here without spelling all items out for a page or two: notably, the bit of the intelligence and persistence of Mark Walsted. Ah, so...

I see now what your trouble was. You didn't have fungus at all. What happened was that one of your Tufted Purple Gezoinks sprouted. You gotta watch them, man.

"I sure would hate to have to go through childbirth"-- all right now, dammit, you have given yourself away there, I guess you know. How did you evade being born, huh? [And you can't be a natural-hatched Barsoomian, or you'd have trouble with our gravity.]

Mistily Meandering 3: Glad you dug "A Talent for Loving". Two more books that seem to me to use Condoneesque descriptive lines [as: "Hearing Raymond talk about his mother was rather like listening to Orestes griping about Clymenestra"] are "Pictures From an Institution" by Randall Jarrell (nonoNO, not Garrett) and "Catch-22" by Joseph Heller-- the latter has been flacked in a fanzine at least once, by Buck Coulson I think, and believe me it is a pisseroo at the very least. Boyd Raeburn recommended the Jarrell book; he also nudged us on "To Kill a Mockingbird"; so far he is batting 1.000.

If you want to costume from Jack Vance, do not overlook "Planet of the Damned".

Perian 1: What you do to the offending North Redondo Beach P O Station is similar to how to Get Back At A Bank. You rent a P O Box (or send a stooge to do this for you) in a phony name, and then you mail dead fish to this box at random intervals. I'm sure the ingenuity of the present readership is equal to devising even better ploys, too.

I still say you can't beat plain ol' pot-coffee; just lift it off as it comes to a boil. We add one further step: let it settle and then decant it off the grounds into another container for sitting on the warmer and slowly vanishing in the normal fashion.

Some of this we covered in letters, as: thanks for the weird scoop on the Sandy State hanging. And I tole ya that Kloote is the faanish ghod, for jelly doughnuts...

Jeez, but you sure did put Boggs with an appropriate dull thud there. Ooog.

The Zed 802: Sheest; digging into the job of cleaning a large mammal without any prior experience on smaller models-- that's quite a feat. I've had it with various kinds of fish, with chickens, and with small mammals-- oops, ducks, also-- but I would think twice before tackling a larger beastie in the privacy of my own home. Good for you.

Retro 27: Cancel the bit about trying to slow-roast a stuffed bird; dressing has to be cooked quickly or it spoils and sort of like maybe kills you off, I find out now.

"What's good for Milo Minderbinder is good for the war effort..." [[Catch-22]]

Mest 12: Hey, you mean you are actually working in TV down there at your school?

Watling Street 15: I like to read about people having fun doing interesting things, as in the case of your BArea Trip Report-- but what else is there to say, man?

Dinky Bird 5: I do like your comments. I know that it can never be a compliment for anyone to be told of a resemblance to someone else, when the someone else was there first-- not really. But perhaps you can forgive my citing such a resemblance in that the clear bright directness of your remarks reminds me strongly of Elinor's, and Elinor has been my favorite wife and girl friend for nearly nine years now.

"what good is half an Eney?" Try that line in FAPA or in the Cult (hey, Dick?)

Ditur = Detour. Yup, thanks. They just pile this stuff too high and I forget...

The poems each have some lovely hooks in them for the reader's double-take.

Pink Platypus et al, 2: You have a good point, that this society does not countenance any degrees of erotic-type love between 100% and nearbeer-strength. This restriction is sort of silly, because the intermediate grades of affection will obviously exist regardless of sanction. What it boils down to is that people simply refrain from expressing feelings that may be taken wrong. Now I am about as married as anyone you are likely to run into. Yet I naturally like and admire and appreciate a number of fine gals in an overall fashion that could hardly exclude the sexual unless I were some kind of Puritan fanatic. But it is not kind to shake people up, so in the general case I do not let on to these nice square ladies that there is any erotic component to my sincere liking for them. Or at least, not any more than they can take as juiceless compliment. Well, this is a pretty deep schtick, but you're doing just fine so far.

So don't worry or fret so much, huh? You're among friends; relax now.

Illegitimate Son... Certainly I have seen you in better moods, Jxtn ol' buddy.

Warhoon 18: Nice job of editing my letter: from one page down to 4 lines, and of course deleting each and every item of dissent. Ted Pauls will be proud of you, Richard...

I think you're putting me on, in your comments re my "too many apas" squib, since you seem to be tying my remarks to assertions that run about 90° slaunchwise, mostly; rather than either agreeing or disagreeing, I think you are building some straw men.

