

Jan - Dango

A STORMY PETREL UNTO YE

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MAYBE THERE IS A RAY OF HOPE

Early in October I heard the first reasonably authoritative utterance since mid-1945 which has given me the least bit of encouragement as to our chances of coming through the present chronic world crisis with a reasonably intact civilization. The encouragement it gave was rather on the dim side, but yet....

The occasion was a talk by Lt. Gen. Ira Eaker, late of the USAAF, before the South Pasadena/San Marino Public Forum on the subject, "Peace in Our Time". The General emphasized the fact, already known to me, that our military establishment was falling far behind what it should be, due to a three-way combination of public apathy, mismanagement by the brasshats, and too hasty demobilization; going on to say that despite the dreams and hopes of nearly all of us, the United Nations was a farce as long as one certain nation refused to play ball, and that we would do well to look to our own defenses until/unless the UN showed that it would be able to protect us.

All pretty elementary and obvious, no doubt, but the General did give a clear, concise, and rather unpretty picture of the world of the next few years. "Our strength is going down; this other nation's strength is going up. Somewhere in the next few years, unless we get on the ball meanwhile, this other nation is going to figure that they can beat us, and zowie--right over the Arctic will come an all-out attack." (He did not name Russia by name until he got into the question and answer part of his talk.)

He stated that the armed forces ideally should consist of a small, highly trained group to be used largely as teachers; a very large experimental program in weapons and equipment; and universal military training to give the basic elements to the men who would be mobilized in the event of war. General Eaker was obviously thinking in terms of guided missiles and robot bombers followed up by airborne occupation troops; many of his concepts being almost scientificfictional sounding. Oh yes, and he touched at some length on the necessity for two semi-military ventures, intelligence and industrial mobilization--pointing out that the US is already well on the way towards having an espionage service comparable with that of other nations, but that industrial mobilization plans seem to be getting nowhere at present.

And so it went, an hour long talk on national defense, similar far to most other talks of the same nature, except for General Eaker's freedom, surprising in a 3-star general, from hide-bound modes of thought.

Then came the stanger. Ushers appeared from nowhere, and the MC announced that General Eaker would answer any relevant question asked him. I was rather gloomy at Eaker's stark outlining of an atomic debacle about 1952 or 1953, so asked the following question:

"Since the probable enemy is obvious, why don't we attack first?"

General Eaker did somewhat of a double-take when this one was read--it was rather a contrast to the two or three which had preceded it, dealing as they did largely with what would happen to the morals of our young men if they were called to the colors--and rather amusingly asked how far such a course of action would get, considering that it would have to be debated in congress first, and so on, giving the enemy every opportunity to cut loose at us while we were arguing about what we should do.

Then he sobered, and said, very earnestly, "If Russia decides to attack us, the necessary movements of personnel and material will be obvious even to so small an intelligence service as we now have. It will take weeks for them to get into position to launch an attack, and we will know about it long before they are ready to let fly. The asker of this question is quite right in assuming that the initiative, the striking of the first blow, very likely means the difference between victory and defeat. When the United States got the atomic bomb, we had a courageous president who took the responsibility of using it. In the event an attack on us seems likely, I truly believe that our president, whoever he may be, will be courageous enough to order our forces, of which he is commander-in-chief, to swing into action and strike first."

Somehow, such a course of action is so realistic, so sensible, that it just had never occurred to me that our idealistic old US would ever take it. General Eaker could of course be mistaken, but his words were oddly comforting to me. It is a hell of a commentary on the world we live in that such words as these should comfort anyone, but we do live in this world--not in some never-never land in the pages of science-fiction.

And for a man who should know what he is talking about to suggest that we would probably A-bomb the pudding out of Russia if they started taking overt steps against us, means that there is some chance that we won't be bombed to bits and overrun, leaves a measurable possibility that we might be able to get through the next war after all.

Of course it would be wonderful to have a warless world from here on out. But from the way things are trending, it looks a lot more practical to try to do something now towards winning that next war than to sit back and trust in a Russia-boycotted UN. This being the case, General Eaker's remarks bucked me up a lot.

