



WHERE'S THE SAFETY?

DO YOU LIKE KIPLING?

I DID, BUT TED PALLS.

"The captains and the kings depart. lest we forget. lest we forget."

LOUIS QUATRE, YES. BUT ARNIE QUATRE?

HAS HANK REALLY LOST THE EDGE?

A .357 MAGNUM DOES NOT A MOONSHOT MAKE...

WHERE'S THE PLOTT?

MILAN WHERE...?

...STEVEN'S EAR WITH HIS DERRINGER...

...REACHED FROM BEHIND...

AND HANK CUT OFF HIS...

THEY DON'T MAKE HIS CALIBER ANYMORE.

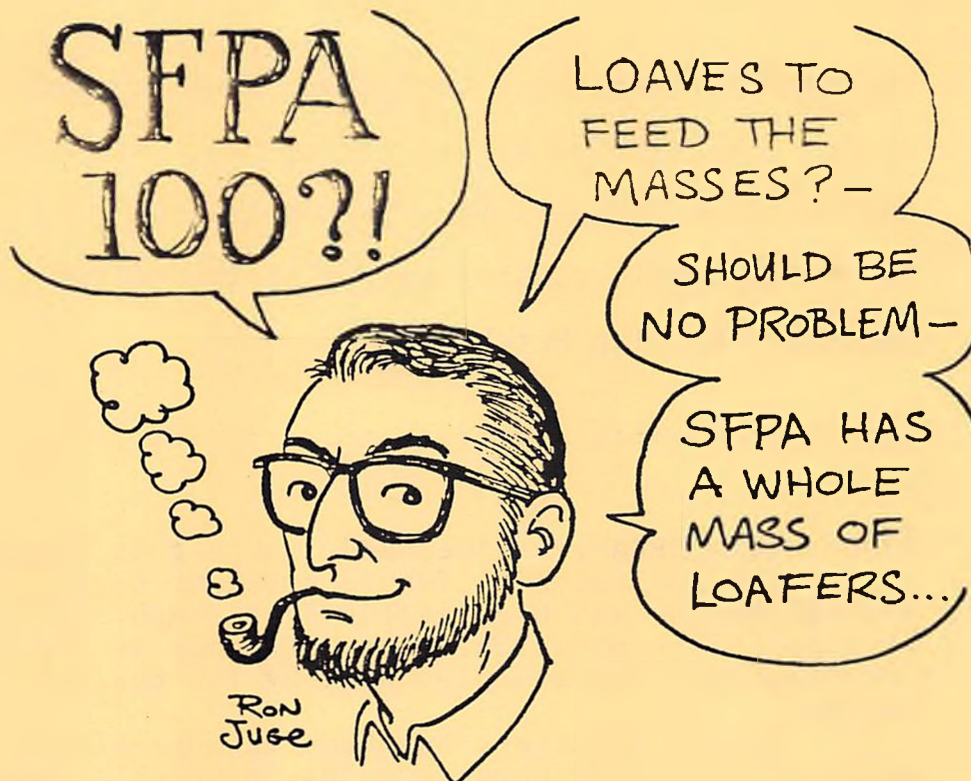
4F...?

SO THAT'S WHY GUYS FAT...

ATKINS STATION



MELIKAPHKHAZ #81 is prepared for the One Hundredth Mailing of the Southern Fandom Press  
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\*\*\*\*\* It's SFPA-100 time, and I hope this reaches GHLIOE in time for inclusion. 'Twould break my heart if it missed, but the way Murphy has been galloping through my life lately I've got my share of trepidation. Lots of projects I'd hoped to achieve for SFPA 100, for example, went by the boards in these past hectic months.

Still, if Murphy has been responsible for some disappointments, he's picked unusual modes in which to operate. Murphy is usually damned for disaster. I've done my share of damning; ole Murphy has played a pretty nasty part in the major debacles of my past. "Murphy is too bloody clever a lad to be allowed freedom!" I was heard to shout on occasion.

And I was right, too. But even Murphy can out-clever himself on occasion. This time he was so set on wrecking my plans for a gaudy celebration in SFPA 100 that he forgot to see what weapons he was clobbering me with.

Looking over my shoulder, Murphy saw my hopes to rewrite "Smoke" and "Red As Flame" to bring them current, improve the writing style, correct typos, etc. He planned a fiendish diversion. He got me promoted to Vice President. This was a devastating stroke against my fanac, as it saddled me with new responsibilities and a scope of involvement previously encountered only rarely. All of a sudden, those une-cumbered hours were filled with a thing called "work". No stranger to me, but new in scale.

As a further project I was planning to finish "Green As Grass", the next Hutch McAlan profundo. It was all plotted out, a deep and sensitive human drama featuring a wise, gentle and empathetic character called "Bill Brideway". But that plan went by the boards too.

As a special treat for SFPA I'd had ideas of hand-reproducing the entire library of those fabulous IGNITES that we all used to encourage John Guidry to keep running through SFPA. I was going to use crayons. But Murphy spiked this daring and visionary plan, which would undoubtedly have earned me undying gratitude in the hearts of my fellow apans.

Murphy, sneaky devil, arranged for a wild and enthusiastic response to circulation of my little computer game, MOUSE. Suddenly my lunch hours were spent in the lab



slaving over a hot computer. But it was great fun -- a delight to once again be programming. Time passed quickly. Plans for SFPA 100 seemed far away. Surely I'd have enough time to get all that stuff done when the games were finished...

And so Murphy triumphed again, but he hadn't noticed that one of the crowd of games players had a connection with a company that specializes in computer games. And now the company is talking seriously about licensing MOUSE and paying me royalties. So Murphy had missed an angle; maybe he's getting old.

And I never did finish that selection of Charles Korbas reprints I was going to edit and run. Nor the article on the comparative literary merits of James Joyce and Gary Steele entitled "Stream of Unconsciousness and Its Place in Amateur Press Groups". Not to mention that my mailing comments suffered in length.

There simply wasn't time to get them done properly. Every time I'd be set up for an exciting evening of typing the phone would ring and it would be Victoria Principal again, insisting that I come over and keep her amused and satisfied. I tried to resist, I swear, but she'd whisper over the phone line about the details of what she had in mind. I mean, how much sacrifice can a fan be expected to make for fandom. Even for SFPA 100. So there's not a portfolio of Korbas reprints in this issue. Nor long MC's.

My final plan was to draw the cover and backcover myself. I figured that it was time SFPA knew the full extent of my artistic talents. The Staton and Hutchinson stuff I planned to have reduced to one-eighth size and run as interior illos.

Murphy again, as I'll bet you guessed. The doorbell rang just as I was all set to put my concepts on canvas. (Yes, I wasn't fooling around with pen-and-ink. I was going to do it right.) This dude at the door introduced himself as Michael Anthony. Said he had a check for me. I was so excited that I knocked over the easel, stepped right through the canvas, and I've been too busy since to buy another one. So I had to make do with the Staton and Hutchinson work. I hope that's not too big of a disappointment to SFPA, but it's Murphy's fault.

All in all, Murphy really worked me over in the past two months. But I look on the philosophic side. Big zines never get many MC's, as everyone knows. If I had managed to do a big Mel for the One Hundredth Mailing, I'd get almost no comments in mlg 101. So in that since there's another loophole in Murphy's plan.

And if I'd really rewritten "Smoke" and "Red As Flame" I'd probably have lost the naive sense of wonder and emerging ingroup spirit that made them so reflective of their time. I'd probably have come out with paler versions. Sometimes to original work, for all its flaws, is the more enjoyable. So in a sense, Murphy saved me from an artistic mistake. Bet he never thought of that perspective when he was gumming up the works....



So Murphy has, maybe, outfoxed himself on this go-round. But I contemplate the long transcontinental journey that Mel must still make and I shudder. It will be in the care of the Post Office, that journey, and where else has Murphy had greater glory than in government organizations?

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Answer to Last Issue's Spiral:

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\*\*\*\*\* The high winds have come to Los Angeles today, blowing the overcast skies of yesterday into the deserts and bringing a tangible pressure to the air. This rush for SFPA has been like the winds for me, pushing me along pall mall in what has been a progressively maddening series of weeks. As I sit to type this last section of Mel, I feel that it will be such relief to get my package in the mail. I'll be restored to humanity again; free to relax at last. Right now, I never want to see a fanzine again in my life.

But like the winds, which push out the clouds and dirty air, so will the pressure of this mailing leave us with calm blues skies and clement weather. I look forward to basking in the reading of SFPA 100. It will be worth the hassle.

In the aftermath of creation I'm left with nothing to say. I'm a creative vacuum. The blank page cannot be left blank -- I must make an effort to fill at least two-thirds of it with idle chatter. But there is no topic comes to mind save trivia.

I've thought of solving this problem in advance by making up blurbs and snippets for use in such fannish emergencies. Somehow I never get to it. If I only had a file of short topics, then this dilemma would be bypassed. But as often as I've told myself that I would build such a file, my ideas have been used for the natter of the current issue, leaving nothing for the future. The topics are blown away by the high winds of deadline pressure.

Well, I'll not fill this page. The weekend is almost upon me. I'll have no deadlines of any sort to worry about then, and even the physical winds should have subsided. In the fair sunny weather of the weekend I shall relax, and perhaps recovery a measure of sanity.

Here's wishing you all similar recovery, if like me you've pushed the deadline almost too far.

HAPPY HUNDREDTH !

— LON



# DAWN'S CORNER

being an appearance in SFPA's One Hundredth Mailing by the junior Atkins representative

## A CHANGE OF HOBBIT

A Change of Hobbit is a bookstore that appeals to the taste for science fiction, fantasy, etc. The store does not only sell books, but sells magazines, posters, and even frisbees! The store has expanded from its old area.

As you go in, you will come to the first room. The first thing you encounter will be some shelves which have a number of calendars on them. On the other side of the room are many bookcases containing mostly science fiction books. On the side nearest to the window is a rack with cards in it. Across the room is the cash register. There is also a caged boa constrictor. Just for show, not to sell.

The second room is the biggest room. In one corner there is a huge stuffed thing with wings. It hangs from the ceiling. If it were on the ground it could seat about six people. The room is painted in bright colors. In the middle is a table with cushions around it, for a place to read books. Under the winged animal is a rack of posters. In another corner are some fantasy books. It too has a place to sit. In yet another corner is a shelf with various books, such as The Art of Star Wars, The Art of The Hobbit, The Unicorn, etc. etc.

The third room has many different things selling. There is a section for kids, with science fiction and fantasy books. And, for those game lovers, there are different colored frisbees that have unicorn and pegasus decals on them. And there are games in boxes. On other shelves, there is a book trading post. There are also shelves of magazines.

So, if you love fiction.... GOOD HUNTING! A Change of Hobbit is on LINCOLN BOULEVARD in Santa Monica, near the Santa Monica Freeway.

Dawn advises me that CATNIP will return next mailing....



## MEMORY FLOGGER

by Dave Locke (Mlg 9-20 & 76-80)

"What?"

"Spa," I told David Hulan two decades ago. "Why, is that wrong?"

"It's Seff-pa, because it's easier to add an 'e' to the pronunciation than to drop an 'f.'"

"If you say so."

Two decades later, Lon Atkins calls from LA to Cincy (because he lives in the former and I live in the latter, I suppose) to tell me he just got promoted to Vice President and people had been taking him out for congratulatory drinks. Said he'd been drunk all week. Couldn't stand another promotion. Then he asked if I were doing a zine for SFPA 100.

