

E G O B E A S T

Number One

FAPA

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The following publication constitutes Don Wilson's contribution to the Fantasy Amateur Press Association. Any material herein not specifically credited is the, uh, work of the editor. I don't believe there are any extras for sale to nonmembers, principally because there aren't enough extras to make it worthwhile to sell them. Anyway, review copies go to Sam Merwin Jr. and Rog Phillips.

This issue of Egobeast is going to be a new experience for me, because it's the first time I've had anything to do with producing a mag for the benefit of Fapa members, and it's also my first crack at composing at the stencil. However, the latter isn't too much, because most of my stuff is composed at the dummy, and that isn't TOO different. My sole object in this paragraph, then, is an attempt to keep some of the inevitable criticism from descending on my head. I'll stop here on the advice of Speer, who says apologies add nothing to the enjoyability of a magazine, "although they may ease the editor's conscience."

But enough of that. Egobeast is to be something in the nature of a running editorial, punctuated here and there by material written by others. Perhaps it isn't entirely ethical to stick material in the middle of an editorial, and it is probably even less ethical to comment on material in your own magazine, but it will at least create an air of informality, which is the main thing I'm striving for in this mag. And, since very little of Ego's material will be written, solicited, or accepted in the usual fanzine manner, an explanation will have to accompany each bit of stuff. You'll see what I mean when you work your way into some of the stuff in here.

Now to something that's been bothering me for quite a while. The fact that I'm a FAPA member can be laid to Francis T. Laney, who wrote a letter to Fandom Speaks. Before Fran's letter appeared, I had hardly any idea of what FAPA was, how to join it, or anything else. New fans (and I haven't been in fandom too long) must necessarily depend on what they read to inform them. I had read publicity for nearly every other aspect of fandomania, important and otherwise, in the pages of various fanzines, propaganda leaflets, letters, etc. But it seems that FAPA doesn't want itself publicized. I had heard references to FAPA in various letters, and so on, and through a peculiar process of association and semi-detective work I deduced what FAPA was; after that, for a long time I didn't know how to join. Finally, a copy of Variant #1 came into my hands, naming Widner as secretary; by the time I got around to writing Art, Ackerman was elected secretary. I finally sent my buck to Burbee. But that is off the subject. The point is that something ought to be done (much as I detest that phrase) about the lack of Fapublicity available to the new-fans.

If you want to discourage membership in this organization, then conditions are ideal today. But I doubt if this is so. And Laney's letter proved that it wasn't. So, assuming that FAPA wants new members for its ranks, some sort of publicity campaign should be instituted. Many things could be suggested; as far as I can see, the best idea would seem to be a propaganda leaflet, or introductory booklet, of the same sort the NFFF distributes to prospective new members. In this case, the leaflet would preferably be sent to anyone whose name appeared on

a letter, article, or other piece of material in a fanzine, and particularly to all fan publishers, the moment their first issue is announced. This way, a waiting list could be built up, and waiting lists are a healthy sign in any organization. Perhaps some provision could be made to send trial mailings to those highest in the list when a vacancy occurred; but, in thinking that over, I can see that it isn't a good idea, because once it became the custom to send out trial mailings, the end would never be reached. Anyway, mailings should be sent to the professional fanzine-reviewers, and a little hornblowing could easily be indulged in. FAPA could stand to be more than a graveyard of discouraged fan-pubbers.

Your ideas on the subject will be welcome.

THE FOLLOWING remarks are gleaned from various letters of George Caldwell, fan of San Anselmo, California. I had intended running them in the letter column of my subzine, DREAM QUEST, but lack of space kept shoving them out of every issue of DQ, so I finally decided to shove them in here. I have eliminated as far as possible all extraneous material, personal correspondence, and the like, and saved only the material likely to provoke the most controversy. I have an idea most of you will be interested.

Listen, then, to the conversation of

CONTROVERSIAL CALDWELL:

AN OBJECT-LESSON IN NOTORIETY

I do not believe that ASF is tops in quality. Far from it, I have even stopped reading it except for newsstand skimmings. I do not object to the stories -- it is the scientific drivel contained therein. I had a pretty good scientific background in high school. I got an A-plus in chemistry, being in the top $\frac{1}{2}\%$ bracket of a nationwide chemistry test given by the University of Columbia (New York.) I also had physics and physiology. Yet I'll be damned if I can understand the stories in ASF. Oh sure, I can get the bare essentials of the plot, but hell, I myself can think up as good plots as the ones they're using. I like cake, but I like the frosting too. ASF has no frosting. I was talking to an occasional reader of science-fiction last night. I met him quite by accident; he's my cousin's boy friend and I was over there visiting her and her folks. We got to talking and he mentioned stf. Let it suffice to say AS and FA are his favorites, while ASF is far down at the bottom of the list, purely because of the science. All he can get is the bare plot; that's not enough. Yet he knows real literature; his favorite story is Stanley G. Weinbaum's immortal THE NEW ADAM, a truly superb story. We passed the Shaver mystery off as "maybe" because no proof pro or con has been presented. He reads them and enjoys them; that's as far as it goes.