THOUGHTS WHILE PAND-SAWING

Rothman published a telegram signed Purbee and Laney, which apparently was sent to the Philcon to say, "DAUGHERTY HAS SEIZED CLUBROOM FOR DANCE STUDIO IMFOUNDED CONTENTS DECLARES CLUB FORFEITED ALL RIGHTS HAVE ANGELENO DELEGATES WIRE INSTRUCTIONS."

"Nice try, boys," he says.

Good going say I! Evidently there is a trouble-maker around the LASFS, because this wire is news to both Burbee and me. I'd sure like to know who sent it; next thing I know the boys will be signing my name on checks

This does clear up an early September mystery around the Half World. Al Ashley asked me if I knew anything about a hoax sent to Philby, (this was very early in September), said that Daugherty had shown him

a wire reading "IF THIS IS TRUE OUR FRIENDSHIP IS AT AN END. EVERETT"

The payoff is that the hoax (?) telegram to Evans is substantially true. The LASFS found itself unable to pay the September rent on the clubroom, Daugherty was making arrangements to take over, and then Elmer Perdue fixed the club but good by getting the group evicted by the landlady as an aftermath of the wild evening described in HALF LENGTH ARTICLES. Daugherty rents the room at 637½ South Bixel now for a dance studio, for \$15.00 per month he sublets the use of the room on Thursday nights to the LASFS for meetings. He changed the lock on the door and issued keys to six "trustworthy" persons who are allowed under certain conditions to use the mimeograph--has specifically barred both Laney and Burbee from using the mimeograph because we are a disruptive influence and would probably wreck the joint or something. (Well, no. We are not barred from using the mimeograph, but we are barred from the clubroom, where it is still kept, except during meetings Thursday nights. Same difference.

So the wire is true. Daugherty did seize the clubroom for a dance studio. In a certain sense, the contents are impounded--at least only six members of the LASFS are now allowed to use the club equipment at will, and Daugherty is the boy who issued out the keys. The club had forfeited all rights by permitting Perdue to hold a debauch in the clubroom and spend the night there passed out. (There was a previous warning on the repetition of this offense.)

Looks to me as though some loyal LASFSer was understandably irked at Mr. Daugherty's putsch, wanted to do something about it, and, lacking guts to sign his own name to the wire, figured Burbee and I were far enough in Mr. D's black book so that one more incident wouldn't matter.

This is, no doubt, what Helen-San would call ayjay affection.

---oo0oo---

AMERICAN FANDOM HAS FILED! WE MUST LOOK TO BRITAIN!

---oo0oo---

Everett Evans wants FAPA to discuss ethics in fandom. Despite the fact that I was involved back in 1944 in a similar discussion, I would now like to suggest that there is no such critter as "fan ethics". There are ethics, period. I question very much if a legitimate case could be made for establishing a set of ethics which are peculiarly of a fan nature; an action which would be unethical for fans would be unethical for anyone else, and vice-versa. Or do we intend to set ourselves completely apart from the laws, manners, morals, and customs of the rest of mankind?

---oo0oo---

The mention of Everett Evans brings me face to face with the fact that I owe this gentleman a profound public apology, yet cannot for the life of me see how I can word it so as not to make matters worse than they are. A completely candid and accurate apology, setting forth what I was apologising for, why I had acted as I had in various instances, would not only probably alienate one of my best friends, but it might very likely insult Evans more than anything I have done to him yet. And I don't believe that I'd want to apologise for the apology. For right now, I'll just say that Everett Evans was on the receiving end of the most incredible double-cross I ever heard of, that he is as he is as he was, but nevertheless, in deference to the said double-cross and to the slight part I unwittingly played in it, I will no longer make any snide references to EEE's interest in what might be termed the physical side of fandom. And if I can ever figure out how to word it, I'll publish a rather weird apology.

