

38
NOVEMBER
1986

Redd Boggs'
SPIRODNEGG

TRACING THE FAULT LINE: A STUPEFYING STORY

I was looking at my art books. They had been stored out of sight for 20 years and more. I left them behind in Minneapolis when I came west in 1962, and after my brother Jerry brought them along on a vacation trip many years later they were left boxed up in a closet for lack of shelf space. Most of the books are "folios," acquired from a mail order club called Art Treasures of the World. I remembered how I once carelessly overpaid the company by 12¢ and then was puzzled why they enclosed no bill with several subsequent purchases. Only belatedly did I realize that they must have recorded my overpayment of 12¢ as a prepayment of \$12!

Thumbing through the books now I wondered why I was once enamored of Utrillo and even of Rouault, but I found myself admiring as much as ever the French Impressionists and the Dutch landscapists, especially Ruisdael's "The Burst of Sunlight" (c. 1670). But among the other art books was one that puzzled me. It was a set of unbound pictures enclosed in a figured dark tan paper case. I untied the string that secured it and opened it for, I suppose, the first time in 20 years. As I did so, a slip of paper fell out and sailed to the floor.

I pondered the contents of the folio: a small set of modern Japanese prints which we might once have described as gayly colored. (I don't mean to say that they are erotic.) They were published in Tokyo, and the titles were in Japanese. It was all completely unfamiliar to me. Then I picked up the slip of paper lying at my feet. In my own handwriting it said, rather enigmatically, "Given me by Richard Eney." Richard Eney? Eney, now of the Ethiopian Desk? That Richard Eney? Yes, even so.

It was good of my younger self to tell me whence came the folio, I thought, but it would have been nice if he had somehow contrived to indicate the circumstances under which Eney had given it to me, and when that was. Why in the world would Eney have given me such a thing?

As I stood there fingering the note and the folio, wondering blankly what-the-hell, I seemed suddenly to be standing in a cold waft of air. It was a mild evening in September, but I felt like that wimpish Lovecraft hero who shivered "more than others upon entering a cold room." I began to remember for the first time in 20 years an errand I did for Eney one frigid winter day in Minneapolis. Without even the snap of a breaking watchspring my mind cast back to the days when Eney was still in the armed forces stationed in Korea or Japan along with the likes of Hawkeye Pierce and Hot Lips. He was about to be discharged and was considering the sort of education he intended to pursue under the G. I. bill. Was it training to become a medical technician? I am not sure. Anyway, one of the schools he thought of attending was located in Minneapolis. In a letter he asked me to check it out for him.

One winter afternoon a few days after receiving his letter I finished classes at the University of Minnesota and went out to find the school he asked about. I

hoped to acquire, if possible, a catalog or schedule of classes to send him. The school was not in a familiar part of town, and I lost my way getting there. By the time I found the address indicated in Eney's letter the school -- whatever it was -- was closed. The time was not much past 4 o'clock, but everybody seemed to have gone home. I couldn't see any signs of activity. I tried the glass door without success and peered hopefully into the empty lobby. A dim golden light wavered out into the grey winter dusk. A busy school that was!

Glumly I walked back along the street toward downtown. Every few steps I craned my neck around for the sight of a bus that never came. The morning had been unseasonably mild when I left for the campus. I wasn't dressed for a cold snap. Now the temperature was falling fast, and it was beginning to snow and blow. The snowflakes flying into my face were like tiny needles of ice that stung my eyes and numbed my cheeks and ears. It was too cold to stand on a windswept corner waiting for a bus, so I kept slogging into the wind along the icy sidewalks.

At last I found myself on a corner near the State theater on Hennepin avenue. I have never felt so cold in my life, and I couldn't see a Bryant-Johnson bus approaching anywhere down the storm-swept street. Others more sensible than I would have headed for the nearest bar to chase the ice from their veins with a brandy blazer or a hot toddy. This never occurred to me. Instead I headed for the nearest place of refuge in sight: the movie theater. I don't know how I managed to fumble out money for a ticket, but I did. I stumbled inside to the warm darkness as if I had found the Door into Summer, and fell into the nearest empty aisle seat.