"No," was about the way I put it. "Not through any lack of effort on Guy's part," I hastened to add. "I'm sure he has exceeded the scope of his duty with all those letters and telexes and candygrams and offers of cast-off girlfriends. It's just that I can't whip up the ambition. Well, actually, I have lots of ambition. I'm just too lazy to do anything about it."

"I see," he saw. "Well, get me a page in two weeks, of camera-ready copy, and you're in like a porch-climber. I'll run it in MEL."

"Lon, you're all heart. I'll do it."

There was a pause in the conversation. I could almost hear him shuffling his feet on the other end of the line. "Now will you tell me the secret to winning at Othello?" he blurted, then belched, covered the phone loosely with one hand, and I heard him say in a muffled voice: "Yes, thank you, I'll have another."

"Sure, Lon," I told him. "As soon as you tell me the secret to winning at chess."

"I can't do that. It's against rules. I'd be stripped of my ranking and forced to attend checker tournaments. How about the secret to winning at Hearts, instead?"

"Nah, I already know that one."

"How come I beat you so often, then?"

"Well, that's because you know it, too."

"Oh, yeah."

"But I'd love to take you up on your offer to do a page in MEL for SFPA 100."

"Any idea what you're going to say?"

"Probably just: Have another happy hundred mailings."

"That's succinct," he told me.



# the OE symposium



ATKINS: If this group will come to order, we can begin to explore the nature of SFPA and try to relate our experiences as OE's of this fine apa. I think we've all got some interesting observations to make, and I thank you in manifold repetition for your generous agreement to participate. Order!!

LILLIAN: Call to ordure!! Call to ordure!!

ATKINS: Sergeant-at-Arms, restrain that man!!

(A solid THUNK is heard. The buzz of lively conversation quickly dies away as the assemblage regards the imposing figure of the Sergeant-at-Arms carefully wiping scalp, hair and blood off the butt of his pearl-handled Browning NAAC Brigadier classic.)

ATKINS (clearing his throat): Thank you, gentlemen. You too, Hank. I think we can begin. As you know, the rules involve frank, open, gut-spilling answers to some fifteen questions prepared by a committee composed of three officers of the NSF, Ralph Nader and four randomly selected inmates of the Greater Atlanta Home for the Criminally Insane.' I will read the questions in sequence and you are invited to reply. Ready?

ALL: (Total silence.)

ATKINS: Thank you for the motion to proceed. I shall try to read this first question, and those following, with distinct enunciation. We'll start with a general probe, just to get the engines turning. If you'll be so kind as to flip to the next page of this symposium transcript, you find the first question.....



1. *Why do apas exist and what is their pay-back to members? (This is a warm-up question to exercise your synapses. But I'm interested in your answers. They relate to the general issue.)*

MARKSTEIN: They're a form of participatory publishing venture, an underground literary society, or a mail-order cocktail party. This describes them better than any recitation of the mechanics of their production could do, but I know better than to expect anyone to be enlightened by it. Apas exist because there are enough people interested in them to support them. We understand why we're here, so no explanation is necessary.

CARLBERG: Getting an apa mailing is like hitting an egoboo jackpot -- the egoboo equation functions so smoothly and generously within apa parameters. A six-page zine produced in a single sitting can be depended upon to net as many as a couple dozen responses from your fellow apa members within mere weeks of the original writing. A zine of the same length out in general circulation of fandom is highly unlikely to do anywhere near as well as this for comments.

INZER: I don't know why apas exist. I can only observe what uses they have for the people in them. In all the apas I've seen communication was the alleged goal. But the kind of communication differed. There were fans interested in demonstrating their knowledge about arcane subjects. Apas provide a haven for them. There were fans whose chief interest seemed to be in manipulating others while climbing to the "top" -- the BIG NAME FAN. There were those who used fandom and fanzines as ways to gain a career... or something like one.

But the ones I liked best were the ones who used apas as a testing ground in their general growth into something beyond their current selves. --A way to socialize and evolve and communicate... This all sounds too Grand, but looking back those are the ones who responded to what I was doing myself.

HUTCHINSON: Why do apas exist? What is the capital of Nebraska? Apas fulfill a need for communication with people who share common interests. What fun is there in owning a complete set of PLANET STORIES when none of one's mundane friends have any idea of the tremendous implications of such an accomplishment?

JENNINGS: Yes, Alan, having mutual interests and a somewhat common hobby background sweetens the pot. But being in an apa is a golden opportunity to show off in front of a captive audience. Members come up with fancy fanzines, scholarly articles, witty humor, piercing commentary and reviews, etc etc. Virtually every person in the group will read this material. Not only that, a good many of them will react. The egoboo returns, the sense of involvement with people who are impressed and who care -- is very powerful.

LILLIAN: Generally speaking, I'd say that apas caught on and prospered because they provided an outlet for creativity and opinion-spouting undisturbed by any sort of editorial control. The writer creates a complete package. No one edits, censors -- or botches up your writing. The apazine is as free a method of written self-expression as I can imagine. The special attraction of apas is that they provide regular, reliable response...



HULAN: Apas allow the development of a group spirit that you don't get with genzines. Those that have successful careers do so because a group spirit develops. After a few successful years, there comes to be a core group of people who've belonged for several years, and who basically set the tone of the apa. New people who join tend to be influenced by what the Old Hands are doing. If they like it they stay; if they don't they leave. This factor gives each apa its own personality. It can and does change over the years, but the change is relatively slow. Any major alteration is usually the result of most of the longer-term members either dropping or going through a period of minac. As for the payback -- egoboo.

JENNINGS: What else would explain the fact that members slave long hours and spend a proportionately large sum of money to turn out special projects, articles, fanzines, art effects, etc etc etc etc for apas which are composed of only twenty to fifty members?

HUTCHINSON: Stupidity? Ohh, yes! The capital of Nebraska is Lincoln...

## 2. *What characterizes SFPA as opposed to other apas? I don't want geographic answers, but spiritual ones. ....*

CARLBERG: At the risk of sounding ridiculous, I'll suggest that we have in SFPA, on the average, the funniest and most intelligent apa in fandom. There is no topic so difficult that one or more of us cannot tackle it in earnest, and no topic so earnest that one or more of us cannot make fun of it.....

INZER: True, perhaps in context. But SFPA was more than just an apa for me. It was a large part of my life and my development. The geographic role cannot be discounted, Lon. Coming back to Alabama; these hills, these faces, these HOT cities makes me realize this. SFPA was home; it spoke my language.

When I joined SFPA there were already people there for years. They had been through what I was on the verge of. When I joined SFPA I'd never published a fanzine. Because of the traditions, and the maturity (NOT IN YEARS, BUT IN continuity) members, I was allowed to make mistakes, commit my social gaffes, and generally grow and mature as a writer, and -- even better -- as a man.

ATKINS: You hit a strong chord in me also, George. I feel that SFPA played a major role in my transition from youth to adult. And I'll admit that the regional (geographic) factor had a lot to do with my initial involvement. I picked SFPA to pour my first and foremost enegies into, not because it was quick to join (I was the very first waitlister, on flip of coin), but because it was the group I wanted. And lots of that was my rebel heritage. I think the spiritual issue is tied to the geographic...

HUTCHINSON: Being an apa based on geographic proximity, SFPA's unique chemistry is probably due to the fact that most of its members have met one another. In my experience, I've come to enjoy a person's zine much more once I have a voice and face to put with the printed words... Of course, knowing a fellow apan is no guarantee that compatibility will follow, but it is very interesting to observe that while most SFPAns live close enuff



together to see each other several times per year (on the whole, that is), they've not the degree of familiarity that breeds contempt...

LILLIAN: SFPA has the Southern value of heritage going for it. Hank Reinhardt jokes, Hearts jokes, Ulric Greywolf jokes, IGNITE jokes, XXXXXX jokes, Hank Reinhardt jokes, various minacker jokes, Ulric Oldwolf jokes, etc. Not to mention Hank Reinhardt jokes. (Like Pickett's reckless charge -- though nonetheless noble -- into the barrells of Yankee guns on Cemetary Ridge.) Basically, SFPA is SFPA because of its heritage...

It's ability to be open to new voices while perserving this heritage. It's open door to growth. its appearance: like New Orleans, SFPA possesses a funky pride in its own identity. Rich in personality, steadfast in tradition, warm is hospitality, racy and deep both in content, (and also handsome) in appearance ... that's SFPA. SFPA's the best. That... is our pride....

STATON: I was somewhere in my mid-teens, Guy. (Though I'm not honestly even sure about that fact.) SFPA was what it was: a good thing: fun. If you were, as in my case, a "liberal child of the '60's". I felt almost entirely alienated from the people around me, and in SFPA I found a sense of community that I found nowhere else in the South.

HULAN: Perhaps there's more of a sense of tradition in SFPA than elsewhere.

ATKINS: Yes, there is the tradition. But what of recent years?

HULAN: There was a day when SFPA seemed to have more of an in-group spirit than most apas, but it hasn't seemed to me to have that feeling for several years. It is possibly true, though, that the members of SFPA, on the average, care more about SFPA than the members of most apas do about their apa. Where the members of most apas are in it for what they can get out of it, a fair number of SFPAs seem to be concerned with what they can put into it. This isn't unique to SFPA, but it is unusual.

MARKSTEIN: Maybe that's because everyone knows his zine has to stand by itself instead of being stapled into anonymity. SFPA is one of the last apas to cling to the ancient tradition of binding zines separately, so that each one stands out as an individual. It pays off in accessibility of zines and in making each SFPA member stand out as well. And it adds an indefinable something -- substance, I guess you might call it -- to the zines, each of which has to stand with a front and back cover naked against the world. More care seems to go into the average SFPazine.

JENNINGS: The degree of a person's involvement in an apa really determines the way he reacts to it. I think perhaps that special feeling that SFPA members mostly have for the group, and the respect that SFPA commands from other apas and thruout fandom, is an accumulative effect begun when the thing was born back in 1961. At that time there were very few southern fans. When I became an active fan in late 1959 it was a Big Event. People wrote me to remark how unusual it was to have a fan come from the South.

When the SFPA was formed, it seemed to me that creating an apa would be a great idea to get active fans together. After the apa did get itself going most of the members were involved in a serious manner, and were determined to various degrees to keep it going, despite any problems and adversities.



And I think that sort of feeling, once entrenched, continued to survive thruout the whole history of this organization. How many times have people run for office, put aside feuds, sacrificed a principle or a point of honor or done something else for the good of the apa? Hundreds of times. Happens all the time. In fact it happens so much most of us don't really pay that much attention anymore. We expect members to be willing to put aside petty bickering and disruptive actions for the good of the apa as a whole. From what I've seen of other apas this may be a unique quality we have here.

When a person becomes part of the SFPA and becomes active in the group, the sense of group pride subtly and carefully instills itself in him or her. Members of the SFPA are proud of the group; they don't hesitate to tell the world that this is the best apa in existence. The point that other apas might offer greater benefits seldom is even considered. We know we're the best because we work within, around and for the ideals that have made themselves a part of this organization thruout its history. The fact that we instinctively know we're the best seems to promote its members to make repeated special efforts to product top quality apac. Why is that? Because of the image of the group, the spirit of the thing demands it.

The most recent example I can think of that backs up this concept is a few moths ago when suddenly word arrived that our world record mailing had been surpassed; by a comic book apa at that. Suddenly we heard people say that the apa was in the doldrums. The membership was turning over, the page count was down, the quality of the material was slippshot and often totally non-interesting.