Eden-Plish wondered what was meant by "crifanac". This term dates back a couple of years to the days when Burbee and I were having fun out of ridiculing the hyper-serious attitude taken by many fans towards their fanning. Maybe we were laughing at ourselves a little, too. Anyway, as I remember the mythos, any thing done by any fan was crifanac, critical fan activity; and anything done by a member of the topton was crufanac (the cru- is for crucial). For some reason, maybe because Speer started plugging it in STEENE /S, the term very shortly became a household word, used by people all over the world. But Burbee and I are still sweet, unspoiled, simple--unaffected by the adulation we receive as builders of a vital new language. Someday, perhaps, we will make a further contribution towards revitalising our native tongue. And you, and Everett, and Dunkelberger, and Al Ashley --different as you all may be--will still have a common focal point, a great, all-encompassing field of interest. You knew us when.

---oooOooo---

"If I thought that something so trashy and unimportant as fan publishing were the whole that fandom had to offer, I'd cast off the stuff tomorrow," says Gus Willmorth, going on to say: "far from being a 'component' of amateur journalism, fandom can only consider amateur journalism trivia that has some slight bearing upon the intercommunication between the addicts."

Who are you trying to kid, Gus--Wesson or Willmorth? I believe you are the same Gus Willmorth who, every three or four months for a year-and-a-half, single-handedly published THE FANTASY ADVERTISER, a large and elaborate fanzine in a circulation of ONE THOUSAND--and who even now publishes the same mag in a photo-lithed format, taking care of all the onerous details such as typing, relevant correspondence, wrapping and mailing.

The reason (among others) that I dropped ACOLYTE was that it was taking nearly all of my spare time. Your magazine is five times as big. Granting that you may be much faster at such work than I (though somehow I rather doubt it), you must spend most of your spare time being fan publishing.

"Trivia". "Trashy and unimportant." Where's your sense of perspective, Gus? When do you find time to implement your "driving hope for the future"? To indulge your "consuming curiosity in scientific wonders"? To experience "the mental ecstasy of the flight of fancy in pure fantasy"? To rock to the "emotional thrill of the weird and outre"?

You say you feel sorry for Wesson. Well, I feel more than a little sorry for you--a mere slave to the ajjay facet of fandom, when the rest of the field has so much more to offer.

Or could you, just maybe, have made a faulty analysis of the situation?

---oooOooo---

As a matter of fact, the hodgepodge of activities which go together to make up this thing called fandom need no justification other than the fact that they give pleasure to those doing them. If you like to sit around and read fantasy, or if you like to mimeograph in an edition of 1000, or browse in bookshops, or bait Evans, or what have you---fine. Just because you like one facet and someone else likes another, doesn't give you any justification to act so goddam superior, does it? Come off it, old boy.

FAN-DANGO is the personalised, composed-on-the-stencil production of Francis T. Lancy, 516 Westboro Ave., Alhambra, California, published quarterly or less often for FAPA. Unsigned material is by the said FTL, but libel suits should be brought against the mimeographer, Chas. Burbee, Jr.

Mezz Mezzrow and Bernard Wolfe. REALLY THE BLUES. Random House, 1946, \$3 (Snagged off a remainder pile for 98¢)

Here is an off-trail book to end all off-trail books, the aut-biography of a man whose life has been a sordid fantasy. Mezz Mezzrow (born Milton Mesiro) is a Russian Jew from Chicago who got swept of his feet by the great Negro jazzmen in the Chicago of the early 1920's, and never has recovered from jazz, the one inspiration of an otherwise sordid life. Occupying what might be termed an in-the-wings position in the world of jazz, Mezz has recorded from time to time (he plays sax and clarinet), played tough night-spots some, and since his last jail sentence has been wholly occupied with his small band in New York and his own recording company, King Jazz, Inc.

But it was a scuffle. There were years in which he did nothing but peddle tea. And there were other years, black ones, which he spent lying in the basement of a Harlem tenement, smoking opium. And years in jail. Frustrated in his music, he groped towards the idea that if he thought like a negro and lived like a negro, maybe he'd be able to express the music which meant so much to him, negro music. He ended up renouncing the white race, moving to Harlem, and marrying a negro girl. And, through his jazz, he finally threw off the opium, and won himself a respected place in Harlem.

