

SELF-PRESERVATION #10

(Special Legible issue
in commemoration of the
fact that I bought a new
impression roller.)

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You know what you have caused me to do? You have tricked me into moving the margin setting on the typewriter. Like, I just stuck the stencil in and automatically made the adjustment. I suppose this is not such a terrible evil. I can always get it back to where it was. But for some intangible reason, probably with roots buried in my early childhood, I hate resetting the margins. In fact I rarely set the rt hnd margin at all, which may account for more than a few of my problems.

It is all your fault. Yes, I mean you! Every once in a while I think about you--that body of eager FAPAns out there. I was thinking about you just a moment or so ago, in the context of Gee whiz, gang, I reckon it is nigh about time to put out a FAPAzine, eh wot? (If my hashed up idioms on paper bug you, think how they irk the people I speak aloud to.)

Anyway, I have this feeling that I really ought to put out a FAPAzine at least once every year or so, and I think it is a year or so since I did one, so here it is.

Hey, I picked up a hologram the other day. I am completely fascinated. I don't understand it at all. Oh, sure, I know all those words about interference patterns and that jass. I've read the Nat Geo article, the explanation in Edmunds Catalog, and sundry other notes hither and yon. But having a Grim Teutonic Mind, I like analogies and visualizations. I have always enjoyed thinking of the universe as consisting of oversized oranges, ping pong balls, and basketballs. I conceive of atoms as made from modified tinkertoy sets. A radio engineer once explained over-modulation to me in terms of dumping red ink into a city water supply system (I did especially enjoy that one). But when I try to square a hologram away in my mind in terms of pointy arrows, flights of gæse or bouncing bee-bees, I don't get it.

The trouble with the damn thing is that it works. I gaze into it and there are these three dimensional objects which I can visually move myself about, within limits. I shield half of the hologram and I can still see the whole scene, etc., etc.

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Staring into it gives me a kind of looking-glassish feeling, especially since the subjects are chessmen.

Now I am all intrigued by this business of two different holograms, taken separately, which can be played back separately, both on the same plate.

I kind of wish I understood the fool thing. But maybe if I did, it would destroy my Sense of Wonder about it all.

It reminds me of an exhibit I saw some years back, like maybe twenty. A whale came to Savannah, and I went to see it. It came in a converted boxcar, and was preserved. Along with the whale, there were some other goodies in the show, like an octopus (pickled, I think), and a mermaid. To see the mermaid, you looked through this little glass window, and there she was in full-color three D, combing her long golden hair. She looked maybe four inches high, and had much the same quality about her as the figures in the hologram.

Speaking of pickled octopi, the drug-store across the street from my father's store had one. There was this big glass apothecary jar--the round-bellied kind, if you know what I mean, up on top a display case. For years I was in and out of that store, and half-noticed the thing. Eventually it came across to me that it was some kind of ropy, coily snaky-looking mess with suckers. And at last I put two and two together and realized it was a pickled octopus, like in the ancient tradition of apothecaries. Sometimes I wonder where it came from originally (and when), and what has become of it. I hope they didn't throw it out.

A while back I was going to make candied octopus for a dinner party I was giving. I went around the corner to my friendly neighborhood octopus store, and they had a whole counter full of fresh ones. But as I studied over the situation, I realized they were whole octopi. I don't know whether the store would sell pieces, or require you to buy the whole thing. And I don't know how to clean an octopus anyway. I didn't ask. I made candied pigs' ears instead. They didn't come out very well, I used pickled pigs ears. I should have used fresh ones.

YES, VIRGINIA, TV CAN BE EDUCATIONAL DEPT:

I watch kiddie shows and, believe me, they are enlightening. For instance I learned from "Captain Universe" that "a square inch of air weighs fourteen pounds". And from "Officer Joe Bolton" that Aristotle had a wife named Xanthippe.

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I have this file folder, which I have marked "Notes for FAPA-zines". Over the past year, I have occasionally made note of one thought or another, and shoved it into the folder. The preceding item comes therefrom. So does the following.

FOOTNOTE TO PROJECT REPORT #1

"...Buddha ate mushrooms...at his last supper on earth before being carried to Nirvana..."

"...Seven kinds of hallucinogenic mushrooms have been gathered..."

MUSHROOMS, MOLDS AND MIRACLES
by Lucy Kavalier

Is it possible that the Flower of Eternal Life that Gilgamesh sought was actually a mushroom?

"But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden...you shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die...the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise..."

Could the fruit of the "Tree of Life" actually have been a fungus?

((Maybe it was a banana tree?))

MORE FROM THE FILE:

"You don't remember me, do you?"