In most apas this would have meant a long gradual decline which may or may not have been reversed somewhere far down the line. But in the SFPA a number of people looked at the situation, all of them at about the same time, and said, my god, this is horrible. I've failed the apa. I've got to get my ass in gear and produce some decent stuff again. Not, the apa owes me better material otherwise I won't bother to respond, but a decision on the part of a number of people that they, personally, owed it to SFPA to produce more frequent fanzines of longer pagecount and better written quality. And with this sort of dedicated effort the apa has turned around. We did this by internal manipulation and conscious effort, not by turning over practically the entire membership to get a whole new slant on things. That's one of the primary reasons why the SFPA is unique.

LILLIAN: Rich in personality, steadfast in tradition, warm in hospitality, racy and deep in content... Like New Orleans, SFPA possesses a funky pride in its own identity. SFPA is as handsome a group of zines as I've ever seen. SFPA's the best.

MARKSTEIN: Let me leave you with another question: What characterizes your family as opposed to other families? (I'm assuming you've got a really good family....)

3. *What made you decide to run for the OEship? (Why not answer for each time you've run?)*

HULAN: I've run for OE five times, though I've only served two terms.

ATKINS: But you won three of the campaigns.



HULAN: True. But in 1963 I resigned because of moving to California before start of term. The first time, in 1962, I thought it would be interesting to try being OE, since I'd never done it before. And Bob Jennings was going away to college and was just as glad to get out from under when I said I'd run.

In 1965 I ran again, beat Larry Montgomery, and served. At the time I filed I didn't know if anyone else wanted the job, but I knew Joe didn't want another term. In 1966 I wanted a second term, because things were going well in SFPA and I had more things I wanted to do to finish what I started. (I was unsuccessful this time; lost to Lon.) In 1968 I (unsuccessfully) opposed Lon because I didn't (and don't) think OE's should serve more than two consecutive terms if there's anyone else competent and willing to take over.

JENNINGS: The reason I ran for the OEsip the first time around was because I was one of the active members interested and instrumental in getting it formulated and I wanted to make sure it would continue to exist during its first mailings.

STATON: As I recall I was sort of a fill-in OE around the time that Bill Plott's wife pulled him out of fandom entirely and the rest of you who would normally have been OE were in the process of moving en masse to the West Coast, so I tend to remember my term almost entirely as a matter of somebody occupying the space until everything else settled down.

ATKINS: I ran for OE shortly after I got into SFPA, mostly because it was an exciting idea and I thought I could do the job well. I had a lot of encouragement from Larry Montgomery and the Atlanta contingent, all of whom wanted the OEsip back in the South. Larry would have run, but he did not think he could beat Dave Hulan. So I was pushed into the candidacy. It was a hard fought (but clean) campaign decided, imho, by the residency issue. SFPA was gathering momentum with every mailing and was now the clear spearhead of the resurgence in Southern fandom. We needed a focus within the geographic South.

Even though I too moved to Southern California, carrying with me the OEsip, I still feel that the OEsip should stay in the South most of the time. There's no reason to make this law, but it seems to work better. The fact that I stayed on for four terms has more to do with the lack of viable Southern opposition candidates than it does philosophy. When Don Markstein came along I was delighted.

MARKSTEIN: Well, it all started when I lost a bet with George Wells.... no, that's why I ran for President of the NSF. OK, I ran for OE three times. The first goes back to 1969, which is slightly more than a third of my life ago, so it's a little difficult to recreate my motivations of the time. But as I recall, it was part of a general pattern to my behaviour of the time. SFPA seemed to need a new OE, and I thought being OE of SFPA would be just ducky.

Lon was OE at the time and had been for four years. And Lon had evidently lost his enthusiasm for it. There wasn't much to be enthusiastic about -- the apa had entered the worst slump of its history. And it wasn't easy for a California OE to get a Southern apa out of the doldrums. All in all, one might easily come to a conclusion that a new OE next election time would perk things up. And why shouldn't it be me, I thought, so it was.



It's certainly easy enough to answer for the second time. A sudden uprising of Southern Fandom had dramatically pushed SFPA out of its rut. Record page-counts were being hit. (Today, they'd be routine, but at the time they seemed like hot stuff.) New members were coming in right and left -- my third OO contained the first waitlist SFPA had had in years. Things were popping all over, and I was right in the middle of it. Of course I ran again.

INZER: Basically, I ran for SFPA OE my one and only time for one reason. Of all the people running, I thought my vision of what SFPA was all about, at least to me, was the right one. I felt that SFPA was on the verge of losing that "SPECIAL" feeling that it had when I joined.

Guy -- in my opinion of the time -- knew the form of SFPA tradition but not the ESSENCE. He seemed to feel that if we made it look like the SFPA golden age, then it would be the SFPA golden age. I felt that was not the way.

The Hughes candidacy, on the other hand, seemed to be rooted in Power Politics. To me, that was absurd on its face and just not for SFPA. (Remember the Power Elite discussions? What power? Whate elite? I wondered about that...)

Only Steven seemed to share the same vision of SFPA that I had. No wonder -- he had been there much longer than I. He had seen it. He helped create that ESSENCE. As things turned out, he probably should have won that election...

LILLIAN: 1973. Why did I run? Two years of close acquaintanceship with Don Markstein's OEs had entranced me with SFPA and the mechanics of putting it out. I ached for the experience. It was an unwise candidacy in many respects, because even though I was a popular member (Spiritus had won the Egoboo poll that year & I'd come third overall), I was preparing to leave the South for New York and had no idea of where I would spend the following twelve months. When I lost to George Inzer I was frankly a little relieved.

In 1974 I had no intention of running until I called Inzer some weeks after the deadline for our September mailing.... and found that he wasn't running again, that the mailing was not out yet, that he was out of money... In short, that SFPA's greatest crisis was upon us. George asked me if I would be interested in running. I felt I was as good a choice as possible, so I ran....

CARLBERG: I've always had the run-for-office urge, wherever that comes from. From October 1967 when I first in my life saw an apa mailing (a CAPA-alpha mailing from CMs Don & Maggie Thompson), I knew I was destined to run one of these things. First it was Myriad, and then, as my love for SFPA grew, it had to be SFPA, too. "OE of the best apa in fandom," that had a nice ring to it, and I wanted to see it after my name.

HUTCHINSON: Why did I run for OE? "I think it'd be fun to run an apa."  
(© 1940 by Orson Welles.) That was the basic reason, altho later I was to discover advantages I hadn't thot of (such as having extra time to work on zines when you didn't have to mail them to an OE.) I was also to learn the unpleasant side in fielding abuse from fringe members who had their minds (?) made up without waiting to hear the other side of the story. Anyway, it was the opportunity to try something new that prompted me to run for OE (also the fact that no one else was running.)



LILLIAN: In 1979 I ran again, with some misgivings. My '75 OEship had been savaged as none other before or since. I contacted a few fellow members, all of whom encouraged me to run. Seeing as no one else wanted the job then, and realizing that an incumbent OE would have a shot at mailing #100, a true prize, I ran. In 1980 the apa was in fightin' form and folks did me the high honor of giving me partial credit. And the 100th mailing... OEing that milestone would cap my SFPA career and repay the apa for 10 years of never-dull community. Think I'd pass up a chance at that?

4. Give me a few words about SFPA OE campaigns. A number of these have been rather heated. Why is the post so desired?

JENNINGS: The ultimate honor is to hold the OE post in the organization. Given that postulate, it's not hard to see why many OE campaigns get heated and sometimes very bitter. SFPA traditionally prefers to elect its OEs for many terms of office. Having another person challenge the incumbent is a slap in the face, even if worded in the most cordial terms. You imply that you can do the job better than the existing OE. Naturally his pride is hurt. However, I think it is significant, not to say downright remarkable, that of the list of OEs in the twenty year history of this organization, all but two are now active members, and one of those two is on the waiting list. How many other apas could make that claim?

CARLBERG: The post of OE is so desired simply because it is the big power position in SFPA, and there is something about power that attracts. As it has been written, "Where two or more are gathered in any name, there will be an argument about who's in charge."

A lot of heat in the OElection has been generated by friction between two basic approaches taken by candidates into the fray. One, the Hot Issue platform, is based on a contention that there's something rotten in SFPA that only the Hot Issue candidate is aware of and/or prepared to cope with. Guy Lillian's first successful campaign is the only example of a Hot Issue candidate taking office, this occurring in the already peppery political climate engendered by George Inzer's nonfeasance in office.

The other sort of approach is a Status Quo platform, holding that the new OE is going to do nothing more radical than keep track of all the details involved in running SFPA, and the more clearly, elegantly, and attractively, the better. (Guy's platform in 1979 was more like this.) SFPA is traditionally more inclined to elect somebody who is calmly prepared to take on the whole sheaf of work than somebody burning to fix up some detail he's taken to heart as an all-important holy mission. SFPA crises have eventually all sorted themselves out so long as there is someone there to keep the mailings coming around and everybody talking about what's to be done. The one-man salvation squad isn't a popular concept here, as experience has shown it to be simply unnecessary.

LILLIAN: Why is the OEship desired? Damned if I know. You have to keep track of zines as they come in, maintaining accurate pagecount records. Heaven help you if you should mislay a package or miscount a zine! You must handle other people's money -- never a comfortable situation. Increase the treasury if possible; guard its every penny.



You stare at the stack of zines; you sweat its slow growth. When packets appear with stencils or masters only, you add this printing to your own. When the stencils don't fit your machine, you either hunt down one they will fit or somehow finagle a fit on your own mimeo... not to mention ink all over yourself, your floor, your dog and your wife.

HULAN: In California, people of that persuasion are said to use salad oil.

LILLIAN: That's in Southern California. But as I was saying, the OE stays up all night collating the mailing, only to discover that Member XYZ has shorted you three copies.....

HUTCHINSON: In the case of a Wells zine, is that "short sheeting"??

LILLIAN: Will you guys be serious! The life of an OE is hard. \*sniff\*  
You type the OO like every typewriter key pressed was a nail being driven into your own coffin. You lug thirty clumsy packages to your car and from your car to the PO. You face the suspicious bureaucrats at the post office counter, entrusting precious SFPA to their meaty paws. You do the work. You take the grief.

CHORUS: Awwwwwww!!!

LILLIAN: But you get the return. It's to your house that the calls come. The decisions are yours to make. The problems are your, yes; but the price is yours. Being OE is like being a SFPA... thirty times over. Worth it all.

HUTCHINSON: I've yet to see an OE so inept that he caused an apa irreparable damage... get the mailings out, that's the main thing. Tho the OE, in most cases, has to put up with more undeserved bullshit than any other member of the group.

CHORUS: Awwwwwwwww!!!!

JENNINGS: There's a lot of work involved in the thing.

ATKINS: True. But their rewards are ample, and not just the obvious ones like extra time and "power" within our tiny circle. The rewards are those any good steersman reaps: the ship sails to his course. Or any skilled craftsman: the handiwork bears his stamp. Although the object being an apa, filled with other human beings, it's not really that simple.

INZER: Some people want a place in history, no matter how small. At least I got that from some people's campaigns. But, I think, the good OE's -- the ones I remember best -- wanted the post to keep the SFPA flame burning bright.

MARKSTEIN: My own first election calls to mind a few words. As a campaign promise, I stated that if not elected, I would blot out the Sun. I was elected, but blotted out the Sun anyway.

Or maybe I hadn't quite been elected on the day of the eclipse, tho it happened some time after the election was originally scheduled to be over. Last year, when I was campaigning hard for the Westercon, with no opposition in sight, you might have heard me remark that I've seen surprises in one-candidate elections before.



Well, that was it. Not that the one candidate wasn't elected in the end, but the end was a lot farther away than it looked at first and there were some surprises along the way.