From the jazz point of view, REALLY THE BLUES is nothing much. Mezzrow is not a good musician; about all that can be said for him is that he is sincere, that he has patterned himself after the right models (Dodd, Peck, Nones), and that in his recordings he invariably got together a top-notch bunch of jazzmen. And I cannot but question the authenticity of some of his anecdotes, particularly the ones in which he imagines himself as being a great help and influence on everyone he knew, from Louis Armstrong to Gene Krupa. Mezz undoubtedly knew all the men--heck, he recorded with most of them--but I daresay he magnifies his influence a great deal.

But as a human document, REALLY THE BLUES is a real killer-diller. Mezz starts out as the black sheep of a respectable middle-class Hebrew family, and after an increasingly delinquent adolescent gets sent to reform school in 1916 for stealing a car. At the reformatory he learns clarinet and falls in love with the playing of some of the colored boys in the band, and is further shoved towards them emotionally by a race riot in the prison yard. When he gets out, he works his way up from errand boy around a poolhall to manager of a suburban cat-house for the Capone gang. And boy, those first few chapters are strictly from Studs L. nigan only more so.

He is fooling around with music all this time, and finally in 1923 uses his gang connections to get a union card in the American Federation of Musicians. Since that time, Mezz has been a musician. When things were looking up for him he was on fantastic drunken jam sessions with Bix Beiderbecke, a liding an anomalous job--part stage manager, part hunger-on, and part arranger--for Louis Armstrong, learning the blues from Bessie Smith and Clarence Williams, and trying to hold the Chicago gang true to the traditions of New Orleans jazz. When Mezz was down, he was really down.

There was the time that Josh Billings suddenly turned into a cow, and ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Mezz decided that by golly, even if the guy

was his best friend he would have nothing more to do with him if he insisted on changing into a cow without any warning.

And Bix and PeeWee and Mezz and Tesch roaming the hills one night in search of a jug Bix had stashed; Bix getting gravel in his shoes and sitting down on the railroad track to get it out; the train coming along; Bix drunkenly ignoring his friends' warning shouts; finally Bix rolling down the embankment at the last second, leaving his shoe on the track where it was cut in half; and then delivering a lecture on the supreme folly of a grown man's ever taking off his shoes, particularly at night--- whereupon it developed that Bix had not had his off for over a month.

It is a delirium, nightmare world that Mezz lived in--the underworld in its original sense. But through the sordidness and the squalor and the fantastic dissipation there looms a huge grim humor. And the blackest misery of it all is eased by the near nobility of some of the least acceptable characters, especially the negroes. And cutting through the fog of marijuana smoke and the choking swirls of opium and the lees of innumerable emptied jugs of bootleg booze, an undefeated clarinet rises high and clear, wailing out the blues or shrilling a joyous stomp.

FAPA members, regardless of their jazz interests or lack of them, should find this book of compelling interest. Mezz Mezzrow is nothing more than a rich man's Elmer Perdue (except that he is a viper, and has no time for the lusher). And the frustrations, the weird psychotic characters, the utterly wacky progression of events are worthy of fandom itself. You get the LASTS pumped full of guage and you'd get about the same effect, minus the music. Speer particularly would enjoy digging the psychology of a man who fell into every degradation imaginable because of the inferiority complex developed by being white instead of negro, and who finally straightened out to a certain extent by deciding that he was a negro from New Orleans and getting himself to believe it through some sort of obscure auto-hypnosis. And the language this book is written in will kill all of you, particularly the chapter of jive-talk and its translation; this boy Mezz uses a sepia-toned Americanese/Anglo Saxon that makes Raymond Chandler sound like Charles Dickens.

It's too bad that REALLY THE BLUES isn't fantasy so that some of you could read it!

---Francis T. Laney

---ooJoo---

August Derleth. THE SLEEPING AND THE DEAD: 30 UNCANNY TALES. Pellegrini & Cudahy, Chicago, 1947. 31. (free review copy, sent me because I was one of the editors of 5 Fingers, a one-shot fanzine. This is the second book I have received on this flimsy ground--though THE COLYTE never was sent a review copy of anything, darn it!)