I don't remember what the movie was. I think it was one of those pastel MGM celebrations of the old and faraway, probably one of the last of the breed. I dimly remember a cast of characters that talked in pseudo-Irish or more likely Scottish accents while quickstepping along to the skirl of a bagpipe, bound for god knows where. With my frozen eyeballs I didn't try to focus on the screen. I just sat there, slowly thawing out, like a cryonics patient. I didn't tarry long. Once I had regained possession of my ears, nose, fingers, and toes I arose and departed. I got home somehow. A long time ago I nearly froze to death to help a fellow fan!

-- But no, Eney wouldn't have rewarded me for that effort. After all, I didn't obtain any information for him, and I probably didn't even bother to tell him that I had braved the worst cold spell since Jack London's "To Build a Fire" in my futile quest. It must have been something else. "Why, of course!" I said to myself suddenly, the cold shivers going away. I was finally remembering, after a fashion. Eney had been in the army and needed to keep up his activity in FAPA and SAPS. I must have run off his fanzines for him. That was it. Perhaps I even cut the stencils. I seem to remember the MSS he sent me from across the Pacific, scribbled in his distinctive small handwriting or handprinting.

I met Eney at Dean and Jean Grennell's in Fond du Lac near the end of March 1956, not too many months, perhaps, after my walk in the storm. Come to think of

SPIROCHETE : Number 38 : November 1986. Edited and published at the Sign of the Idle Gestetner by Redd Boggs, P. O. Box 1111, Berkeley, California 94701, for the one-hundred-ninety-seventh mailing of the Fantasy Amateur Press association. "Perhaps the safest thing to do at the outset, if technology permits, is to send music. I would vote for Bach, all of Bach, streamed out into space, over and over again. We would be bragging, of course, but it is surely excusable for us to put the best face on at the beginning of such an acquaintance." -- Lewis Thomas. The Spirochete heading, and the "toucan" drawing, are by Gretchen Schwenn (1964). The Gafia press.

it, he was fresh out of the army at that time. After that, I suppose he must have published his own fanzines. Perhaps he gave me the Japanese folio then, out of gratitude for my help in preserving his fannish life. But that was a long long time ago. The recollections are lost in the cold winds and snows of yesteryear -- three decades back! I would have forgotten the whole thing if it weren't for this small folio of Japanese prints that was "Given me by Richard Eney."

WIND AND RAIN IN THE PATIO

Driven by a gusty wind the rain dashes upon the puddles in the patio like the sound of cellophane crackling or of short whiskers being scratched reflectively. Where it dots and flicks the red pavement in a gentler mood you would call the effect stippling -- or swarming, if it's a cloud of midges dancing in a sunset, which it resembles if you close one eye.

The rain only submits to cease for a moment as fresh darts of wind, no bigger than gulls, skim low across the pavement, making sudden white flashes in the standing water, like book pages turning.

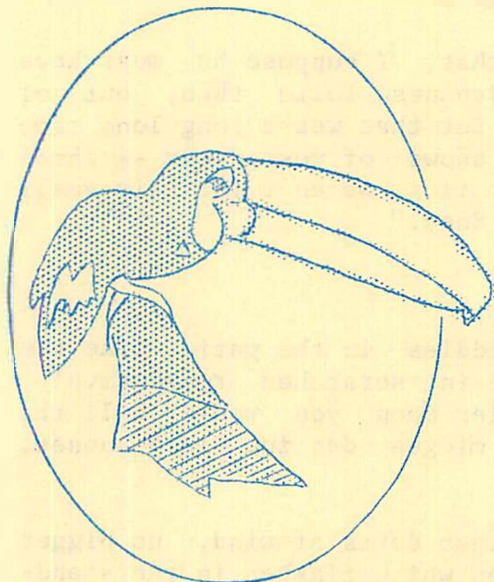
The ripples of rain tail off in the corner where the bonsai maple sits in its red clay pot busily ingesting redwood bark and leaf mold with roots as slender as nerves. With such a spare number of miniature leaves to tremble in the aqueous light, and only half a pint of soil to cling to, the little tree seems as full of gusto for life and as grand in the whole pattern of creation as the redwood on whose bark it feeds. The wind blows daintily through the small leaves, tossing the delicate branches on the tilted jackstraw trunk. The rain falls upon it in tiny drops as upon a dollhouse.

BE MY GESTETNER!