The average reader of literature, if he picks up an Amazing Stories, is lucky. I know. I picked up an ASF at the age of 13. It wasn't till a few years later that I found Amazing didn't have the dry science of ASF. ... To me, characterization and humanness of the story are what I go by chiefly. If the characters are dull and heavy, if there is no emotion, then the story is a flop. The old Astounding of 1942 era had humanness in buckets full. If you've ever read "Final Blackout" you know what I mean. It is only in TWS, SS, AS, and sometimes Planet that these qualities are found, and then oft times rarely. ... By humanness of a story I mean emotionalism, I guess. But it's more than that. Characterization means a great deal; the characters must seem to breathe, live, act according to whatever standards I have set up for it after reading the story and forming my opinion of him from the text. Some characters act unnaturally, not

fitting into the scheme of things as though they belonged there. That is mainly my whole objection to ASF. In their social aspect stories I cannot put myself in the place of the characters pictured therein, because the background, or whatever you want to call it, isn't there for me to fit myself in. I can fit myself in most stories with ease if the job of characterization is done half-well. As I have not read ASF for quite a while it may possibly have changed its policy by now, but I doubt it. Therefore, I cannot analyze my feelings for you; I only know how I feel when I read some stories, and how I feel when I read others. Some give me a feeling of completeness, of having really entered into the story; others leave me with a kind of "so what" attitude or "just don't care". The plot, idea, etc, is there, but I just can't get interested in that particular story***.

Wilson again: I guess that's enough for one round. After all, I want poor Caldwell to come out with a whole skin. Naturally I don't need to add that I disagree completely (almost) with everything he's said. His remarks about characterization "making" a story are true enuf, but in my humble opinion he sure used them as an example to prove the wrong point! I don't want to use ~~my~~ xxx up valuable (!) space to comment on Jawge's remarks; I'll leave that up to you. You are urgently requested to argue with Jawge. If you wish to send your comments directly to me, I'll gladly publish them in the next issue of EB. Otherwise, comment in your own Fapazines. And please confine your analyses to argument, not libel or insults. Criticism of a promag is legitimate. ANY promag.

SOME OF YOU may recall that in the second issue of DREAM QUEST, I began a department called "Bookdealers I Have Known." Well, the department didn't catch on, and no articles on bookdealers were received. The following is an excerpt from a letter to me from Bob Stein, and represents the only real reaction the article on bookdealers which I wrote received. Says Bob: (Quotes eliminated 'cause I'm lazy) "Bookdealers I Have Known" reminds me of a fellow here in Milwaukee, called the Silverdime. He has some zines, Amz mostly, and won't let you take them off the shelves, or look at the second hand records he sells. I was looking thru his pocket sized stuff and he asked wot I was looking for. I gave him the 2 Lovecraft titles in the Bart House edition; he said they were not there, in a belligerent tone/of voice. So I walked out.

A fellow in Chicago, I walked in and found that he had all the early ASF and Unknowns, and nearly keeled over when he told me he wanted \$3 for #1 Unknown, \$2 for older ASF, and \$1 for '40 to '44. I got out of there buying a Merritt pocket book for 50¢.

One thing you've got to remember. As long as fans are willing to pay those inflated prices, they'll stay up there. We ought to get together and start a fan cooperative -- a magazine exchange. Listing wants and doubles or stuff you want to get rid of, in a zine. Don't take any ads for selling stuff above a maximum. Prices should run something like this: Top for ANYTHING in the magazine way, 75¢, that for early FFM and FN and Unknown Worlds. Pre-'39 ASF..60¢. Post-'39 to 44, 45¢ maximum. '45 to '46, 30¢, '47 cover price. Or you could make it 35¢ for '45, and cover price for anything later. For off-breed zines approximately the same prices should hold; they sold for considerably less in many cases than ASF. Startling and TWS and Amazing should go for about 50¢ in the Standard and ZD co. editions, and early Amz and Wonder should have a top of a buck -- I mean the really early early, 1927 to '33 or so. '34 to '35 could take 75¢,

and 60¢ from 1936 to when the present publishers took over. The reason the off breed go for as much as ASF is that while they were of inferior quality they are rarer, and didn't go into as big editions. They didn't have such wide distribution, either. ###