Well, people, August Derleth has done his usual competent job of anthologising--but it left me cold.

This is no reflection on Little Bugie nor on the definitely high caliber of most of the stories; it simply points up the fact that weird fantasy has completely lost its appeal to me. It would be interesting to know both what got me interested in the genre originally and what made this same interest so evanescent. Quite frankly, I don't myself wholly know. With the exception of this one divergence, my tastes in fiction have run

to realism, with an accompanying emphasis on believable characterization, logical sequences of events, psychologically apt action, and a freedom from hackneyed plot-forms. Scarcely any weird fiction meets these criteria, particularly the Lovecraft stuff which set me off on this tangent in the first place. Put there it is, this inexplicable laguna in my otherwise consistent reading. And make no mistake about it, that enthusiasm for weird fiction was deep and genuine, even if so short-lived.

But this isn't reviewing THE SLEEPING AND THE DEAD. I made a manful effort to read the book, covering some dozen and a half of the thirty tales included therein. In nearly every instance I was rereading something I once liked very much indeed, something which I knew was a first class story of its type. Not a single story held my interest and I finally gave the book up as a bad job.

For the weird devotee, this omnibus volume looks like a good buy--but I'll take Cain and Chandler, thank you.

---ooOoo---

Duane W. Rimel. THE JURY IS OUT. Cherry Tree Book #232. London, 1946, 2d. (Complimentary copy from the author.)

This is my boy Rimel's third book, but so far is available only in this British pocket book.

THE JURY IS OUT is a far cry from the Lovecraftian material Duane was writing a decade ago, but should appeal to the handful of you who read anything without first obtaining a notarised affidavit signed by Forrest J Ackerman stating that so far as he can tell without actually reading it himself the book is a bona fide fantasy. This is simply a better-than-average whodunnit.

This story revolves around a series of brief thought pictures in the hero's mind as he awaits the verdict of the jury which is trying him for murder, a device used much more successfully by Whitman Chambers in his magnificent THIRTEEN STEPS. THE JURY IS OUT suffers from a complacent feeling on the part of the reader that no matter how deep the hero gets involved he is going to come out with flying colors and a girl in his arms--and unfortunately it does come out just that way. And it also seems to me that this story commits one of the cardinal ~~maxxx~~ sins of the who-killed-cock-robin type of novel; on checking back hastily I felt that there were not sufficient clues as to the real culprit.

In other words, this is no more than a good average detective story; and is nowhere near the stature of Duane's brilliant CURSE OF CAIN, which, however, I would rate among the best 20 or 25 murder stories I ever read. For me, the biggest kink was the accurate depiction of my old familiar surroundings, the Snake River country.

On the other hand, I read THE JURY IS OUT immediately after finishing Cain's PAST ALL DISHONOR, and my reaction to the book probably reflects this fact considerably. After all, Vaughn Monroe does n't sound so good after you've been listening to Louis, either.

MR. JACK SPEER, of the Seattle Spears, would confer a great favor on me if he will publish a logically and objectively defensible justification of the attitude towards the Ziff-I vis magazines which has recently reached its apothecis in Ackerman's fiat on the subject. I simply don't get it.

A F E W W O R D S I N S P I R E D B Y T H E P E R D U E S

In the recent Pardubious postmailing the name of Laney was pretty thoroughly kicked around; and I finally decided to make a few remarks on the subject. Though I caught hell from both the Pardues, I am as innocent as a new-born lamb. I did not write F A A FOREVER. I did not illustrate it. I did not stencil it. I did not mimeograph it. I did not assemble or staple it. Above all, I did not take any part in the, shall we say, exotic happenings which it chronicles.

All I did was to encourage (in my newly discovered facet as local patron of the arts) its publication. It must have taken me nearly 30 seconds to talk Anderson into publishing it.