How coy I'm being! Well, various versions of the story are still current, so I guess it won't hurt to tell mine. Rick Norwood and I had just split up an apartment under rancorous circumstances. He, justly and firmly convinced that it was necessary to Save Humanity from me (and probably never suspecting that I harbored the same thoughts about the dangers of letting him run around loose -- we were really pissed off) talked Lon into running a write-in campaign to rescue the OEship from the disaster of falling into my hands.

It must have sounded convincing while they were talking, but when it came time to put out the mailing Lon was unable to get in touch with either of us. And, from his accounts therein, felt like he was holding the bag. But, having garnered enough write-ins to win handily, he went ahead and published the results and sat back to see what happened.

Hoo boy was I surprised! The whole thing got straightened out eventually, but I don't think very many only-candidates have had bigger surprises.

ATKINS: Funnier now than then for me, too, Don. Faced with the testimony of a long-term apa member I was in a quandary: with the election at hand, should I turn over the reign to a Madman? Both you and Norwood proved particularly hard to pin down. So when the election came, I reserved jurisdiction. The occasion provided a rather actinic forum for resolution. You proved cooperative; Norwood faded into the proverbial woodwork. Need I say that turnover was speedily accomplished.

The follow-up vindicated us both. Norwood and his wife skirted the edge of minac, constantly trying to provoke the OE into dropping them. Before it was over, the famous ruling on minac in mailing 40 came to be a standard of application. The Bill Bridget sordidness is hardly a pimple on the corrugation of our past....

After all, why do we have such doings when it's all supposed to be fun?

LILLIAN: The campaign of 1973, against Inzer, was also supposed to be fun -- we'd agreed on that beforehand, George and I. But others seemed to look upon my policy statements as personal attacks. Alas, defensiveness, anger and bitterness turned what might have been a good time for all into a feudfest. Too bad. The campaign of 1974 was too revolting for words.

MARKSTEIN: That campaign right after I said I was stepping down... 1973. SFPA was a thriving concern at the time -- one of the hottest apas in fandom. (Not the first time it had occupied such a position.) Not surprisingly, several people turned up willing to step into the post. Sadly, a couple of them were less than polite about campaigning. I don't know whether to be proud of the fine show of civic responsibility SFPA put on for that election, or embarrassed at having presided over an election that everyone had such a strong opinion about. But it was the only 100% voting turnout I've seen in any apa.

HULAN: I won't count, for myself, the 1974 run Lon and I made against Guy Lillian, because I wasn't really the candidate that time, and it never came down to an actual election....



As I said before, SFPAs care about SFPA, and if they think they are better suited to be OE than an opponent, they feel very strongly that they should be elected. Which can get a campaign rather heated.

5. *Once in office, most new OE's see a policy change or rules adjustment in order. Few come with any long-term reason announced. What were **your** changes and what were the enduring reasons?*

JENNINGS: I'm not sure this question applies to me. As the first OE everything was in process of change and adaptation.

HULAN: My first term saw what was probably the biggest change SFPA has ever had -- the separation from the SFG and the adoption of the present Constitution, which is very different from the original one. The reason for the separation was that the SFG was moribund and about the only activity within it was SFPA; SFG had become something of a millstone. Also, the original By-laws (there wasn't a Constitution as such) were rather rigid and unwieldy in my opinion. It was always my philosophy that since the OE does all the work, he should have as much freedom to operate as possible within certain rather broad limits. Anyone who didn't like what he did could always run against him at the next election, and if he became too outrageous there was provision for impeachment. This has been successful, as shown by the fact that SFPA is still around after all these years, with little change in the philosophy behind the Constitution.

ATKINS: Finding a sound foundation in place, my major concern as OE was to preserve SFPA (through some trying years, I might add). In the "mechanical" departments I made some decisions I felt strengthened the ease and correctness of administration, and most of those changes are still with us in one form or another, though most are Tradition by now. The first real action I took was to crack down on the uncontrolled post-mailing scene by ruling that the only legal post-mailings were those mailed by the OE, accompanied by an identifying fractional OO, and listed in the next whole-numbered OO. We were suffering from slipshod pm's firing out from tardy members like mortar fire.

Other minor things were putting the roster on the back page of the OO (for convenience of reference), instituting a waitlist fee and response requirement, installing Tuesday deadlines as a standard (with a promise to Always Mailing No Later Than The Next Monday Morning). And finally, with a notice in the OO of mlg 30, reviving my original platform (in reverse, selfwise) and asking for some Southern fan to take the OEship off my hands. I was tired. SFPA needed a Southern OE. Fortunately, Don Markstein heard the call.

But the thing I tried hardest at (as, I think, all our OE's have) was to set a strong role-model for my eventual successor, to administer the apa fairly and speedily, with an open listing of the reasons for all my actions and advance warning (more than a mlg if possible) of any changes I intended to propose. And to make The Southerner attractive and easy to read -- easy to find critical info within. It counts.

MARKSTEIN: I made a bunch of changes, most of which were trivial but some of which have been pretty enduring. I set the deadlines at last Thursdays of odd-numbered months, for example; set the minac that has by-and-by been with us ever since (tho it's been fiddled with some); and probably did any



number of less durable things that escape me now. The one thing I did that I think was pretty significant was to push through a Constitutional amendment to make mailings bimonthly.

Looking back, I can see that the Enduring Reason for the Momentous Change was that the Epoch of the Quarterly Apa was passing... At the time, tho, it just seemed like the more frequent apas were livelier, and SFPA looked like it could use some parking up -- there weren't really any Enduring Reasons.

(By the way, SFPA has the distinction, I'm almost certain, of being the longest-running bimonthly apa in fandom, having started with the 38th Mailing, November, 1970. Now, I think bimonthly is the most popular frequency.)

INZER: I wanted to see SFPA open up in the sense of communication but not physically. I opposed increasing the membership. I liked it at 20. Twenty-five was OK, especially the way Don did it. I never wanted it to go to 30 as some advocated.

One thing I did was change the rule about married couples and joint membership. To me, living together was OK too. In fact, the only way for me.

CARLBERG: The one big policy change that survived my term as OE was the raising of the membership limit to 30 and the copy requirement to 35. What I had in mind was giving a few more waitlisters a chance to get involved in the apa without damaging the SFPAness of SFPA. I don't think it's worked very well. We still seem to find ourselves knee-deep in new members all the time, and the waitlist is as long as ever. I'd like to see the limit cut back to 25 and the copy requirement to 30.

One trivial, yet enduring, policy change I slipped in is zero-numbering for the waitlist-invitee. I'm pleased that subsequent OE's followed my lead on this idea.

HUTCHINSON: The only policy change I can think of that I instituted in SFPA was to allow any two people, regardless of sex, to share a memberspot. It seemed fair to me, couldn't hurt anything, didn't cost the apa anything, and besides, there was a Dynamic Duo at the time asking if it could be allowed. --Oh, yeah. I think I raised the price of backmailings to keep up with the postage required to mail them out, and raised the wl fee to pay for that. And clarified what would constitute acknowledgement of the OO by waitlisters. Anyway, nothing earthshaking.

LILLIAN: In 1975, when I assumed the OEsip, an ugly hassle was in progress over the interpretation of the Constitution as recently amended. This was the infamous ambiguity regarding Retained Status. In an attempt to resolve the problem, I introduced a second amendment to clarify the wording. I was accused of being an assassin of babies and devourer of same, but that was just suspicion from the hideous OElection. My language remains in the Constitution today.

I also tried to erase antiquated wording from the document by offering an amendment deleting the "the" wherever it appeared before "SFPA" ... we're not "the SFPA", we're just "SFPA". The first amendment passed; the second did not. Humph... I'm still pissed about that.

Since every new OE, almost by dictum, presents at least one new amendment in his first mailing in office, this year I presented two, removing an obsolete notice that declared that SFPAns who didn't shell out their dues within a month of notice were



automatically booted out out, and requiring annual publication of the Constitution. Both passed. I had no long-term motives for any of these changes, either in '75 or '80. They just seemed like alterations that needed implementation.

I sometimes wonder, though, how SFPA would've reacted had I used that old clause and booted all the people who were overdue with their dues, when I took over... I might have lived through the week. No, better to have scratched that harsh and horrible law.

ATKINS: A delight to see how in accord our legion of OE's is on the key issues that historically faced the SFPA....

⑥. *Being OE of SFPA has been compared to facing a Polish firing squad: not fatal but nerve-wracking. What experiences have you had in this vein? ("Abstract" references are allowed.)*

HUTCHINSON: What! You want to know about my nervewracking experiences as OE? Why be "abstract"??

There once was an apan named Bridget,  
Whose actions were those of an idjit.  
He was once heard to say,  
"I'll be OE someday."  
Which caused all the members to fidget.

ATKINS: Thank you, Alan, for the ...errr... limerick. But I was looking for more gut-wrenching, seriously-inclined, deeply-penetrating accounts from SFPA's voluminous history. Things like the Norwood-Markstein incident in my transition from the OEsip. (By the way, I'm now accepting advance orders -- \$15.95 plus postage and handling -- for my full-length novelization of that incident...)

Or the time I exercised the OE blackball when I caught a waitlister putting material lifted from old Astoundings in SFPA under his own name. Half the membership came down on me to be lenient -- maybe the original material rule should be loosened. After all, if we started to toss people out for mere plagiarism enforcement of minac might come next. Those are the kind of gut-wrenching incidents I was looking for. (Though I'll admit that Bridget came close to gut-wrenching -- my bowels moved when I read his hotter stuff.) Somebody else?

MARKSTEIN: During my OEsip I was prone to a malady that has attacked many OEs, of many apas -- in fact, many guys in the hot spot of organizations of all types. You're making what you think are all the right moves, and are being rewarded by having all the right things happen. Most people think you're doing a great job, but there's one guy (with a loud mouth) who, along with a couple of his friends maybe, just can't seem to accept the fact that you're not doing things the way he says you should. There never seems to be more than one at a time (that's one guy or one very small clique), but think of it as one fly at a time buzzing around in your space helmet.

There are a lot of things that are annoying, like a quire of stencils arriving to save somebody's membership when you've already started typing the roster, and people cluttering up the mailings with any piece of trash they can find enough



copies of. And there are aspects that evoke negative feelings: like turning the crank on the mimeo and dragging the mailings to the Post Office (to this day, that's the part of being an OE that I like the least). But the fly in the space helmet is the only thing about being OE that I'd call nerve-wracking....

ATKINS: Golly, Don, that was well put. But we were looking for something with more pepper, remember. Considering your reputation as the very best at ...uhhh... peppery commentary, I was hoping you'd talk about a fiery topic, like that famous minac ruling in mailing 40 or the time you blackballed Harlan Ellison off the wl. But, I guess we all get older... Let's see who else might "ignite" things... Guy, what you got to say?

LILLIAN: The only "nerve-wracking" experiences I've had have involved the prying of pages out of Hank Reinhardt. And that went on for years, in the OEShip and out! God!! That bozo would come up with more innate laziness than an Army of Gus Geese. I spent the college funds of my children and often had to sell girlfriends to slavers to finance that deluge of calls and letters by which I tried to keep Hank in SFPA. Well, it was indeed hard on one's nerves and challenging to one's wits, but it got a few zines out of Ulric -- so it was worth the strain.

(A solid THUNK is heard. The panelists shrink back into their chairs and grasp nervously for water glasses as they regard the imposing figure of the Sergeant-at-Arms carefully wiping scalp, hair and blood off the butt of his pearl-handled Webley .455 Mark 1.)