That's a sucker's question--one only a true masochist would ask. If the person being asked did remember and wanted to remember, he would probably have greeted the questioner with a hearty Hello there, you old sob, or something equally appropriate, which would render the question unnecessary and superflous.

If the person being asked does not remember, he is of course immediately put on the defensive and can either be politely embarrassed, or can turn aggressive. My own favorite reply would be something in the vein of "Should I? Is there something memorable about you?" but I rarely have the gall to say it.

Instead, I tend to mumble as unintelligibly as I can and from then on to do my best to ignore the boor who took such delight in putting me on the defensive. I am easily antagonized and alienated, so keep in mind that if you want to make an enemy of me, next time you see me, tromp up and say something witty like, "You don't remember me, do you?" I will know from that that you are one of the vast body of boobs I don't care whether I remember or not.

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Since making the note on the preceeding page, I've read THE GAMES PEOPLE PLAY, and it seems to me I was probably right. The "You don't remember me, do you?" stchik probably is one of those destructive games, in which the player's goal is to hurt himself and you both. He can take satisfaction in proving that he is not worth remembering and at the same time in having proven you to be mean and inconsiderate in not remembering him, or something on that order.

ON TO THE NEXT NOTE IN THE FOLDER DEPT:

One of my favorite pastimes is feeding animals. I far prefer the zoos where it is permitted over the DON'T variety. I could go on at great length about assorted animals I have fed, like a lovely doe in the Okefinokee, and a cageful of nutty raccoons, or the giraffes at the Bronx zoo, or the turtles that dove for popcorn. And about the animals I didn't feed, like the gator at large in a river outside Wilmington, N.C. (I didn't have anything edible with me) and the Brahma bull that wasn't hungry--he just wanted to be petted. But the one that brought this topic to mind was a rhinoceros.

This was at a zoo in Jacksonville, Fla., and I was lugging around this meager bag of peanuts, doing the best I could with it. So there I was at the rhino pen, and there was this monstrous one-horned hunk gazing dolefully at me through his piggy little eyes. It was miserably hot, a real Florida summer day. We stared at each other sympathetically, and at last as a gesture I tossed my final remaining salted peanut into the pen.

Ponderously, with an infinite weariness, the rhino lifted his great bulk and meandered toward the single peanut lying on the concrete. He lowered his great horn-laden head. And ate the peanut.

It was an awesome spectacle.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE STATE OF THE NATION:

In the 1940's, one of the major causes of crime in the United States was the adverse effect of comic books on the young. Once this evil influence was recognized, an authority was established the pass on material appearing in comic books. Since then this code has been strictly enforced, and comic books thoroughly censored. The effectiveness of this step can readily be seen when one realizes the tremendous drop in the crime rate since that time.

Among the serious faults of comic books of the pre-authority period was the subtle indoctrination of America's youth with favorable attitudes toward sexual perversion. Since this fault

has been eliminated, sexual perversion has almost completely disappeared in this country.

It is well known that the major cause of crime today is poverty. When members of an ethnic group commit crimes, they do so because of their poverty-stricken environment, their lack of proper educational facilities, and the prejudices exerted against them by WASP majorities. The proof of this is the fact that no crimes are committed by whites from middle or upper income environments. Since the United States has the highest national standard of living and the best educational system in the world (or ever known to mankind) it follows that the United States has the lowest crime rate in the world (or ever known to mankind). Technically, this is known as "progress".

One of the major contributing factors to crimes of violence is the easy accesibility of firearms in many parts of the nation. In New York City there is a law against the possession of pistols and similar concealable weapons without a permit. This law is rigidly enforced: Women caught attacking strange men in the streets with tear-gas guns or switch-blade knives are almost always convicted. As a result of this stringent regulation no crimes of violence are committed with such ~~x~~ weapons in this city.

Should similar anti-firearms legislation be made nationwide the rest of the United States would almost certainly become as free ~~xx~~ of crimes of violence as New York City is.

(New York also has laws against littering and air pollution. As those of you who have been here will have noticed, these laws have resulted in New York being the cleanest city in the world.)

17 October 1967

I note by the calander that time is slipping rapidly past and I'd better do something about this thing if I want to get it into the forthcoming mlg. It would probably behoove me to get out the last mlg and do some comments, but, gang, I'm just not in the mood. Some years one tends to be less communicative than others.

Of course I could publish the article I wrote the other day for THE ROUNDUP (o-o of the Western Writers of America) which I decided not to send them. I was picking nits with an article in the last issue and after writing this feiry attack on a fellow western writer, I decided to hell with it. All the babble and bickering has been going on for longer than there's been a WWA. All the volleying of opinions may do some good. I dunno. But after my many years in FAPA, I'm kind of weary of nitpickery.