You have thoroughly demolished my theories about Bob Leman (re SAPS and FAPA); I am mortified at missing one of the two FAPazines of his that you cite, because after all my eyeballing before writing my ideas, there that zine's title and pagecount is staring accusingly back at me. The other Lemanzine that I missed was sheer bad luck, though, folks. It does not appear in the listing in any Official Organ, and for a while there I thought that you (RB) were ribbing me, for missing the other one. However, it turns out that one large zine of Leman's is listed only in a last-minute "Fantasy Armature" which itself is not listed in any OO. So I'm only half as stupid as you first thought.

However, you have still ruined my theory, which had been that Leman dropped SAPS because he ran out of time due to work-pressures. Being a scientific-minded type I am forced to look for a new theory based on your new data, correcting my incomplete-type observations. Now if I have this straight finally with your help, our subject published 64 pages in SAPS his first year, 36 pages his second year, then dropped out, joined FAPA, published 64 pages his first year, 8 pages at the end of his second year, and is still in FAPA; right? OK, you have convinced me that work-pressures were not the vital influence. I am forced to admit that it looks as if this guy is given to huge flurries of interest and activity at first in an apa, and after that it slacks off. It appears that his interest slacks off faster in some apas than in others (2nd-year figures). I certainly did foul that first idea up with inadequate research; didn't I though?

I did not exactly spot your "long list of other top fans who rejected SAPS for FAPA" as "supremely unimportant"; quite the contrary. I took pains in the Pillar Poll writeup last year to point out exactly how many of the past few years' toppers were or were not still around on the roster; the statistics were on my side and I said so. OK?

I will refrain (from sheer laziness) from citing a list of "top fans who have rejected FAPA" in favor of mundane. I mean, sure, I might prove a point, but I am not so sure that any of us would be particularly taken by it. But I guess it all helps...

I begin to dig the weave and texture of that fine needlework of your replies to me, Dick. I intended to indicate this by handing you a deadpan example of my own and asking Hey, have I got the technique right? But I find that I cannot construct such an example; in order to do so I would have to cut a whole new set of mental grooves.

It seems simple enough to do, scanning your last paragraph on page 41: First one says "Your point A does not prove your point B" [which of course it doesn't-- the two being in different paragraphs and in different though related lines of thought]. Second, one makes a positive, associative, obviously-correct statement which carries the implication that one's chosen patsy has said the fuggheaded opposite. Third, if one wishes, it is nice to ornament the presentation by adding a telling point [such as the inherent weaknesses of IPSO] just as if the same point had not been made specifically in the very item under the needle. I wonder what else I've still not noticed... it's a fascinating study, at any rate [or, "don't stop me now, man; I've got to where I like that plink-plink-plink jazz!" -- S. Freberg].

¿Porque? 16: GOOD ol' wringer-type washing machines! I learned to use one of those things while stationed on Amchitka Island in the Aleutians ["Garden Spot of the Aleutians" we used to say, so I guess you know what kind of shape we were in]. I had the choice of learning to use that monster or getting by for 13 months on one change of clothes. So I guessed wrong and tried the machine. I put in all these soiled white cloths and they came out O.D. No, my O.D. stuff had not faded; it was just that we had O.D. water there. This is a characteristic of Aleutian "lakes" which consist of shallow depressions in the tundra and no drainage. The Army was pretty nice about helping us to avoid having O.D.-colored insides; it added plenty chlorine for bleaching purposes, which also killed the big gooey bugs so you did not have to strain them out with your teeth. Anyway, the first time I used the machine I broke it. I felt very bad about this and hoped nobody would find out, but I needn't have worried; every time anyone used the machine, he broke it; it was just a normal part of the routine.

Hoping you are not the same...

The punchlines for "Watch for Rolling Rock" and "Watch for Falling Rock" signs are: "That damn Indian is loose again!", and: "Oh, NO! So is his crazy brother!"

A Vote for Doreen: OK, OK-- so I did awready yet...

Stumping 3: If the 9mm Luger had been delivering up to 1500fps all those years, then the big fanfare about the .357 Magnum's 1510fps, back when that caliber was introduced, is about like Chrysler inventing the hemispherical combustion chamber. Come to think of it, the impressive tables topped by the .357 generally included only US calibers in those days, at that. Yeh, and the Corvair is all original with General Motors, hey?