But as long as I got hauled over the coals anyway, I guess I might as well do something to merit it. I'd hate to have it on Mr. and Mrs. Browder's consciences that they maligned an innocent man.

Apart from a certain amount of pleasure to be gotten therefrom, it has occurred to me with increasing clarity the past couple of years that there is one highly utilitarian function fandom can perform. Since practically all fans are more or less off psychologically (including me), it seems that fandom ought in part to be a source of self rehabilitation. Many of us do not need psychiatric help anyway; our quirks being such that we can iron them out ourselves. And psychiatric attention costing what it does, it seems to me that a certain amount of amateur help ought not to be sneezed at.

Well then. In order to make any sort of headway in coping with a psychological problem, it is necessary that we first admit the existence of the problem, admit that there is something wrong. It is for this reason that I am such an ardent proponent of factual reporting in fandom, of the publication of the truth. If fandom is to do any of us any good, we must divorce it from this aura of pose, this cloak of fact-evasions which enables ~~near~~ neurotic fools to masquerade as wise men, savants, sages, and the torchbearers of a brave new civilization.

Anytime I get wind of something that enables me to do some debunking, brother, watch me bust out in print. As Pardue well knows, I've been on the receiving end of some pretty rough handling myself; whether or not I've profitted by any of it I'll not venture to say, but at least I've tried to see if maybe the guy had something on me.

For these various reasons, plus the fact that I felt FAPA had a right to know why their mailings had been so badly fubared, I was very anxious that the expose of the Pardues see print.

But Elmer irks me when he carries on at me as though I were kicking him when he is down. If he'd get off and look at himself objectively, he'd realize, when he got through puking, that I have done as much for him as any brother could've sensibly have been expected to do--- moreover, that practically all of us out here have.

Elmer Pardue, and his charming bride, are persons non grata with at least six local people. Here are a few of the reasons why Elmer Pardue is not welcome at my house.

First and foremost, I simply am unwilling to have such scenes of drunkenness in my home. I'm no prude, I myself like my nip---and I most certainly have been around a lot of drunks at

various times. Anyone is likely to get too drunk now and then, and I'll bend over backwards to tolerate such occasional lapses from discretion. But Percue can be depended on to ruin your evening one way or another. For one thing, most of his drunkenness is feigned. The fellow has a head for liquor--he just thinks it is cute to act drunk. Take his passing out. I've seen Elmer Percue supposedly passed out at least thirty times, and I've never seen him so far away from reality but that he would snap into complete consciousness at the very mention of anything which might redound to his discomfort. Who else can be lying passed out like a light among a group of people, and suddenly sit up and take a sensible part in the conversation if someone whispers, "Let's give Elmer a hot foot."

This drinking all ties in with Percue's overwhelming ego, his unbelievable exhibitionism. He used to come to see me when I lived over on 35th Place. He'd rarely bring me a drink, though--just come in lit to the eyeballs. The minute he'd come in the house, he'd start acting sleepy, and within a quarter of an hour he'd be apparently passed out on the davenport. But if I'd quit paying attention to him and go on about my affairs--even if I did so little as to pick up a book and start reading--he'd immediately come out of it and start staggering around, throwing himself into chairs with a shattering crash, reeling into Sandy and Maggie's room and terrifying them, knocking stuff off tables and stands onto the floor.... BUT THE MOMENT I COULD GIVE ELMER MY UNDIVIDED ATTENTION HE'D SUBSIDE AGAIN, PASS OUT.

Once I got hup to what he was up to, I told him that he was welcome any time he came sober, but if he ever came drunk again he'd get the door slammed in his face. I was damned if I'd cater to his egocentricity by spending evenings just sitting, admiring an unshorn, unshaven unwashed, recumbent carcass stinking with cheap wine. Because Elmer does have a lot of good points, I didn't stick to this like I should have. But I did slam the door in his face once, for cause.

Elmer used to bemoan the lack of women in his life, asking me to help him. He was always too weirdly unkempt to be seen in public with, but I spent a lot of time trying to give him pointers and constructive criticism--at his own request, mind you. I'll never forget when I told him that all he needed was a little moxy and a bit of verbal patter. "What shall I talk about?" he asked.