ATKINS: Will the Sergeant-at-Arms please refrain from editorial comment!!  
Now, if someone will prop Guy back up in his chair we will proceed. I'm disappointed that Guy wasn't able to slander more than a single former member before he was so rudely interrupted, but Dave Hulan is noted for talking straight to the issues and I'm sure he's got something that will set this assemblage ablaze. Dave?

HULAN: The only problem I remember from either of my terms was the blackball of Barry Gold. It was the first time that OE privilege had ever been used, and it was unpopular enough that I retracted it. Though Gold didn't accept the subsequent invitation. I know it's been used once since; I don't know if it's been used more than once. But that time the OE (Lon, as it happens) took a poll of the members first and got a consensus before using the blackball. In retrospect, that's what I should have done... but hindsight is always 20-20.

ATKINS: Just great, Dave. Fresh material and all that. Well, I'll bet George Inzer has some penetrating people observations... Heheheheh...

INZER: The most nerve wracking thing for me was the SFPA Treasury. It ultimately provided the trigger for my resignation. I don't think I ever had the Treasury in my possession except for the incoming dues and back mailing sales. When my financial footing collapsed back in 1974-1975 (not to mention my personal life at the time), the whole thing came unravelled. So much for good intentions.

ATKINS: George! The Treasury! Well, Bob Jennings will hit the mark.



JENNINGS: I've never had any experiences in that line. The responsibility to get the mailings up and out on time is about the greatest stress I recall in my brief tenure.

ATKINS: Lord, where will this Symposium get reader-interest from? Staton?

STATON: I do recall typing one member's zine onto stencil at the last moment, when he lost access to a typewriter.

ATKINS: Alright. I give up. Stven?

CARLBERG: One interesting case I got into while I was OE concerned the special cover Joe Moudry did for our anniversary mailing. I didn't want it on the OO since I was still proud of my new Southerner logo, and did not pause to realize in advance that Joe's disappointment about not having his cover where he expected it deserved a little more exercise of tact than simply letting him find out about it when he opened his jetpak. Inked, Joe opened fire by publishing a hot list of gripes in his next zine. And I was just an ace away from firing back in my own zine -- the first draft was already out of my typewriter -- when I decided that maybe one rude surprise upon opening the mailing was plenty on this particular question for Joe. I wrote him a letter making the specific points of rebuttal I felt were valid and sent it to Joe personally. In retrospect I think it was this willingness to present our points of view without an audience that took the fire out of our eyes; while we continued to disagree about whether the contribution should have been handled as I handled it, the anger was drained from the argument.

Being in the SFPA mailing is a peculiar way of being in public. The OE has a certain amount of discretion about what gets to be in the mailing, but only so much. He can throw out illegible zines, zines "not of interest to SFPA" (that much debated phrase), things that aren't fanzines at all, and darned little else. To be a member of SFPA is to have the right to be in the mailing, and after that we usually figure that the conventions of free speech pertain. Joe was sandwiched in by a technicality -- namely, he'd contributed to the OO rather than the mailing -- and quite rightly reacted strongly when he felt his right as a SFPA member to free speech in SFPA being compromised.

The most natural hazard of free speech in SFPA is attack by nincompoops. Though the OE is in many ways the most convenient target, the long line of nincompoops we've suffered have managed to scathe virtually every one of us at one time or another. (Most of us have also put in a stint or two as Interim Nincompoop while the position was unfilled, but that's another story or six.) This pertains to the most complex problem of my OEsip, the Charles Korbass blackball question. Korbass was universally, I think, regarded as a nincompoop, one who'd been given every opportunity to join the real world and had never taken up the invitation. As he was not a Southerner, the OE had the option to decline to approve Korbass for membership; SFPA and I thus faced the question of whether simply being irritating and asinine were sufficient grounds for keeping someone out of the apa. Most of us seemed to feel the grounds were more than sufficient, though Bob Jennings (notably) spoke out in favor of Korbass' right to free speech no matter how far off the beam he was. Since Korbass resigned the waitlist before the blackball could have occurred, the question of how SFPA deals with its nincompoops is still murky.

Particularly in the case of Southern nincompoops, who are Constitutionally



immune to OE blackball in the first place. Perhaps it's best just to let these people run their course, as they seem eventually to dry up and blow away once they get tired enough of peer group disapproval and disinterest. Maybe their place in the karmic wheel is to remind us what we might be ourselves if we hadn't learned to pay some attention to the people around us as more than handy targets. On the other hand, maybe a special "Nincompoop" category could be added to the Egoboo Poll, with the winner each year being kicked out on his can.

7. *A chronic irritation to the OE post is minac. Some members push the line too often for comfort. Most OE's start with great tolerance but grow more exacting. How did you handle minackers? What was their perceived value to the apa? How would you handle this aspect if you were suddenly OE again?*

MARKSTEIN: In the apa I've most recently been OE of, FreFanZine, there isn't any minac. I find it increases my tolerance for the stuff immensely when there isn't any. FreFanZine has no roster -- the OE sends it to whomever he pleases, and it pleases him to send it to regular contributors. Those who contribute do so because it pleases them to do so -- not because they have to get in a certain number of pages or be thrown out.

SFPA has a roster, which alone may make it too rigid for the free-wheeling anarchy of FreFanZine. Where there is a maximum membership, there must be a minimum level of activity to maintain membership. And if there are people who produce above that level and people who produce below that level, then there are bound to be the marginal people who produce at that level...

I grew more tolerant of minackers as my OEsip wore on, I think. If I were OE again, I would be more tolerant yet. The minackers are a certain class without whom we would be poorer. Some may do nothing but take up space, but many of the more tenacious ones contribute something to SFPA that can't really be measured in pagecount. The Great Minackers of SFPA include (but are not limited to) Faruk von Turk, Hank Reinhardt, and -- probably our all-time champ (having ousted Rick Norwood possibly a couple of years ago) -- G.H. Wells. Lon will probably add Len Bailles, but that's before my time. All of the above named would occasionally rise above minac in pagecount, but are by-and-large thought of as not contributing a great deal of bulk to the mailings. But there are better things to be known for than contributing bulk, and all of them are.

INZER: I would be a lot tougher on minackers -- at least, on the chronic ones. One of the problems of this larger SFPA has been too many spectators and not enough DOERS. I was too tolerant of minac.

JENNINGS: The situation when I was OE is probably unique, but I was constantly worried about minac and people dropping out, and as I recall went to some lengths to keep people in whenever I could. On the other hand, I recall a couple of people who obviously didn't give a shit about the apa in any form, and were just there because of the missionary spirit all Southern fans then shared to some extent.

Were I to be elected OE again I think my



attitude toward minac would be rather harsh. People just skimming the edge and holding on by their prehensile fingernails do not do the apa much good, in my estimation. There is a large waiting list of people who want to become active in the SFPA, and I see no sense in struggling to preserve someone with a borderline interest in this apa when others are patiently waiting for the opportunity to participate. Yep, I'm afraid I'd be rather cold and dispassionate with minac.

As to how much minackers actually contribute to the apa, that's difficult to estimate. Some people seem to stagger along doing perpetual minac, yet their stuff is enjoyable when they do produce. People like Tom Campbell, George Wells and Hank Reinhardt fall into this category. Yet I feel that these are the exceptions, not the rule. Most minac is a frantic attempt to slam together a few pages to save a membership, and it shows. People who do perpetual minac, it seems to me, have no real interest in the apa, and are missing out on most of the enjoyments the apa can provide. My only question is why these people do such things. If I were overextended in a number of apas or involved with so many projects that I found myself producing perpetual minac, I think I would sit down and make some decisions on what to save and what to heave out.

CARLBERG: My approach to enforcing the activity requirement was simple: I enforced it exactly the way it was written. Even though this led to untimely departures from SFPA for Phyllis Moudry and Janet Davis (now Janet Lyons) after borderline contributions, I'd do it the same way if I had to do it again today. SFPA's activity requirements aren't so difficult that anyone who wants to meet them can't meet them.

LILLIAN: Minacking.... it hasn't been much of an "irritation" for me, except in the case of Reinhardt, who gave both words new dimensions of meaning. I got in trouble when P.L. Caruthers joined SFPA in '75 with a small illo she'd drawn, the cover, two stencils and a page from me about redheads. That fit-- precisely -- the definition of minac as it was then. There was an uproar and minac's definition was changed to its present four pages -- all by the member.

As for why I allowed P.L. in that time, since without my page she wouldn't have cut it, well... it has a lot to do with her value to the apa, which has always been of an imensity far exceeding her pagecount, and my own sense of fondness. Typing a page and eating the heat seemed a small price to pay for her presence on the roster.

Aside from that instance, and Hank of course, I never had many problems with minac. How to handle it? Basically, an OE should lead by example. I have never minacked. In a period where SFPA activity is frenzied and joyful -- such as '80, if I do say so -- minac is a non-existent problem.

STATON: I once wrote a one-page article on stencil to fill out a member's activity requirement. So I guess you could say that I went pretty far to keep members -- there weren't that many back then, remember. But it wouldn't be fair to the waitlist these days.

HULAN: I've usually been fairly firm on minac in apas with waitlists and tolerant in apas that didn't. Minac standards are stated, and if a member meets them he or she stays in; if not, they're out. Though as I say I've been lenient in cases where there was no waitlist. If being lenient in cases where there was no waitlist cost the apa treasury, I figure it's worth it in most cases. But if it's keeping someone out, I'm much more strict.



I don't ever remember, in the 50 apa mailings I've put out, a case where I had a really marginal decision, based on something like excessive white space, double spacing, or something like that. If someone did that more than once I'd set out rules in detail enough to cover it, and enforce them.

As to the perceived value of minackers to the apa, I don't think consistent minackers have much value to the apa. (Someone like Hank Reinhardt I don't consider a consistent minacker; erratic, yes, but usually when he got a zine in it was more than bare minac.) But a lot of people go through spells of minac although before and after they're valuable members.

ATKINS: Two years ago I was a confirmed minacker and had been for the previous two years. What made me switch? It's an inspiring story. I joined an organization called "Minacker's Anonymous". When I got the urge to minac I called a fellow member and talked it through. In a matter of months I found myself able to walk away from minac, though the temptation was still there. (I learned how to fight it successfully.) Soon I was producing big robust zines with lots of mailing comments, fan fic, natter and even some respectable layout. I whipped the Dread Beast.

The truth is that most of us are in fandom because it's a hobby, and even if a particular area holds special devotion, that area is still a hobby area. In my case, the mundane pressure was building up steadily for several years at the same time that the interest content of SFPA was waning -- too many core members were retrenching and all the new faces (or most) seemed to make one appearance, drag a few grunging pages out to hold a memberspot for two more mailings, then drop. I found that SFPA wasn't a worthwhile investment of what little surplus energy I had. So I minacked.

But I was never really comfortable in the role, if innured I did become. My own image of myself, as a SFPAN, was a producer of good solid material -- interesting and sometimes special material. It's of interest (to me, at least) that even in the throes of minac I tried to craft those scant pages for impact and quality.

When the tide turned, in manifold ways, I saw that SFPA needed energy from its faithful. I began to do more, try harder, dedicate time. Mel 72 hit the mailing with a lot of pride behind it, & I've felt good about every issue since. The reward has been the interaction with fellow SFPANs -- something that a minacker must obtain in primarily vicarious fashion.

I think the issue of minac is a key one, and one that is frequently addressed mechanically. Yet it's a question that can determine the success or failure of a group. The shading of minac is subtle -- it's damned hard to detect the reasons, the underlying reasons. Even harder to know what flame still burns unseen.

