

## AN OPEN LETTER TO FANDOM

by

Forrest J Ackerman

I have still not got over the surprise that you have voted me top fan again after several years of relegating me to second or third place. I particularly don't understand how this took place when the polling was done in the east, which I think of as "the enemy camp". That is to say, statistically speaking it seems there are more people antagonistic toward things I do or say or don't do or say, there than elsewhere in the country. So, with the convention packed with Pennsylvania and New York people, it was startling to me to prove so popular.

I read in some fanmag the other day the opinion that a fan does not become popular by expressing too definite opinions about anything. He has to avoid treading on toes, he has to be one of the Good Joes. He has to be diplomatic rather than decisive. He has to say yes so that it could be interpreted as no, and make no sound something like yes; and I guess most of the time it would be better for him just to say maybe. In other words the writer made it sound like if you were a leading fan you wouldn't be very articulate about the negative or affirmative of anything very vital to many other fans.

Well, maybe in the next poll my rating will be shot all to hell and I'll tumble to 10th place or 20th or be eliminated altogether. I don't know, but I am not the least bit interested in retaining popularity at the expense of integrity. I have already spoken out sympathetically toward the colored people. There may go my southern constituents. One of these days I am going to get around to defending some social outcasts even more shocking than those with dark skins. But that must wait another time. Right now I want to give you my reaction to an invitation I have declined:

I am not having any part of the fan dept. that Nameless Stories proposes to inaugurate. Fans, you have conferred a certain honor on me by naming me your #1 favorite: Now for god's sake (or Science's, if you prefer, as I do) listen to your old Uncle Acky! What good is it going to do to fandom to be publicized in Nameless Stories? What next--astrology magazines? I would as lief solicit attention for my mag in an insane asylum. Editor Noname has just about corraled all the crackpots in creation; okay, let him keep them, croon to them, crow about them, if he's that crazy for filthy lucre, and in this case I consider the adjective applicable; it's on his own conscience, if he can conceivably have one any longer; my dear brother died, ostensibly to give this world a chance to be a better one, and I would be false to his memory to throw in my lot with frauds and fakera. Those are my feelings, and they are costing me far more than lost ego-boo as a fan: As an agent I could find Nameless Stories and Ditto Stories lucrative markets. If I'd kowtow to their perverted policies, but I have made it very plain to my prospective clients that I will not submit their mss. there. Maybe this sounds melodramatic--"Death before Dishonor", and old chestnuts like that. Rather chestnuts than nuts!

A couple months ago we (the actifans) were in no uncertain terms defamed as adolescent, short-pantsed sons-of-bitches by this charming chap at the helm of Hopeless Stories. Now he is all sweetness and lies. In my opinion, he does not find his 20 million readers compensation for the fact that 200 of the kind of guys he used to be are in varying degrees against him. How many dollars does it take to make up for the fact that the opinion of even one person who matters to you despises you?

Listen: I have probably known this individual longer than any of you. I first heard of him when I was in high school, back in 1930. He was in a hospital then, and the embryonic fans of that ancient day were urged to write to him. I was one who did. We were correspondence friends for a long time. Giving the devil his due, I freely admit he did fine things once upon a time in the fan field. And I was quite elated for him when he wrote me the sensational news that he had been chosen as editor of the old aristocrat. He was very cordial at the Chicago Convention, and generous in donations--which I do not disparage, at the same time pointing out it is no great sacrifice on an editor's part to give freely of his company's property, as it only redounds to his popularity and the goodwill of his publishers.

Then came Lemuria.

Nameless Stories' greatest mistake (from a financial standpoint) was in replacing Jack Larrow with Jack (mazuma, that is) Dero. And when Noname's tool sought to make a fool out of me (and I guess he succeeded), betrayed my trust in him as a truthful person and stabbed me in the back by making me the innocent transmitter to fandom of the Insanity Hoax--THAT WAS ALL, brothers!

If you are brothers. I have a sinking feeling fandom will go ahead and cooperate with Nameless Stories on this fan dept. thing, despite this earnest plea I make here to utterly ignore the overture. I feel in all likelihood this author who aims at inaugurating the fan dept. in Nameless Stories is just another Noname stooge; at best, giving him the benefit of the doubt and accepting him as sincere, he is



misguided.

My god, who in their right mind would have wanted to have sold radios, say, to the Japanese while we were at war with them? Or done business with Hitler? We fans, I feel, are in a small-but-irritating, unofficial way at war with this noisy, noisome nuisance, Nameless Stories.

Fan magazines reviewed in Nameless Stories need not expect further contributions from me.

Editors appeasing Nameless Stories, please do me the favor of omitting my name entirely from the next poll, or voting me Worst Fan--either would be preferable to being placed by you in a favorable light.

FORREST J ACKERMAN  
19 Oct 47

AN OPEN LETTER TO FANDOM  
by  
Rog Phillips

Acky is entitled to his opinion. We all are. He also has the right to express it in public. And I regret very much that it is antagonistic.

In a way this might be called an answer to his open letter to fandom. It isn't enough to answer by saying that his antagonism is personal rather than dictated by an honest and impartial opinion of what is best for fandom, though that might very well be all there is to his letter, when it is boiled down. Up to now I have had a great deal of respect for old Uncle Acky. And his open letter isn't a bit like him, the way I had pictured him.

About the insanity hoax. - I think if a friend of mine of long standing were supposed to have gone insane, rather than sitting down and writing letters informing people even as far away as England about it, I would catch the next plane to see what I could do to help him and his family. Since Acky confesses starting the hoax, it seems to me he implicitly confesses he saw what he thought a chance to knife Ray in the back when he was helpless, and now confesses it was a foul blow on somebody's part to trap him into making a foul blow of the worst sort. It reminds me somehow of Italy's declaration of war on France in the last war. I had not known who the spreader of the insanity rumor was until Acky confessed. Now I know.