"Oh, anything. Just be witty, light, frothy. The gal will probably give you enough leads if you watch for them. Hell, Elmer, you can chatter like a magpie with me--just carry it over onto your date."

He gave a great, shuddering sob. "But I can't turn off my fine mind," he said.

That was the end of that.

Elmer was broke, had no job. He had already drunk up his car and was starting to drink his records. He wanted a job, he said. So I got him one--fixed him up at my place of employment so that all he'd have to do was to walk in and tell them who he was. So Elmer shows up with a three day beard, as drunk as a goat in the bargain. So he got no job and I caught hell for "trying to get us to hire a wine".

We took Elmer and Betty out to my fiancee's sister's home in Van Nuys. The trip took the Percues only three quarts of wine. On the way back (we'd left Cele at her sister's to spend the night) the first thing Betty did was to ask me, in a most disparaging voice, if I thought Cele "had any gro-

amount of intellectual depth". She then began trying to pump me about my love life. She topped her performance by insisting on waving her wine bottle about, particularly as we drove by policemen. The evening was concluded by a drunken quarrel between the Pardues, whom I couldn't even get out of my own ear for a couple of hours.

And there have been probably scores, certainly dozens, of other incidents.

Tell, somewhere along the line I decided that life was too short to saddle myself with a friend that I had to apologise for constantly, that put me through so much grief. I'd had enough.

Think it over, Elmer and Betty. You people make any real effort to come out of it, and I'm pretty sure your friends will forget the past. Stay as you are, though if you want to. You've already alienated everyone in the LASFS. The others have their reasons, just as I have mine.

But if you don't have the guts to face your problems and do something about solving them, you can always go off by yourselves and talk to your bottle.

And you'll never be facing any problem if you start getting sore at someone like Burbee, who is after all a lot better friend to both of you than you'll ever know.

Think it over.

WOULD-BE BOMB-DODGERS! ATTENTION!

I quote from an article in the January issue of '45: The Magazine of the Year:

"I suppose some pathological cases are now assuming correctly that the worst is going to happen and are retaking themselves to remote islands where, though vegetation is the rule in both senses, the nastier aspects of the new warfare will come last, mildly, or not at all. Such egocentricity is impossible to normal people, for the world as they know it is the nourishing and supporting medium in which they grow and without which mere life loses significance."

Anybody want to try that one on for size???

COMMENTS ON COMMENTS:

(Inspired by Speer's comments on my bomb-dodging article). My idea in having a railway spur or highway running to the colony was to enable it to be self-supporting during the pre-bomb era. And I don't think Jack quite fathoms my objections to small town life. For him, it will be OK. He is fitting himself to practise a profession. I believe I said that persons with enough capital to go into business for themselves, or trained in a profession, would do OK in a village. The big point is that I'm not so trained; I can make fairly good money, but it is in a line of work which would exist to any extent only in a big city; I moreover am already too familiar with the low pay awaiting employees in a village. And at 34 I'm a bit old to take up a profession. Better, I think, to play the long shot.

A RANDOM CONVERSATION WITH AL ASHLEY ON LIFE, DEATH, AND IMMORTALITY

In his precise and sluggish manner, Al Ashley laid aside the fanzine he had been reading. He fixed his gaze into the depths of sub-space, and for a long while there was a near silence, broken only by the faint clicks of the caffeine crystals as they formed from the slow evaporation of the oracle's coffee.

I summoned all my courage and spoke. Well Al, I said, what did you think of it?

He shrugged.

None, Al, I urged. Don't be so inarticulate. Here I sit at your feet; thrill me with a measured flow of intellectual cadences. Be your old critical self.

Al sat and thought. Well, for one thing, it is entirely too immature. Why, it is positively childish. The fact that you seemed to like it is fraught with profound revelations of your deep-seated maladjustments, revelations which can be disclosed fully only to a person like myself who has made a life-long study of these things.

But Al, I protested, that kid is only 18. After all, you can't expect the wisdom of the ages from a kid like that.