Was I a candidate for the heave-ho! during my darker days? (I know that a secret group, headed by Hulan and Lillian, was trying to push through an amendment to summarily dismiss me from the regiment. "Poor old Lon is burned out," went their story. "It would be a kindness if we dispatched him with mercy, rather than watch this former page-count giant spend his last mailings in self-recriminating agony." Perhaps from their point of view they were right; I was pretty exhausted of the stuff that fanzines are made of. But the Phoenix lived within; I knew that someday I would again contribute to the glory that is SFPA.) That question is a central one to the minac issue and one that has been touched on by all of the OE's who've already answered this question.



There are species of minackers. There are those who have and/or will make significant contributions -- perhaps not large page count, but an abundance of quality material. There are those whose interest is medium-level -- they will put forth occasional exceptional material to maintain credentials as "solid members" but will typically use the old "I'm swamped" routine to avoid the expenditure of significant energy on the group. There are the Don't Care or Don't Care Enoughs whose material is always thin and skimpy -- yet they value the status of SFPAn too much to drop.

There's another type -- the pro minacker. I've run into them in every apa I've been in; agonized over them in every apa I've DEed. They calculate the rock-bottom minimum energy needed to maintain membership. It's a challenge, you see, maintaining membership with minimum energy expended.

The pro minacker will find every legal way to shave his contributions. He'll type endless rows of asterisks until told that It Won't Do Again. He'll progressively broaden his margins. He'll use fillies to doomsday. Etc. I've had running battles with these types, perhaps because as OE I demanded value-received.

(Quick stop to say that, yes, I've accepted outrages when the waitlist was not there. But as Steven can tell you, I could be tough on outright violation in the direst days of the apa. It never pays, in the long run, to condition people to expect tolerance of rules violations. They never understand that it's connected with circumstance. When circumstances change you get a hell of a reaction.)

There's an Atkins rule for survival of an apa, and it relates to the concept of "critical mass". The critical mass isn't number of members (though a massive organization, like the dinosaur, will continue to churn away long after it's biologically dead). It isn't page-count (though large p-c's, like the undertaker's cosmetics, can make rotting material appear momentarily attractive). It isn't anything mechanical. It is, and Bob Jennings has said it already, a spirit that is determined to succeed.

The Atkins rule says that that spirit must be mirrored in a critical percentage of the membership -- I can't tell you the number, Guy. If not, it folds up and looks elsewhere. That spirit looks for potential -- this is why all our heroes fade, despite high activity, and we install new heroes in time. This is right and proper -- a static situation is a situation without defense against adversity.

Only one class of minacker fulfills the requirement of potential -- all the other types tell you from their pattern that they have reached their apogee and will never do more. It is detecting the latent Hyperactive that is difficult. Within the short life-spans of most apas many are never discovered. It takes an enduring apa to nourish all seeds, yet few apas endure (though many maintain enduring moribundity).

While I can't define the critical mass, I can approach it from another direction and say that it is only a strong and successful apa that can afford to retain its artful minackers, yet remain prosperous, vigorous and evolving. By this standard, SFPAn must be a remarkable success. We have a history of artful minackers almost as old as the apa. (Perhaps not minackers in Dave Hulan's strict technical sense, but minackers of spirit. All brotherly cries of remarkable value of presence to the contrary, it is true that SFPAn stands by its substance. Substance, not vapor. Place these artful minackers in an apa by themselves, demand that they maintain it -- and see how long it lasts...)



SFPA must feel wealthy, powerful, to be able to sustain its drive (time-averaged, of course) and still provide niches for its artful minackers -- for there is no denying the reality of Don's phrase: "something that cannot be measured in page count". SFPA would have been far the poorer had it rudely roused its George Wells, Bill Gibsons, Hank Reinhardts, Len Bailes and Faruk von Turks. We are honored by their presence.

But were it survival, we would need more than they seem willing to give of their talents to attract fresh waitlisters and invest them with the energy necessary to drive the apa. Have we had, during his time, an OE who minacked?

The bottom line is this. In times when the roster is short every member counts, despite Treasury costs (which are minimal in differential). In times of high activity the waitlist-er knocks loudly and must be heard. Because we cannot make unequal demands on the membership, it must be a literal interpretation of the activity requirements which determine survival. Yet we cannot set the requirement so low as to discourage turnover of the disinterested. Nor so high as to drive out the artful minacker or the Phoenix unborn. But I suggest we are at the point where we should review our criteria carefully.

HUTCHINSON: While I felt that minackers should do larger zines, beyond making mentions occasionally in the OO I didn't really push them for greater activity. "Do Big Zines" became my catch-phrase, but it never went beyond that. And I don't think I'd do anything different if I ran again. After all, minac is perfectly legal activity....

REINHARDT: I never minacked. I just did selective activity...

### 8. *How did you handle (and credit) unusual zines? Handwritten. Printed on frozen pizza. All-cartoon. Etc.*

HULAN: I don't recall any peculiar zines from either of my terms as SFPA OE. In fact, I don't remember any that peculiar from SAPS, Stobcler, or Apanage. I guess I've been lucky.

HUTCHINSON: The most unusual submission I ever received was ~~this date XXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXX in 1981~~ a 45 rpm phonograph record sent thru by Marcus Wielage. I think I gave it one page credit for the front of the sleeve, one page for the back, and one page for the contents of the record. Actually, I should say "page count," as Marc received no credit for the record since he just acquired the copies and sent them thru. Marc later sent in a report of the Blues Brothers concert he attended, each copy of which had an actual rubber dog bisquit attached. (They were given out as place settings at the concert.) Thru some bizarre circumstances, the zine was returned to Marc and he eventually ran it thru VIDAPA. I'm glad now that I didn't have to store that bulky rubber bisquit with my SFPAs, as there is a large lump in the middle of my VIDAPA mailings.

JENNINGS: I never saw a handwritten fanzine when I was OE. Most of the members then had a little more pride than that. Faced with the situation today I would have to judge each situation on its own merits. I don't think it is very difficult to come up with a couple of pages of typed material. I doubt I'd ever give credit to anybody for something like IGNITE, which is illegible and incomprehensible as well.



LILLIAN: I never had much of a problem in this regard. Gene Reed sent a zine through SFPA once to which was attached a lollipop... but I never had to worry about figuring out the sucker's (uhh.. the lollipop's) page credit, since every one of them had come loose in the mail. I sent one of the suckers to each member, not as a part of SFPA but just as a gift from Gene.

MARKSTEIN: There was the time I got 40 copies of a college catalog. No indication that it was intended for SFPA; nothing to indicate that a SFPA member had sent it; no possible reason to suppose the average SFPA member would be interested in seeing it; wrong copy requirement.... and yet, I was accused of censorship for not running it.

JENNINGS: As far as the jumbo lollipops, copies of Uncle Scrooge Comics, records, tapes and the like, I might be disposed to sending the material thru, but without any credit to the person sending them. They'd be extras carried with the mailing but not counted as a part of it. This is an amateur press alliance; printed matter is the acceptable norm. Tapes, candy, records and the like may be an interesting sidebar to the apa's business, but can never be legitimately counted as part of it.

ATKINS: I guess the zines that irritated me the most were those hard to read: poor repro, cursive handwriting, grey ink on black paper, etc. I rarely rejected them, though I'd have much less compunction today. As Bob said, there ought to be some pride in your zine's appearance. And to dump in crud is an insult to your fellow apans. I suppose it's politeness that explains why SFPA has put up with such over the years.

LILLIAN: In my second term as OE Bill Bridget was shipping through some illegible handwritten -- or hand scrawled -- zines as part of his general assault on the sensibilities of SFPA. According to my duties as OE, I couldn't let him foul up the apa more than he already was, so I established a legibility requirement. That gave me the right to deep-six any zine which wasn't readable, in my judgement. Out went Bridget's hand-done dung.

What should happen, but immediately -- mike weber sent in a partially handwritten zine. I could read it, so I admitted it --- and was both surprised and grateful that I wasn't damned as a hypocrit.

ATKINS: Well, there's handwriting and there's handwriting.

MARKSTEIN: I'd bet a nickel the majority of IGNITEs went through under my OEship -- certainly, more than any other single OE got. I recall the policy I eventually adopted concerning such stuff.... handwritten zines got no credit at all.

Unusual sizes and shapes of pages, and things like double-spacing and such were counted for Contents purposes as simply the sum total of sides of a piece of paper (of whatever size they were) that had any printing at all on them. That's because I perceived at least one purpose of the pagecount on the Contents as an aid to making sure that the mailing was complete. As for credit, it wasn't usually an issue. (In cases where it was, then I had to Sit in Judgment. It's sort of like divvying up credit for a oneshot, assuming anyone claims it -- more an art than a procedure. Once it was determined, I usually took an "Ah Has Spoken" attitude...) But I do recall getting peeved at the unusual shapes running through at the end of my term...



HUTCHINSON: I came close to rejecting a couple of mimeo-testing zines that were mostly blotches of ink with a few lines of incoherency scattered throughout. If I had gotten anything really unusual, I probably would have credited it by the amount of time I thought it took to complete as compared with the time to do a page of type.

JENNINGS: The only points of conflict I would see might arise from variables in printed material. Double spaced fanzines, for example, I would be forced to look at with a very critical eye. By the same token, fanzines produced in reduced print size should, in some cases, entitle the publisher to adjusted credit if an activity problem sprang up. Cartoons. Cartoons can take a lot of work, also a lot of thought and planning. Doing cartoons can be as much work as typing up pages.

9. *How do you feel about the size of the apa? Does the membership roster versus waitlist size count? If so, how?*

HUTCHINSON: I like the size of the apa. My bookshelves are made to handle 8½ x 11 bundles perfectly....

MARKSTEIN: I don't know how to answer this question because I don't know whether to think of SFPA as a big apa or a small one. Its 30 roster spots put it in the small-to-middlin' range, but it does seem to put out some fairly hefty mailings.

I guess I carry around a ghost of the impression I had of the apa when I joined it, back when the maximum membership was 20. It wasn't so uncommon to see 200-page mailings, and there had been larger ones, but the general atmosphere was close and chummy. It still seems chummy, but it also seems a little more public than it used to. Of course, fandom itself seems more public all the time, so...

Anyway, there comes a time when you can't keep the apa small anymore. So what the hell, I enjoy telling people who ask that yaas, I said that's one SFPA mailing. When you've got a good thing going, word gets around. And more and more people want to take part. If there's a maximum membership, the waitlist begins to grow larger than is comfortable. It begins to take so long to get in that people begin to lose interest while they're on the waitlist, spending what should be their most enjoyable time in SFPA, their initial impression time, cooling their heels. And people get on the waitlist with the idea of reserving a spot on the roster for a couple of years down the road, when they think they might want it.

Deprived of fresh blood while it's still fresh, the apa begins to stagnate. People lose interest. An equilibrium is usually reached, but it's on a lower level of fun for those who were around before it Caught On. To keep the apa young and interesting, people have to be moved up the waitlist faster.

So you increase the maximum -- first to 25, then to 30. And I should know, because I was the first OE to increase maximum membership, thereby starting us on the road to gianthood. But there's a limit to how far you can go in that direction without completelt losing touch with what SFPA is and should be. Personally, I think SFPA is about as big as it should get. I mean, if we wanted to we could probably expand to the point where we'd hire a full-time professional OE just to put out our gargantuan mailings...



INZER: I preferred the smaller group; twenty members was the perfect size. It preserved the in-group feeling and enhanced more open discussion. Twenty-five was a good enough compromise. The waitlist could be 100 and I'd still feel the same. Fifty members -- or even thirty -- simply isn't SFPA. It's FAPA -- or something like that.