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Anyway, I decided to spare the readers of the ROUNDUP my tirade. Similarly, I'm depriving you of it too. After all, I may be giving away my own personal trade secrets in it.

18 October '67

Well, I've finished off another manuscript. It is always a good feeling to get one of these things completed. The last phase is the worst. I mean having to proof it. As you may have noticed, I've developed an antipathy toward proffreading. It is a drag.

This makes eight sold books (this one was pre-sold on the strength of chapters and an outline--a way I don't really like to work). The three ~~xx~~ that aren't in print yet probably won't be out until late '68 or '69 (or '70). There is an awful long gap between purchase and publication sometimes. A contract may give you two or three months to write a book, and give the publisher eighteen or twenty four to print it.

From all the evidences I can see, the author is considered a minor character in the vast production of a book. At least on the pulp level.

SPEAKING OF BOOKS...

I have been won over. I am now a true blue John D. MacDonald fan. Not only that, but I've begun proselytising. That is, I lent a copy of one to a friend whom I trust to return it. I wish to hell I could find a similarly prolific and good writer in the Western field. Most of the Westerns I try to read are wrote rotten.

Right now I am in the middle of reading a "non-fiction" Western entitled THE YOUNGER BROTHERS - The Life, Character, and Daring Exploits of the Youngers, The Noborious Bandits Who Rode With Jesse James and William Clarke Quantrell. It is by one A. C. Appler, and its particular charm is that the body of it was written before the Northfield raid, and is a collection of anecdotes aimed at convincing the reader that they were really nice young fellers and not guilty of all those crimes they were being accused of. Their getting shot up and captured in Minnesota before the book was published kind of screwed that hypothesis. The author therefore tacked on a chapter about the Northfield raid and some reprints of newspaper interviews with the boys after they were in custody, which speak favorably of them, and left it at that.

ALSO SPEAKING OF BOOKS...

I got an interesting communique along with my latest royalty statement from Ace (for Gunfight at Laramie--my half of

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an Ace Double western). It says in effect that the cover returns on a book usually come to roughly 24% and that an additional 4% are damaged in handling by distributors and on newsstands, etc.

Now I've heard it said the average Western can expect a sale of between 60 and 75 thousand. I've heard the same about S-F. Print order on the usual Western would seem to be either 100M or 150M. (GatL was a little over 100M.)

If 100M are printed, and 28% destroyed, that leaves 72M to be sold. This is fewer copies than the author's initial advance royalty is paid against.

DEPT OF HOLES IN THE GROUND AND SUNDRY RELICS:

Heading back from the Midwescon this year, the Whites and I decided to do a mite of sightseeing. That is, we figured to stop off in Pennsylvania and see a cave. (I'm rather a buff of caves.) Once we got off the turnpike, we discovered Western Pennsylvania. Ended up seeing three caves, inside and out, an antique auto museum, a house museum with a fine stock of ancient and middle-aged firearms, a semi-open railroad and trolley museum, a set of roadside ruins without so much as a brass plaque in explanation, a lot of scenery, and possibly other things I've forgotten.

It was a jolly fine trip and if you're ever in the neighborhood of Centre County, Pa., I highly recommend Penn's Cave. It is one of the best I've visited--possibly the best.

I arrived home with a short fat stalagmite, a very nice growth of small calcite crystals, a lot of glass slag and a load of less distinguished pieces of rock.

As you may have noticed, I am a pack rat by nature.

Rock is intriguing stuff though. When I started in collecting it with some seriousness, I discovered myself abysmally ignorant about mineralogy. I started studying up, and discovered I also needed to be well-read on geology and chemistry. As yet, I'm not...but I know a damnsite more about both than I did before I started.

Some of these danged sneaky hobbies can trick you into getting an education whether you want one or not.

One of my ambitions in life now is to learn a few things about palentology. Like, I've always been interested in that sort of jass from a distance, but never got involved in fossil-hunting before. It never occurred to me that I could find fossils. Then

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I discovered that a couple of little things I'd picked up on the Great Trek were crenoids. It didn't get any further than that till I went & visiting my folks in Port Charlotte, Florida last spring. We went out on the local beaches, picking up fossil sharks' teeth, which are in such abundance that I accumulated around 1200. In the course of this, we heard that some of the canal dredging in the locality was bringing up the big, big carcharodon teeth. You know, the ones that run three to five inches long. Well, I sure did want one of those, so off we went to the dredgings.

We didn't find a three to five inch long sharks tooth. But we came up with great quantities of fossilized bone from sundry vertebrates, like prehistoric horses, camels, and such. Loads of teeth--horse, gator or crock, rodent, sharks, and various other as yet unidentified creatures. And also about 4 to 5 lbs of ivory from a mammoth or mastedon. Ended up I had to buy an extra suitcase to lug the loot back to New York in.