Stein has an idea there. But his prices are doubtful, at least to me. A lot of them sound a little high. For instance, 50¢ is an awful lot to ask for Standard TWS's and Ziff-Davis Amazings. Amazing has always had a larger circulation than any other stezfine, that is since Palmer took over; and many Amazings can be picked up by casual hunting in second hand magazine stores. I'd say 30¢ or, at the most, 35¢ would be enough for any Rap Amazing. Thrilling Wonder sold originally for 15¢, and we should take original (cover) price into this somewhere. I'd think an awful lot before I'd pay double the cover price for any prozine less than ten years old, which pretty well covers the more modern era of pro publishing. Thirty centavos would be a good maximum for anything newer than 1940, except, of course, for some FN, FFM, ASF, Unknown,. The pulp junk could have a 50¢, or less, absolute maximum placed on it. By that I mean such magazines as Planet, Superscience, Future, &c. But prices or no, the idea of a fan magazine exchange sounds fairly reasonable to me. As usual, I'd appreciate if you comment on the idea, and make suggestions. The more analytical-minded of you will doubtless come up with a complete working-plan and pay-scale for the exchange anyway, so wot an I worrying about....###

Ackerman says of the following article: "The background on that "Venus" article is that it was originally written as a filler for some prozine (not necessarily fantasy) as part of an Experiment That Failed. I got a notion I could write and sell fillers like mad -- \$2 here, \$5 there. It developed I could write 'em like mad, but selling 'em was a sad story. I finally turned the batch over to the Mss. Bureau to salvage. You got about the longest one, I believe."

VENUS STRETCHES ARMS TOWARDS EARTH

by Forrest J Ackerman

VENUS the planet, not the armless De Milo, will beckon to rocketeers in the years ahead, an astronomy professor said in Los Angeles recently. Prediction was made by Dr. Samuel Merrick of the University of California, who appears to be the local counterpart of Clarke of England when it comes to the subject of astrogation.

Like an ever increasing portion of the earth's population, Dr. Herrick is convinced that Verne, Wells and Willy Ley will soon be made prophets with honor, as Man climbs into a spaceship and calls on the man in the Moon.

"But a trip to Luna is only an hors-d'oeuvre," ssays Dr. Herrick, who his has eye on much richer pie in the sky: The Evening Star. Once the escape velocity of 7 miles a second is attained, the rocket leaves earth and arrows through the void, 240,000 miles to the moon in 10 hours. The voyage to Venus -- approximately 70,000,000 miles-- would consume about 4 months.

Plotting the course, a time-consuming operation on whose infinite precision the interplanetary pioneers may well depend for their very lives, is the business of Dr. Herrick. At UCLA, he is teaching the subject to his class of junior and senior astronomers, physicists, and ~~mathematicians~~ mathematicians.

Astronautics students are learning the theory of calculating a space-flight. To Venus, this would involve the original factor that the rocket leaving the earth has the same motion as the earth, which is traveling around the sun at 18 miles a second. Venus, too, is circling the sun at a high rate of speed. ((This is page 4))

To clear earth and connect with Venus will require a higher skill than hitting the jackpot on a pinball machine. With a correspondingly greater thrill: A payoff in adventure, discovery and romance literally out of this world.

A veritable Milo-stone, the conquest of Venus!

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I think it only fair to tell you that the above article was received before the Rog Phillips storm broke. Page 4 of this issue was stencilled about a month before page 5, which explains why the explanation wasn't made before the article. Hope nobody minds. I didn't want you to think he had broken his pledge, or that I was taking advantage of him, or anything.

Like I say, this page was stencilled a long time after the previous one. And this came up only recently -- that is, I got this idea only recently. My subzine contains a pro review column called "Pro-Phile", by Gilbert Swenson. Unfortunately, this column runs to great lengths, and fills up untold amounts of space. And, as I have to have room for some other stuff, something has to go -- and I don't like to shave the department down, because I've tried it and the readers didn't react favorably.

The only conclusion is to throw it out of the mag entirely. However, everyone has agreed that it's a good column; and I wouldn't feel justified in removing it entirely from existence. The obvious answer is to put "Pro-Phile" in here -- in the mailings of Fapa.

This, then, may be the last issue of EGOBEAST. If the readers of Dream Quest don't jump at my throat for it, it is very probable that in the future my contribution to Fapa will consist solely of Gilbert Swenson's "Pro-Phile." A zine devoted solely to comment on and discussion of the prozines would, in my opinion, be a good idea. Of course, there would be a letter column, perhaps a long one; perhaps outside drawings, though this is unlikely. The pages, if this thing goes through -- it might not, I can't tell at this writing -- won't, of course, be limited to Gilbert Swenson. Articles on the prozines and any aspect thereof by anyone in or out of fandom will be solicited. Swenson's reviews will provide only the backbone, the report on the current issues of the prozines as they come off the stands. From there on, it'll be up to youse. The size of the mag will depend on your response.