JENNINGS: The size of the apa seems right to me. Of course, I thought it was OK at twenty members, and at twenty-five members as well. I would probably be apprehensive if the membership limit were raised much more than it is now. I favor a small highly-active group of apans. Seems to me you get better emotional returns from that sort of arrangement.

ATKINS: I know what you mean. I was once fairly hot to see us be The Same but Bigger. I even proposed a gradual-increase method in order to (hopefully) overcome the reactions of more conservative members. But these days I think we're too large. Not that we've declined in quality of member in our expansion, but because the span of the apa has grown beyond the comfortable size that produces the best interactions. When a member can't easily comment adequately on the mailing -- and face it, few do -- then the apa is too big to permit optimal interaction. The result is a FAPA, as George alludes to, though that takes years to evolve. Decades, even.

CARLBERG: I said earlier I'd like to see SFPA return to a membership limit of twenty-five, but about a week later the SFPA mailing showed up and pretty much changed my mind about the thirty-member roster. I think now that our concept of what SFPA is has expanded to include 30 people on the roster, and will do so without losing any of the in-group spirit so-treasured.

LILLIAN: SFPA may have been a cozier place with fewer people on the roster -- but, hell, Southern fandom's growth in the '70's was incredible, and SFPA had to expand with the region. With new talent entering fandom, SFPA had to offer a place for those fans to survive. Otherwise, they'd have all been swallowed by Myriad and we'd never have seen any of them. Or any of their talent.

HULAN: I'd prefer a smaller apa, but on the other hand, when the waitlist gets bigger than the membership that's bad too. Twenty to twenty-five is the ideal size for an apa: thirty is about the upper limit as far as I'm concerned.

In an apa like SFPA, with a lot of tradition and a lot of long-time stable members, the waitlist turnover would be painfully slow if the membership were cut to twenty -- there are probably almost that many people who've been in five years or more. This is something an OE has to gauge, and is one reason I left that up to the OE in the Constitution. You need a big enough membership to let the WL turn over with some reasonable speed. (If there isn't an average of one opening per mailing it's too slow.) But it should be as small as feasible below that.

MARKSTEIN: Shadow\*SFPA is a wonderful innovation in that regard. Instead of staving off the problem of too long a waitlist, as increasing the membership has done in the past, it deals directly with the problem itself. It gives the waitlisters something to take an active part in, so they don't feel like SFPA is passing them by while they sit around. The fact that it was generated from the waitlist itself has probably contributed to its success.



(That it is a success is obvious from the fact that it's gone through at least three complete turnovers of the list without any sign of slacking off.) Makes a fellow proud to be part of an apa whose waitlisters can put on such a class act.... (Of course, it does have a tendency to attract even more people to the list, so possibly it's not quite as good for that particular purpose as it seems at first.)

JENNINGS: When I was OE I was mainly concerned about getting members, any members, period. Since then I've watched from a more comfortable position and recall being somewhat concerned when the waitlist dropped below a certain number. But for the past eight years or so this doesn't seem to mean a damn thing. New people are constantly being added, and people are being dropped from the waitlist. ~~Some~~ go on thru it to become solid members.

LILLIAN: A long waitlist is like a pretty face -- it's good for egoboo but what counts is the substance behind the facade.

10. *How far should an OE go to "carry" members? How about "valuable" members?*

HULAN: The OE should not bend the rules in favor of anyone if there's a WL. As regards things like reminding people to get their zines in, or even taking dictation over the phone to help someone either meet minac or save a string -- that's up to the OE as a person, not an OE. Imho, he can help people he likes and ignore people he doesn't in that sort of way.

As far as his official acts are concerned, if he thinks someone has been screwed by the PO, for instance, I think he has the right and even the obligation to be lenient in such cases. But unless it's something beyond the member's control (sudden illness might be a case, though it would need to be something of a judgment call if there's a WL -- chronic minackers who get sick at a time where they miss their minac are one thing; people who are usually reasonably active, but for one reason or another miss a mailing and then get hit with an illness when one would normally expect them to do a substantial zine, are candidates for leniency on rare occasions, though I don't recall such a one in all my OEfficial career), the rules should be enforced strictly and impartially in any apa with a WL.

INZER: There are times in one's life when SFPA just can't be done. In those cases, some effort to "save" the membership is good for the person and the apa. But when SFPA gets to be a burden rather than a joy to do, and the member is literally being "carried", I think it's better to let'em go. When things get better, there's the waitlist.

MARKSTEIN: Well, obviously, an OE shouldn't go so far to carry a member that he's doing the guy's activity for him. And obviously he should check his mailbox the day he does the OO... In between, I guess how far the OE should go depends on the OE and the member.

Only one OE of SFPA has ever (that I can think of right now) given anyone an extension on his activity requirement, and he was jumped on severely enough to where I think even he realized that that's not how SFPA does things. I hope the tenor of



the apa remains such that going so very far to carry members, no matter how valuable, always causes an uproar.

Bob brought up another aspect of this question in his campaign for OE. That is, how far should an OE go to nag someone into contributing to the apa? I don't think I'd be as hard-nosed as Bob. He says not at all, but I don't think a little reminder can hurt, with someone who may actually have forgotten.

JENNINGS: I don't think the OE should go much out of his way to carry anybody on the rolls once he has lost interest in the group. Altho I criticised Guy for harrassing members when they had pages due, at the same time were I OE again I might drop a letter or card to a person with pages due whose material I personally enjoyed. This would not be an official thing tho; I'd probably do it even if I weren't OE.

CARLBERG: An OE can't "carry" a member unless the member is willing to get up and do a little walking himself. But it's great to be ready to help out if a member happens to be in a bind occasionally. It's important to continue to observe the letter of the law when trying to help someone save a membership; an OE can't put himself in the position of having let one person sneak around a minac requirement and then refuse another the same privilege.

The only exception I would make to this is attempting to keep Hank Reinhardt in SFPA, which has become something of a perennial sport for OE's on those rare occasions when Hank manages to work his way back up the wait-list. In his case, I can see making ridiculous exceptions to the rules -- identified, if only implicitly, as such -- in the spirit of the game.

LILLIAN: I went to the ends of the cosmos to "carry" Hank Reinhardt. I'd do the same for any member as valuable as he... and I'd give aid in any way I could to any SFPA who asked for it, or even just seemed to need it. Such is simply the duty of the OE as I see it...

(A solid THUNK is heard. The panelists fidget with their note pads as they regard the imposing figure of the Sergeant-at-Arms carefully wiping scalp, hair and blood off the butt of his pearl-handled Krieghoff .30 Luger.)

REINHARDT: Nobody ever "carried" Ulric Greywolf.

ATKINS: If the Sergeant-at-Arms will kindly return to his post... And if someone would arouse Guy... What's that, P.L.? No, I think simple smelling salts are more appropriate at a public forum like this one. And now Alan will deliver our final Moral Observation on this question...

HUTCHINSON: I was forced to drop two of my best friends from membership, even tho I wanted them to stay in. But when the pages aren't there, what can you do??

11. Who are the valuable members? In terms of characteristics, of course. High page-count people? Quality writing people? Artists? Controversial people? Any people . . . . Remember the normal distribution.



HUTCHINSON: I think the valuable members are the ones who've put the most spirit and enthusiasm into the apa. Strangely enough, one of the best measures of spirit and enthusiasm is activity, and I think it's widely accepted that those who are the most active are the "most valuable" to the apa. But I wouldn't limit it to page count alone, since there are those members who do little more than minac whose contributions I enjoy a great deal.

JENNINGS: "Valuable members" is a term difficult to pin down. I think of members as being valuable when I really enjoy the stuff they produce and look forward to seeing what they have in upcoming mailings. Interesting material can be long or short; high page count does not necessarily mean the member is writing quality material. Controversy is no guideline either. Force of personality might be more of a handle, but some really obnoxious jerks have forcible personalities. It's a subjective thing. People whose material I find interesting and enjoyable, those are the valuable ones to me.

LILLIAN: The valuable SFPAs -- let's say the most valuable ones -- are those who allow their personality to shine into the apa through their pages. SFPA is a personality apa where folks are most important. Pagecount kings are valuable, yes. Weight tells in apas in terms of care involved. Good writing, showing flair, is always valued. And artists... well, SFPA is s.f.'s most attractive apa, as I've said before. But our artists don't let their art carry the whole burden of their SFPAC. They let the "them" inside shine through.

REINHARDT: (A low, animal, growling sound emanates from those muscular vocal cords. It produces a peculiar expression of apprehension on Guy's face.)

LILLIAN: But Hank Reinhardt was always the most valuable member of all!!!

INZER: A valuable member to me is one who has been in SFPA for a long, long time and who contributes significantly to the gestalt of SFPA. But I don't think there is a "typical" valuable member. A member is valuable when he/she interacts with SFPA so to be at their best -- whatever form it may take.

MARKSTEIN: A valuable member is the guy I'm pointing at when I say "that's a valuable member." It's as hard to list the attributes that make someone valuable as it is to define science fiction. But the people who are valuable to SFPA do have one thing in common -- SFPA is valuable to them. When a person places a great deal of value on an organization, the chances are he'll do things to make himself a valuable person to it.

ATKINS: Any member is valuable in the strict sense of the word, for SFPA is an association of members -- without members SFPA ceases to exist. The infamous "bell-shaped curve" always intervenes, however. Over the course of time we see that "membership" alone has little survival value. There's something more. As Don says, you can't really define what it is, but you equally can't dispute that it exists -- some members generate more spirit within the apa than do others.

To end with the "bell-shaped curve" would be a disservice. I think SFPA is one of the leading examples -- of any sort -- of what happens over a long period of time when that bell curve



is combined with a sieve. The stronger members stay; the less durable are washer away by time. With the passage of years, a powerful and talented sym-patico group evolves. The density of "most valuable" members becomes high. SFPA has been extraordinarily successful in its netting. Maybe I can't define that rare essence that makes "most valuable" members, but I sure as hell know we've got a lot of them...

And unless I miss my bet. Stvn Crlbrg can give us the most apropos definition of anybody. (Not that I want to imply that he's a "valuable" member.... He just talks good.) Stven?

CARLBERG: The valuable members are the ones who, one way or another, keep our party hopping. This can mean a talent for writing or art or hilarity or simply a big mouth to keep the conversation going and communication generally swirling freely.

ATKINS: But, Stven, isn't there a truism somewhere....?

CARLBERG: It is much easier to be a valuable member while hitting every mailing than otherwise.

## 12. *If you could make a change to the structure of SFPA today, what would it be? Why?*

CARLBERG: I wouldn't...

REINHARDT: I would.....

JENNINGS: First, I'd create an amendment making post mailing illegal. I believe post mailings are unfair to all the other members of the apa, who work to get their material in with plenty of time to spare.

CHORUS: \*Cough\* \*Choke\* \*Gasp\*

JENNINGS: The activity requirements in the SFPA are extremely lenient as it now stands; to bend these any further to allow post mailings seems ridiculous to me. Members should be encouraged to become more active, not tempted with the thought that if they don't make their minac requirements they can still muddle along and survive with a post mailing.

LILLIAN: Jeez... I dunno. ~~First I would institute/mandatory post mailings!~~  
SFPA's structure seems pretty solid to me. But there aren't many answers to this query...