Let me tell these kind people about your Labrador puppy, Sheba; OK? Doreen and Sheba dropped by here yesterday noon. We said come on in, and Doreen said Sheba isn't housebroken, and we said that's OK we'll put up the gate so she will be strictly on the linoleum and it won't matter. So she wasn't, and she did, and it didn't. 3 times is all, which is not bad for her age. She liked the paper we put down in the corner, tho. Very tasty and chewy, and she liked the way it rustled when she grabbed a corner and shook it, too. Puppies are cute as all hell; hardly anything is more fun to watch. I will not try to describe Sheba except that she is black with a white blaze and tiny white tip to her tail and white paws. And will grow up to be the size of a moosecalf, if she is anything like the other Labradors I have known. Sure cute right now, anyhow.

Astonishing Stories: OK, your story hangs together pretty well. You can go, but don't leave town just yet without letting us know; see?

Somebody earlier in the mailing was asking if I could interpret the Tape Talk you included in the Oct '62 mailing. The answer is no, probably. Not unless the 7-level Friden code is basically the 5-level Teletype code with a couple of control levels added, and I don't think it is. I can decode Teletype tape pretty well, 5-level; I do not know it all 100% perfectly any more [never having been an operator, I never did learn it all that thoroughly] but I remember enough to interpolate fairly well.

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The right to sell women is really the right to be free...

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Hieroglyphic 2: So you are going the humor route to popularity in mundane? It works rather well, or did for me at any rate in my mid-teens, but you have to watch it that you don't get the tag of being nothing but a funny man amongst your peer-group. All it takes is a change of pace, but the boffo routine can become habit-forming, if you don't baffle 'em with the change-up now and then just to show you can do it.

Speleobem 18: Bruce, you must have one of the longest "live" strings of consecutive appearances in the mailing by now, haven't you? John (Berry) and you must be in line right after Tosk on this bit; after that I lose track completely.

Somehow I wish you had not run for a Third Term, but I am hard put to Explain Why; certainly you've done a fine hard-working job of piloting this mob for the past two years. Maybe I'll have room to ramble and analyze my misgivings further on, but for now let's just say that I would vote for you at any time to succeed someone else as OE, but that I'd vote for any capable responsible member to succeed you, also. OK, I suppose that on the face of it this attitude does not make too much evident sense...

Your Christmas trip sounds like a live one. And I will never again suspect you of being an egoboo-hound: no such would ever match trip reports with Madeleine in the same issue. You do jes' fine, but Madeleine does fabulously indeed. You're brave.

Elinor left a note in SPEBEM re Gondal being a fantasy world "shared by all the Brontes". She says: "Gondal was shared only by Emily & Anne Bronte. Bramwell and Charlotte shared Angria". I know not; I only pass these notes back and forth, like.

My faith is rewarded; I said you might have a reason for those illegal (thus, officially nonexistent) postmailings, and by golly you did.

The bug that goes all to pieces for dyestuffs is not coconino but cochineal; no? To the best of my recollection, Artless Artwork is my very own invention, but no, I did not patent it. I'm glad you like it; its public does not seem to be in the overwhelming majority, somehow. ## Thanks, also, for being one to fill me in on both the Ring of Ditur and the Sandy State noosebanger. ## Maybe if Pippin moves to LA, he will start a movement that will drive everyone else out of LA. I pass the obvious line...

A blimp has no rigid structure and a dirigible does have one.

...nothing but gingerbread LEFT; LEFT; LEFT my wife and SEVenteen children in STARVing condition with NOTHING but gingerbread LEFT; (LEFT; etc): a nonstop nonsense rhyme immortalized by Kuttner in a story using the crucial phrase as title. 1942-3? And SPEBEM 18.1: You killed the wild-election ploy, but the fact that it is necessary today in SAPS to announce that we're only funnin', fellas, as shown by the reaction to your modest ploy after the voting deadline in the Pelz-Lichtman/Durward election, shows that it is just as well we did not try to resurrect the old games just now. Our (SAPS) president gave a list awhile back of ex-SAPS to be missed and mourned. Well and good, but you know who I miss in SAPS? ...George and Mary Young. Es Adams. Ray Schaffer. Roger Teddy Bear Sims. Bill Meyers. Larry Stone. Rich Brown (maybe not too much longer, if he has not mislaid his Funny hat). Nan Gerding as she swung circa 1956-7. Dirty ol' SaM(artinez), even though I should not admit in print that I get such kicks from crummy ol' unmailable jokes, in these bland times. Dude Jawn Davis. And to paraphrase a current political boff, Hell, sometimes I even miss Norman G Wansborough!