The more I think of this idea the better I like it. Even if my readers object so strongly that I'm forced to keep Pro-Phile in DQ, I doubt very much if Egobeast will again see the light of day, except on very rare occasions when deemed necessary or fitting, or something or other. I'll very probably contribute some kind of mag of prozinely discussion or report to FAPA, with or without Gilbert's column. Watch the future mailings. ' Horrible that: In the first issue of DQ, the column took up 28 pages -- and it only reviewed 2 months' newsstand output! My ghod. Of course, then were the days when GS synopsisized the plots, too. Anyway, my prozinely Fapazine (if it materializes, and there's no reason why it shouldn't) will be larger than I care to think about. I can see myself dragging the cover off my ancient LCSMITH once more -- much as the thought is detestable.

Hmmm. I still have to fill one more page to make this come out even. Can't waste paper, you know., even if it means spending 15¢ for another stencil tomorrow. The joys of fan publishing.

Your comments and suggestions will be more than welcome.

--Evans brought up an interesting subject recently in "Are Gadget Stories Passe?", which I published in Dream Quest. He reached the conclusion that the gadget story and the old time space opera were definitely not passe. I rather doubt the validity of any conclusion anent this type of story, however. For, as Marijane pointed out, you can't designate a story as gadget-plotted or not arbitrarily with any great hope of being correct from an arbitrary standpoint.

Stef used to be founded on gadgets, of course. A gadget made a story, because the important thing was the gadget. Likewise, a situation, -- a trip to another world, a contact with a grotesque interplanetarian, &c -- was sufficient to create a saleable manuscript. I think you'll all agree that that particular type of gadget story and space opera is OUT. For it takes a darn good author to think up an idea sufficiently good to make a story on the strength of the idea alone. Oh, it can be done. It still is being done, off and on. Rog Phillips can do it. A. M. van Vogt has done it, and some authors, like Richard S Shaver, can make a concept, like the dero in the caves, sufficient for the creation of a story. Nevertheless, not everyone has ideas of the caliber of Rog Phillips', and even the Shavers can't find a Rap to sell their stories to oftener than once in a decade. If ideas were the totality of story material, Rog and A.M.V. would probably be the only 2 authors writing stef today, or pretty nearly the only ones. No gadget concept, no matter how revolutionary, can make a story. Rog's ideas aren't gadget concepts. Any fool can get an idea for a gadget, but not everyone can think up ideas like Rog's, which are sufficient to sell a story on their strength alone.

So you can't designate a story as gadget-plotted or space-opera-plotted arbitrarily and expect to be believed when you say that they are here to stay, willy-nilly. Gadgets and space opera can be vitally necessary for the existence of a story. They can be the prop that holds up the structure of the story. But that they must remain. When they cease to be mere props and become the structure -- there ain't no structure. It's a house of cards, and it will collapse mighty quick. Try selling one of the things. Keep the gadgets, keep the space-opera, but don't depend on them. Use them to help.

It is common knowledge that stef today deals with the way humans react to conditions. Reaction to a gadget-condition could make a nice yarn, but not the gadget in itself. " And even the Rog Phillipses would do well to consider the eventual situation of an idea writer who runs out of ideas. Stories like "The Despoilers", in which the ideas are piled on, can still be written. But one powerful idea, if handled right, can make as good a story as a thousand of them piled together. And, as Campbell points out, an idealess man can write a fine story, Phillips could improve his work by separating his ideas somewhat, I feel. " But this wasn't intended to be a discussion of Phillips' work. We will leave that till next time, when the first fapa number of "Pre-Phile" appears. A discussion of his works won't be out of place there.

And, in the final windup, what counts isn't anything arbitrary, like gadgetry or human reactions or ideas. It's just the power a writer has, or doesn't have, to make his story enjoyable to his readers. And it is impossible to predict when a story will make a favorable impression. Any that do -- well, they're good stories, whether they're founded on a rock idea foundation, or manufactured out of the thin ether-drift. (Joke.) That's the thing that made ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE such a good anthology, and caused other anthologies to fail somewhat in what they set out to do.

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The next fapa mailing will include a discussion of prozines by me. You may expect it definitely. And if the Cosmic Circle Commentator by Elliott appears in this bundle, it is under my auspices. Perdue did it with the emergency disaster plan, and Cortelyou isn't a fapa member. I believe it would be legal to do it with the CCC. But don't blame me for its contents. I assume no responsibility for that. Make crooked the way of non-return....Odd notes; Mitropolous says Wagner ruined opera...Dream Quest can be subbed to by writing me...many copies of issue #1 of DQ remain for sale at 10¢ per...see you in the next mailing. --Don Wilson