Fortunately I was travelling by 727, where they put a maximum on the number of pieces of luggage I could carry on my ticket, but not their weight.

So here I am with this great mass of fossilized bones, teeth, etc. (including some items tentatively identified as coprolites, and a piece of broken pottery about which I will hesitantly advance guesses...) And I am keeping an eye open for literature that will give me a better idea of what I've got.

I found one excellent little booklet called LET'S FIND FOSSILS ON THE BEACH, by M.C. Thomas, which was printed there in the neighborhood and which was extremely helpful. But the other literature on fossils I've come across pertains mostly to invertebrates. And the paleontology texts I've run onto on the used bookshelves tend to be more technical stuff than I'm ready for.

Meanwhile I'm eagerly looking forward to going back and digging some more. I am ape for digging--at least when I find things.

What I would glee to get into are a few midden heaps, pre-1900. I would like to dig up 19th Century artifacts, and also pre-columbian artifacts--not necessarily in the same heap. I want to find potsherds and arrowheads. An old rusty Colt's Patent revolver wouldn't exactly dissatisfy me either.

Manhattan is not really a very satisfactory place to dig, though a friend of mine did come up with a volcanic bomb in East River Park a few years back.

Actually, it probably wouldn't be a bad place to dig at all, if one could do so without interference from the authorities. A

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lot of the island's edges consist of made land, and there was probably a load of interesting junk tossed in for fill. I understand that over on the west side, where they are digging foundations for a forthcoming Trade Center, they expect to unearth the remains of at least one old sailing ship which was sunk for fill.

Staten Island would also be a dandy place to dig. There are people over there who do dig, and they've come up with some nice stuff. Presently, S.I. is in the process of re-building Richmontown, which was the heart of things and county seat for a long while. They're gathering up old old buildings and transporting them there, reconstructing and repairing old buildings in the town, etc., to make a Williamsburgtype deal out of it. They've got a small but lovely local museum and other nice stuff.

A couple of weeks ago they put on an Old Home Day to raise funds toward the reconstruction. Had a number of events and exhibitions, like horse shoeing, spinning and weaving (which went fine till the spinner pricked her finger and fell asleep...), log-hewing, shake shaving, square dancing, etc., etc. There were two Civil War skirmishes scheduled, which particularly interested me.

They had a small breastworks of rr ties and earth, which the Union took refuge behind, with two cannon and a coffin. The Rebs had one small cannon, and attacked from the brush. We watched from a poison ivy patch atop a nearby hill.

The Rebs fired on the Yanks, who fired back, letting off some fine blasts with their big gun, and a lot of pot-shooting with percussion rifles and a handgun. The Rebs moved in, sneaking through the grass, and finally charging the breastworks, to be clubbed down by the Yanks. One dead Federal was put in the coffin and carried for for full military honors.

In the second skirmish, however, after a lot of shooting from cover, the Rebs suddenly surrendered. I think this came as a rather a surprise to the Federals...and a disappointment to the audience, which roundly boo-ed them.

Well, that's wzr for you.

Between skirmishes I was chatting with one of the Union officers, who told me they weren't Staten Islanders, but New Jerseyites who'd crossed the river for the occasion. Mercenaries, I take it.

All in all it was jolly fun. I collected a marble, a corroded electrician's nickel, and a wooden building peg. Ted White collected a child-sized ski, wooden, of a quaint pattern,

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which looks like it might be home made.

REPRINT DEPT:

"...It is to be hoped that throughout the southern states, as formerly in Michigan, the self-governing school district may prepare the way for the self-governing township, with its deliberative town-meeting. Such a growth must needs be slow, inasmuch as it requires long political training on the part of the negroes and the lower class of white people; but it is along such a line of development that such political training can best be acquired; and in no other way is complete harmony between the two races so likely to be secured..."

"There has thus begun a most natural and wholesome movement, which might easily be checked, with disastrous results, by the injudicious appropriation of national revenue for the aid of southern schools..."

from CIVIL GOVERNMENT IN THE
UNITED STATES CONSIDERED
WITH SOME REFERENCE TO ITS
ORIGINS by John Fiske,
copyright 1890

Thus endeth this issue of SELF-Preservation, for several reasons, not the least of which is that this is the last stencil I have on hand.

As to how this issue will get mimeoed, where and by whom, I dunno. My mimeo is not only concealed by huge stacks of stuff, in an almost inoperable position, but it has been giving a damned lot of trouble. I have my doubts as to what kind of copy I could pull if I could reach it, lest I overhauled it first, and even that might not work. I think it may need a new impression roller, which is a helluva thing. I just put one on it about ten years ago.

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