Well, whatever SAPS may have lost in recent years, it has gained mightily and overwhelmingly in pretentiousness. They can't take that away from us, biGhod.

T * H * W * U * N * K * !

That rude and raucous noise signaled the end of comments on the 62nd mailing of the Spectator Amateur Press Society in all its glory or whatever you want to call it.

[Axiom: no group is doing worth a damn unless its buffs feel free to insult it.]

I keep having this feeling that it is rank treachery to be putting these small zines into SAPS and FAPA, both of which I dig. So far I haven't missed a mailing or sunk to needing pagecount (in any given next-mailing) in either group, whereas I did miss mailings in IPSO and I think oftenneeded pagecount in N'APA while a member there. I am beginning to think that pagecount need not have much indicative relationship to enthusiasm or interest, for the individual as well as for the group at large and maybe lucky to be that way. I'm not sure what my smallest SAPSzine has been (7pp?) but I dropped down to 4pp in FAPA at least once. It's not loss of interest(s) as such; it is

on the contrary a pileup of interests (additional; it is only in recent months that I have been getting letters of 20pp and up, demanding considerable attitude-search for answering purposes). I do have a growing reluctance to engage in the actual mechanics of publishing, but I guess this hits all of us sooner or later, and (as Wally Weber has said about the Post Awful) it is just something we got to live with. [We put CRY on commercial repro, taking a cue from Bergeron's doing the same with WRHN, but still the running off of apazines is something I put off until the last minute, somehow.]

Oh well; maybe I really will get that goddamn Gestetner fixed, one of these days.

LET US TALK about beer for a minute. As you may know we make our own, and have done so since March of 1957 (a good year). We began with 5-1/2-gallon batches which is the size recommended for beginners, and switched that same year to the 7-gallon batch which is two cases of quarts and about a half-case of stubbies. We have shuffled the ingredients quite a bit, going from one brand of malt to another (and finally back to the first one), from corn sugar to honey (with something like half the hangover-quotient of corn sugar which itself is a much better deal than grocery sugar in that respect), and from grocery yeast to a brewers'-yeast culture that gives less than 1/3 the sediment. We make the stuff fairly light since I have no ambition to fall on my face in the typer, or at least we always made it fairly light up until now.

Tomorrow we will bottle batch #315. SUPERbatch #315, that should be, maybe. We keep hearing about all this superbeer. Bill Donaho uses 1.6 pounds of active ingredients per gallon and we have been making do on a paltry one pound per. So we put a batch in the crock that's more Bill's speed than our usual one. This will be outside our usual rotation plan for our sets of cases-of-bottles, and we will conserve it to serve on special occasions such as when some idiot says our usual stuff is not as strong as he generally likes. Or when we just might plain like to get a little bit planked, for fun.

Gee, I hope I am not offending anyone by accident. On purpose is OK, of course. Ah, there, anyone; am I offending you on purpose? No, I guess not. Tough luck, all.

* * * * *

Yesterday [today being April 3rd] we had a visitation from Sidney Coleman. All of you who were around these mailings 3 years ago will remember Sidney, because he is good and true and beautiful and shaped like a semi-colon [unlike Earl Kemp, who as you will recall makes the Marquis de Sade look like Mary Worth, has harpies like other people have fleas, and commits 37-X at every opportunity]. That little essay of Sidney's must be one of the 3 funniest items ever to appear in SAPS, even though my quotations do make it sound like a sourcebook for D Bruce Berry [Earl printed it in SaFari].

Sidney is presently based in Cambridge, Mass, and environs. He is on a little trip during which he gives seminars at the U of Wash and U of Cal, each school paying half of his travel expenses. "This is the leisure of the theory class", he explained.

Tomorrow morning he is heading for Berkeley and I hope y'all have a fine time too.

Two days ago our sterling legislooture managed to pass a bill allowing the sale of beer in 7-ounce cans as well as the previous 11-, 12-, 16-, and 32-ounce containers. This morning the paper carried an Olympia Brewing Co. ad for the new size: "Little Oly" will be sold in 8-packs. That's pretty quick work; you don't suppose the company could have had any advance info out of the hallowed halls where our laws are made, do you?

I guess this will be a handy size at that: the oldtime "short beer" in a can. An even handier relaxation of our state law would be one to permit the sale of hard-likker in "mickies", the little shot-sized bottles used in railroad club cars, etc. This is, of course, not practical in our present state-monopoly liquor stores with all their red tape, but then I happen to have some subversive unWashingtonian ideas about that, too.