It is now very nearly 30 years since the day I sauntered into Farnham's Office Supply in Minneapolis to buy a ream or two of mimeo bond and came away the owner of a beautiful new Gestetner 120. I have already told this story once ("The Reproductive Apparatus," Spirochete #34), but -- as the Gospels attest -- a really miraculous event is worth recounting again and again. When I first grabbed the 120's handle and a refulgent emanation pringled through my veins I must have felt much as Francois Camay did in 1692 when he invented soap, and exclaimed in triumph, "Fiat Lux!" I think I said that, too, or perhaps I sang it, as lyrically as Kiri Te Kanawa, although my voice is better suited to "Bulldog on the Bank" than to celestial rhapsodies.

The Gestetner and my Hermes typewriter were the first things I loaded into my Rambler when I headed for California in July 1962. Later the 120 traveled in the trunk of our Ford when Gretchen and I went to Albuquerque on our hegira of December 1964, and up to the Bay area a month later. The machine is considered obsolete by the Gestetner company, and I have always been afraid that some part of it would break and be impossible to replace. They don't make spare parts for it anymore. As Dean Grennell remarks, they are "scarcer than colleens in Kowloon."

However, in the past few years I have been able to provide against the possibility of breaking some essential part of the machine (aside from my right arm, which is its power source), and being unable to Gestate forevermore. Shay Barsabe kindly bestowed on me a Gestetner 120 that (I believe she said) was acquired at a flea market. It is not in operating condition, but is handy as a source of parts. I have already cannibalized it for the impression roller, silk screen, and button bar. I am grateful to Shay for giving it to me, and to Dave Rike for storing the rest of the carcass for me.



In May of this year I acquired still another machine. As Gregg Calkins reported in The Rambling Fap #103 he toted Dean A. Grennell's elderly Gestetner 120 to the FAPA collation in Redwood City and turned it over to me. DAG had given it to him, but soon thereafter he purchased a copying machine, and he was reluctant to use the Gestetner, anyway, after discovering that it's "a (gasp) hand-inking model!" When I first inspected the machine it had wrapped around it the last stencil ever run on it by DAG, one with the date of 4 July 1979. Thereafter its beautiful blue voice fell silent till I tuned it up, experimentally, for page 3 of Penseroso #12 in July.

Dean tells me that this machine was purchased at Wegner's Office Supply in Fond du Lac at the time he was moving to Milwaukee in early 1963. (The original Gruestetner belonged to the MacIntyre company of Fond du Lac and was used for fannish purposes only on selected weekends.) The DAG/Gregg Gestetner may be the oldest of the three machines. Its serial number is 380309. That of my old machine is 402262, and of the Shay shebang, 416016.

Whatever its antiquity the DAG/Gregg 120 is perhaps in the best condition of the three. It runs like, well, like a well-oiled machine, chortling gently as the pages of fanac flick through. Perhaps it imagines itself the Kelmscott press chunking out a new edition of some other work of genius, like The Canterbury Tales. When I get it set up properly I will use it as a second duper of my publishing empire. My thanks to Gregg, and ultimately to DAG. Also to Dave Rike, who lugged it across the bay in his pickup truck and into the house on his shoulder. Its acquisition is clearly a case, as we say in the Bay area, of Hum Baby. Hum Baby!

A FANZINE FOR GRETCHEN

"Every book," Robert Louis Stevenson wrote in a dedicatory note to Travels With a Donkey in the Cevennes, "is, in an intimate sense, a circular letter to the friends of him who writes it. They alone take his meaning; they find private messages, assurances of love, and expressions of gratitude, dropped for them in every corner. The public is but a generous patron who defrays the postage..." A fanzine such as this, obviously, is even more intimate. It is a circular letter for friends alone; the public has no part of it.

This time, however, I want expressly to dedicate this fanzine to the memory of Gretchen, my friend, comrade, and lover, who shared my life for more than 17 years. For all those years I published fanzines for her, first of all. The first copy printed and assembled always was brought to her as soon as it was ready. I did this even with the last fanzine I published while she was still alive: The Cosmic Glitch, August 1981, FAPA mailing #176, even though, in that case, I had to carry it to her where she lay in the Cardiac Care unit of Alta Bates hospital. Sentimentally I follow the custom even yet. The first copy is always taken and placed on her empty pillow where she lay so often in the later years, ill and weak, but still encouraging me in my little efforts of fan publishing. I still publish things I hope would please her. Here you are, Gretchen, once more.

If I had been a little greedier I might have been a little happier.