Al glared at me indignantly. I don't see why not.

What do you mean, Al?

For the first time in an hour, Al Ashley moved physically. Blowing a spray of cold coffee, he laid down his cup and eyed me owlishly.

I was never immature like that, he said. When I was 18 years old I was a full grown man both physically and intellectually, just like I am today. Why when I was only 8 or 9 I was far more mature than some of those young kids you and Burbee are letting into FAPA...

Al, didn't you have a childhood?

Well, in a sense yes, I suppose. But then I have always been much different from most people. Older--more poised--you might say, wiser. Yes, that is the word. Wiser. Yes, Laney, I have always had a great intellectual depth and very broad mental horizons. I am sure even you can understand that to a person like myself the little things of childhood, so many of which you still cherish, could never have meant much.

No elective trains? No tick-tack-toe? No spitwads? No coaster wagons? Al, you've missed so much.

He shrugged again. I have always been too mature for such folderol.

No toys of any kind, Al?

Well, he said shyly, I did have a rag doll once. Such a lovely rag doll. I used to carry it with me everywhere I went. It had a gray moustache and it taught me how to think.

That is interesting, Al. A man in your position should tell us of such things, because the little trivia of your life mean so much to us fans now you are no longer one of us. I remember the scene as though it were yesterday, when you decided to renounce fandom, and how we all begged you to reconsider, and how you just sat there and stared off into sub-space, just like you always had. And how Burbee said, "But Al, you need FAPA"; and you

shrugged your little shrug and said, "I'm quitting FAPA too." And then Speer's eyes filled with tears and he turned to Ackerman and said in a hushed reverent voice, "Now he belongs to the ages."

Just think, Al. Here I am, sitting and talking to you just as though you were a person, instead of the fabulous demi-god you actually are, the puppet-master who in an act of supreme abdication let the strings fall from your nerveless fingers and let us all carry on, almost on our own. I'm absolutely awed.

Cheer up, Laney, he said. It isn't as though I were dead. I still read the FAPA mailings.

No, Laney, an ageless viewpoint such as mine is unique. You with your finite mind can scarcely understand it. You see, not only was I born a grown man, but I have never changed in anyway. Changeless, ageless, complete in myself--an ever living inspiration to you poor feckless mortals.

Al, are you immortal too?

I see no reason why I should not live forever. I certainly don't feel mortal. Besides, God in His infinite wisdom would certainly not create a fine mind such as mine and allow it to moulder away, be eaten by the worms of the earth. Yes, Laney, I'm just about the most immortal guy you ever saw.

In my person, you have a being forever ageless and timeless; living simultaneously the past, the present, and the future. That's why I'm busy 24 hours a day. A full life like that takes lots of time. You scoffers think I am just sitting here drinking coffee. You don't realise that I am sitting here watching the future, which I have already experienced, unroll once again. Speer spoke a profound truth when he said I belong to the ages. In one sense, I am the ages.

But Al, I said, why is it that you do not live in some great marble temple, so that we could come and offer adoration? Why do you live in this..this tenement, without even a bed of your own?

Why hell, Laney. Even a god must be humble. Besides, I like to sleep on the davenport.

To the ever-growing body of people who know Al Ashley only through the stuff Burbee and I write about him:

Al Ashley is not a moron. Al Ashley does not have delusions of grandeur. Al Ashley does not have any fixations (except one which we have promised not to mention in print except in an indirect manner like Al Ashley destroyed the hydra-headed monster who came out of the Midwest to organise fandom). Al Ashley is really more to be pitied than censured; few people have two such loyal friends as Burbee and I are to him. But Al can't help our liking him, because in our discerning way we can see and appreciate his good points no matter how deeply he tries to hide them from us.

Until he grew wearied of it all, Al Ashley was one of FAPA's top publishers. He was FAPA's top politician. He was a brain-truster. He was a humorist. He was an artist. He was a lot of things but most of all, Al Ashley really personified FAPA for a lot of us. Now he is no more.

That's why we eulogise him so much.