So Ray is now all sweetness and lies, huh? And I am his stooge? If Ray is all sweetness he would certainly not publish something at the end of the letter department in Amazing on the stands during November; - something not very complimentary to him nor to fandom itself. And if anyone is willing it is me, because I am going whole hawg in painting fandom in its best light for the readers of Amazing Stories. Wait until you see the first issue with the fan department.

And as for my being a stooge, - in what way? Ray had not the slightest intention of giving in to fandom. Right now, if it weren't for Don Wilson, primarily, both he and I would be forever opposed to fandom. Don, like Acky, makes mistakes once in a while. I was so surprised to see him review a story of mine favorably that I wrote and thanked him. He answered and expressed the desire to see the controversy between fandom and Amazing Stories smoothed out. That was even more of a surprise, considering what I knew about his past actions. I showed the letter to Ray and suggested the best way to smooth things would be to put a fan department in Amazing.

His answer was, "Why should I devote a whole department to two hundred guys who have set themselves up as judges of what I should or should not do with my job? If I listened to their advice I'd have a circulation of exactly 200. If I put in a department for them or about them it will be something the other 179,800 readers have to pay for without getting anything out of it." He was right, of course. But Don Wilson persisted. He wrote me another letter wishing there were something he could do to straighten out the mess. I showed that to Ray and repeated my suggestion. He gave in. A month went by and I asked him what he was doing about a fan column. He said, "Nothing." I asked if he was going to get started on it soon. He said, "Why don't you do it?" So that's how it is. He has not laid down a single policy I should follow. When I asked how much space I could have he said, "As much as you need, but try not to take more than necessary."

I asked about the Shaver Mystery and suggested that since fandom was so sensitive about it I should keep it out. He agreed. He has the rest of the magazine and the Reader Speaks for that. I suggested not listing the Shaver Mystery Club Magazine among the fanzines. He agreed. Hamling also agrees that it is not a part of fandom proper because it deals only with Amazing Stories.

The column, you might say, is MINE. Not Ray's nor fandom's. In it I can do as I please, and I WILL do as I please until I get fired from it. I could be an ass and misuse it in a thousand subtle ways for enhancing my own prestige and forcing this or that fanzine into line on the threat of crucifying them. I could, but I have no intention of even going as far as some of the fanzines themselves and Acky in that direction.

I haven't the slightest desire to rule any part of fandom. My sole object and purpose in accepting the column is to build up the membership of fandom and



the circulation of all of its fanzines, and encourage its activities imperially.

Acky pictures the readers of Amazing as insane. He seized gleefully on the idea of Ray himself being insane, and broadcast it by letter, wire, and the NBC, (for all I know), so that ghouls could fly to Chicago in spirit and perch on the limbs of a tree outside Ray's padded cell. A THOUGHT just occurred to me . . . As Winchell would say, "Hum, Acky?"

As a matter of fact, only a few hundred readers of Amazing are insane. For that matter, only a few dozen of them are sane. Fandom doesn't need to worry about the sane ones because they won't join fandom. They read a magazine merely for enjoyable reading, - nothing else.

In my campaign for new recruits into the files of fandom you will be troubled inevitably with a few of the insane ones, just as Amazing Stories is and has been. You have the right (and I hope you use it) to refuse admittance to your circle to these nuts. Don't let them influence you or color your judgement. Being amateur publications the fanzines can even refuse such nuts a subscription, and there will be enough of the right kind respond to my campaign, and there will be enough of them quite willing to contribute high quality articles and letters, so that you can be as choosy as you wish, individually. YOU NEED NOT AND SHOULD NOT BE INFLUENCED BY THREATS FROM ANY SOURCE AT ANY TIME.

Acky says that if you praise or mention the fan department of Amazing Stories you will be APPEASING Amazing. By that he of course means that if you side in with him regardless of whether he is right or wrong in his crazy stand dictated by wounded vanity, self-exposed behind-the-scenes rumor starting of the lowest sort, and backed by his war cry to rally round the man voted most popular in fandom just a short month ago, you will be rated by HIM as having a high sense of loyalty and a high moral standard.

And for all of you to know and judge, Ackerman alone spread the rumor that Ray was insane. He did it knowing full well that if such were the case actually, Ray could have gone to a good hospital for the insane and in all probability returned to public life entirely cured and able to resume his position in society and public life UNLESS THAT POSITION HAD BEEN TORN DOWN BY HIM - ACKERMAN. THAT is the man you voted most popular. But you didn't know. You know now from Acky's own typewriter.

Should I counter by threatening to boycott and attack any fanzine that sides with him? Should I accuse anyone who sides with him of condoning his most despicable act? NO.

I am not going to threaten or cajole anyone. I say that if you want to, carry on with Ackerman, any of you that care to. Any of you that do not want your fanzine mentioned in my fan column need only say so and I will respect your wish. And if at any time you change your mind you will find me willing to let the past die.

If I am a stooge, tool, or dupe, I am less so than Acky's brother who died to bring peace and justice to Kan. For your information Ray's brother also died in the same war. You will not find Ray using his brother's shroud as a battle emblem. No. Nor me.

Acky should have read the last stanza of ODE TO A LOUSE and then torn up his open letter to fandom. He should have hidden his secret of being solely responsible for the Insanity Hoax in the loneliest grave in that faery cemetery of his mind and left it there. I pity him. I could not possibly face my friends now if I were in his shoes. I would be too ASHAMED.

ROG PHILLIPS  
Oct. 23, 1947

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