Our solons also kept their string unbroken by raising the likker taxes again...

I have a letter from Ron Ellik [along with Wrai Ballard and Dick Eney] requesting a writeup on SAPS for a revised edition of the N3F "Fandbook" dealing with the apas. Ronel is then going to graft bits and pieces of these 3 presentations together and print the result; I can just see Ron trying to crossbreed 3 different styles with his own as required for the transitions; hoo boy; I think I'll stick to the barest of fact.

FIGHT, Utopia! Fight, fight, fight...!

The meetings of the Nameless Ones are a lot more fun than they used to be. In the old days, with coffee extruding my nerves out through my skin like unto tendrils, I'd find myself getting frustrated and bitter and insulting. In the new days, with beer gently laving those same nerves I find myself getting frustrated and happy & insulting. It makes a world of difference, to me at least. Take last night's meeting, for instance.

The meeting was at Jerry Pournelle's place. We arrived only a little bit late and hardly anyone was as yet in attendance; awhile later the place was really packed.

So it go along and it go along, and finally Wally Weber and Phil Jaskar went out to corral Paul Stanbery and our Ring Trilogy that he had had for some months. So in a relatively short while, Paul was telling us about the Utopia that forms the basis of a stf-novel he is presently working on. Naturally, Paul caught bloody hell from all sides including mine for the flaws we found in his concepts, but he put up a good fight. Then Jerry Pournelle, our host, delineated the mechanics of his ideal political system, and fared not much better than Paul had done except that Jerry is perhaps just a little bit harder to interrupt than Paul is, if you can imagine such a thing.

Actually it was all good clean fun and we had a ball except for Mr. Alexander Pournelle who was put to bed in midfestivity on the totally unfair grounds that he is only about 2 feet tall and everybody else has the weight and the reach on him. So...

I will not be so unfair as to summarize-then-refute either Paul's or Jerry's "Utopian" concepts; each should have the opportunity to give a bare-bones presentation in print before anyone presents a dissection. Let it stand that the two ideas are as diametrically opposed as if they had planned it that way, and that I think that both of the constructions suffer from the fault-in-common that "you can't get there from here!"

I will resist all temptations to enlarge on the theme that either Paul or Jerry are trying to do any wellknown book-Utopias in straightface; on to the main thesis!

As a purveyor of Utopias I am a dismal failure. The reason is basic and incurable: I simply cannot think in terms of the accomplished design; I am impelled to consider the means by which the desired condition could be reached, starting from the present. As a matter of fact, this necessity loused up my going-to-sleep daydreaming at the age of about 14; I kept going to sleep during the preface, so to speak.

I still have the same trouble, generally speaking. Faced with a concept that is radically different from today's practices, I find myself unable to consider/evaluate it purely on its own merits in vitro, as it were; I am hagridden by the suspicion that it is a waste of time to debate the merits of theoretical constructions that are also practical impossibilities. Given the premise that the state would be a healthier piece of work if psychopaths were disenfranchised or if neglected children were raised by trained high-empathy professionals, my considerations of the validity of the arguments are swamped or at least heavily diluted by the persistent nagging question: "What is the first step that you would recommend toward achieving this end?" And I find that a logical and practicable first step is seldom if ever forthcoming from the proponents of Utopian remedial measures. Give 'em 3 or 4 free moves and they are hell on wheels, but the Utopian cookbook never seems to tell us how to catch our rabbit to begin with.

There is one thing I learned very thoroughly some years ago, and I recommend it to the attention of all persons who retain any sentimental attachment to reality:

You can only start from where you are, and from nowhere else whatsoever.

I have noticed that this statement is highly inflammatory to many people; they do not like it at all, and in extreme cases it is taken as personal insult, not to say as mortal offense (although I did so say, just now; didn't I?)

Unlike many, I have no final answers, especially for those who refuse to see the necessity for interim answers along the road to anyone's Utopia. I am always interested in Proposals For A Better World, if only these did not usually appear to involve the substitution of a brand-new Ideal Population for the current us-included bunch of hammerheads who inhabit the here and now. But perhaps I am merely prejudiced in favor of myself, not wishing to be replaced by an ideologically-imbued zombie so that Utopian theory may triumph over logic and adrenals and gonads and common sense.

There's that, too: Utopias and cojones seem to be mutually incompatible. Why?