JENNINGS: Secondly, I would make the SFPA a six-weekly apa instead of a bi-monthly one. Chances of this proposal ever being passed are practically non-existent, but I think it would be for the benefit of all concerned. It wouldn't entail that much extra material in a year's time for the minackers. For those active, it would give us all a little extra interaction time for mailing comments, etc., etc. I think more relevant material and better material would be the result. Right now the two month lapse in mailings really means that there is a four month gap in mailing comment response. Shortening



that should increase interaction among the members. We've already tried this, knocking a few weeks off assorted mailings in order to put the apa back on a Constitutionally-sanctioned schedule, and I recall that period as producing some of the highest quality, most enjoyable SFPA mailings I've ever encountered. Maybe the time frame wasn't the direct cause, but I'm convinced it helped and I'd like to see us try a six-weekly schedule.

MARKSTEIN: I hate to answer with a cliché, but we've got a winning system...

HULAN: I think I'd institute an Active Waiting List like the Cult has, though for a somewhat different purpose. I'd let the first five or so people on the WL frank in material and have preference for buying mailings, so they could begin to get the feel of SFPA before they're invited to membership. But I'd eliminate the franking of material from any other WLers, unless it's included as part of a member's zine, and I'd exclude Shadow SFPA from the mailings.

This is because I think SFPA is too big already, and the freedom of the WL to frank in material and the existence of Shadow SFPA as part of the mailings makes SFPA, if effect, something like a 45-member apa, in everything except the number of copies required. The number of copies is not my major objection to 45-member apas; my major objection is that it's hard to get to know that many people well enough to get the major benefit of an apa -- egoboo that means more because you know the person giving it.

INZER: I'm not in SFPA at the moment. Any answer would be presumptuous.

### 13. What is that "SFPA ingroup spirit" composed of?

MARKSTEIN: Dam fino. Back a while, I compared SFPA to a family. Also like a family, it's got its share of crotchety old uncles and halfwit cousins, and one or two people you don't like but continue to associate with because they're part of the group. Memories of good times shared, colorful stories to tell about the bad ones and good ones alike.... It's too elusive to bear close description.

INZER: The "SFPA INGROUP SPIRIT" that can be named is not the "SFPA INGROUP SPIRIT". I just know that for a time I felt a part of that spirit. Then there came a time when the spirit seemed to evaporate. After trying for about a year to figure out what had happened, I decided to drop out and let it rest for a while. After about two or three years I think it might be time to check it out once more.

It must be connected to trust in some way. Or faith. This means within myself as well as the group as a whole. Both are reinforcing. When I dropped out, I felt that the "ingroup spirit" was evaporating -- from feuds, from too many watchers who had nothing to say, and, mostly, from a growing sense of loss within my own self. Now, I'm over that last feeling. Reliance for reinforcement from within the group isn't important. In short, I am less self-conscious and more open once again. Like when I had a beginner's mind. But I can't name the "SFPA ingroup spirit."



LILLIAN: The SFPA ingroup spirit... ah, a theme for high art. It's Mark Verheiden covers -- it's George Wells quoting Arthur Scarm -- it's Atkins, Hank, Brooks and Page in deadly Hearts duel -- it's Dave Hulan unloading a cram course in optical physics in 4 pages -- it's Stven Carlberg's dream of Las Vegas -- Alan Hutchinson delving into his quiet genius and extracting a ~~XXXX~~ work of hilarious art -- it's Mike Weber explaining some new hunk of electronic gear and forcing you to watch his newest tape -- Gary Steele starting an mc to one member and segueing into natter about the electronic watch he was building, then moving on to another member and, sure as taxes, yapping on about that damned watch -- it's five years of snarls back and forth with Markstein, and a surprise call of thanks after the dues resolution last year, when it all worked out, neither of us knowing quite what to say -- it's trying to instill in Shadowites some inkling of the pride and care we who've been in SFPA feel for our apa. It's P.L. smiling over a specially-mixed drink. It's Reinhardt hurling his jeep down an embankment in Atlanta. Meade wandering his way unerringly through the Spring Valley triangle, Jenny on the table, Kaye on the floor. It's the high you get when the Knoxville boys call you up for a Hearts ruling, and the relief beyond relief when the pariah of the apa, the uglifier, had gotten the message and quit. It's ten years at the mimeo and the typewriter... uh, not in that order... and it's an identity that makes no sense but keeps you coming back. The only regret I have about SFPA is that I didn't join years earlier.

CARLBERG: The SFPA in-group spirit is characterized by a great deal of mutual (though not blind) respect and the huge latitude this gives us for poking fun at one another. We all seem to enjoy laughing at ourselves, and helping our fellow members laugh at themselves is in ways even more enjoyable. "Good fellowship" is another way to express this.

HUTCHINSON: It does have a certain ring to it...

CARLBERG: SFPA is, among other things, a bunch of people who have known each other for years -- some of us more years than others, but a lot of us for a lot of years, ten or so on the average. I think this means more to us than we really realize, and will mean more as the years continue to roll by. The tip of this iceberg is being able to tell a joke that the reference to was a comment in passing made half a dozen years ago. More substantially (and usually as invisible as the rest of the ice) is the experience in common that underlies our understanding of each other.

One great thing about SFPA's in-group spirit, as compared to other in-group spirits, is how welcome newcomers are made. I felt this when I was a newcomer, and I've tried to pass it along as I've seen dozens join after me. I think we're all pretty successful at keeping the SFPA spirit going.

HULAN: Right now, I don't feel much "SFPA ingroup spirit", and I haven't really since rejoining in '73. There are and have been ingroups in SFPA, but SFPA itself didn't feel like an ingroup. There were too many factions back in the mid-'70s where the members didn't like other members; then there was a stretch when there weren't even factions, just general apathy. I think maybe an ingroup spirit for the whole apa is developing now, if the size isn't so great that we get factions again -- but at least for the present there don't seem to be any feuds going (now Bridget is gone -- but he was a solo, not part of a faction), and enthusiasm is on the upswing.



I feel there was an ingroup spirit for the whole apa back the first 25-30 mailings, and from what I've heard there was one from about 35-45 or so, though I wasn't in then. But I don't think there has been since mailing 50. Trying to define the ingroup spirit of the early years is too tough, though -- that was twelve or more years ago, and while I can remember the feeling I can't analyze it at this remove.

ATKINS: Bob just slipped me a note that says he already talked about the SFPA spirit, back when he was talking about the early days of the apa when it all started. If I had to pick a point at which to start my comments, it would also be at the origins. Not back when Bob was out forging the apa, but later when I joined. 1965. The immediate impression I got about SFPA was that its members cared a lot about it. And not so much for the things that members of other prestigious apas seemed to care about -- the prestige of being a member, the opportunity to show off or feud or play fan politics. SFPAns seemed to care about the spirit that flowed in the veins of their apa for its own sake.

It attracted me right away; made me want to get to know these people whose ideas were that it was privilege to belong to SFPA. I was already tired of apa hacks whose idea was that any apa was privileged to have them belong.

SFPAns seemed to have a lot of fun in their apa. The petty sniping that cropped up occasionally never went beyond mild stings and the bulk of the horseplay was friendly. On the other hand, there were some very sharp people and top-notch fanzine craftsmen in SFPA. Average material in the first few mailings I saw 13-15, was excellent. And it seemed to be getting better. SFPA was growing, and most of the additions were people who shared that original spirit. Pride in the apa. Care for the apa's well-being. Concern and friendship for the fellow apans.

Through all the years of different jokes and facades, postures and turmoil, that underlying spirit has lived. It has been trampled on by the twisted and power-hungry, suffered droughts of burning apathy, been diluted by sudden influxes, falsely accused of cliquishness and snobbery, suffered false prophets, watched the departure of many acolytes, and endured fan symposiums. Yet it still lives. There seems always to be a core group of members who know it's meaning, whether or not they possess the energy, at any given moment, to practice it. We talk apathy and call the spirit dead, yet it bounds up to confront us yet again. It's like crabgrass; we're stuck with it.

14. *What's your favorite period of SFPA activity? Some of you cover a lot of ground. We've had several "Golden Ages;" which was best to your point of view?*

LILLIAN: SFPA is in a period of glory, as it builds away from its serious late-'70s slump towards its 100's, with new people, new zines and new energy for all, new and old. This is the best time SFPA's had since I joined. Maybe it's the personal egoboo I enjoy as OE.

I enjoyed my first years -- two years -- of SFPAc immensely. Like these days, those were days of high energy, rapid growth (in roster size and pagecount), enormous



personality. Again, we built towards a special mailing -- #50 -- and prospered. So, after the present day, when this symposium is conducted, I would hail mailings 40 - 50 as a grand time, among the grandest.

JENNINGS: I don't have any real favorite period of SFPA activity. I recall the period just after the Inzer problem as being very productive. But there have been other points that were good too. I recall the year that Guy took over the OEship as having consistently strong mailings, but then again I'm not going to attach myself to any particular period and try to make a "Golden Age" out of it.

It seems to me that when publications, or hobbies, or groups declare certain periods a golden age that automatically all present and future material becomes brass or bronze and maybe shit ages in return. The best period of SFPA is always sometime in the future, because I'm sure today's apans will never sit on their laurels, but will be out there trying to do bigger and better things just to show it can be done.

MARKSTEIN: There have been a lot of good times. Even the bad times have been good, just less so. But I (personally) would have to say that the very best were the first two years of my OEship. Of course, it was a good time to be OE, and being OE tends to color your view anyway, what with being in the middle of things and all.

But there are other reasons, too. In my prejudiced view that was the time the nucleus of what eventually became the SFPA we know was formed. (Nearly a third of the current roster -- not to mention half a dozen or so people back on the waitlist -- joined during my OEship.) We were just getting to know one another. Now-immortal stories were current events. Of course, my point of view is prejudiced. I became OE two years after I joined the apa, so actually, it's the people I've known the longest through SFPA who joined during that period.

INZER: The first three or four years of my membership were the best ones. I was a beginner; everything was new. SFPA was at it's peak in pages and -- more importantly -- participation. The feuds were wild but kept in perspective. Nobody seemed tired or bored. It was really fun to be in SFPA then.

By the way, which are those several "Golden Ages"? I've lost track of them....

HULAN: Definitely the period from the beginning of Staton's term to the end of Atkins' first one. Enthusiasm was high, most of the members were good writers, and everybody was friendly with everybody else. Even the hotly contested OE races didn't make the contestants dislike one another.

I was even more active in the '74-'75 period, but it wasn't nearly as enjoyable, because there was too much feuding going on. And I was certainly as guilty of it as anyone. But as the feuding died down in '76 and '77, so did interest -- and a feeling of fellowship like we had in the earlier days never did develop. The feuds seemed to dwindle not because the people involved got to like each other any more, but because they started to ignore each other -- which made the apa much calmer, but reduced interaction a lot.

HUTCHINSON: "The Golden Age of SFPA is 12." HHOK. My favorite period of Activity was probably about two years after I joined, 1975-6.



I had already gotten into the swing of doing semi-large zines, plus I had attended a couple Deep South Cons and met quite a few members. The experience was new enough to generate excitement. Activity by other members was at a high point and we all fed on each other's enthusiasm, and this is a condition which is apparently once again coming into being.

CARLBERG: When I first joined the apa, in the final stages of LAOE's terms, I was very impressed with the style of writing and production in SFPA. A whole lot of SFPA tradition has been passed down from those days and the ones preceding them, frequently headlined by the Lon Atkins vs. Hank Reinhardt Follies. If you have to pick one Golden Age for SFPA, I guess that would be it, since that's when it all got started.

That same spirit has been passed down, with improvements, however, and I doubt there's a year that goes by without us topping ourselves in one fashion or another. One of my favorite periods was characterized by Alan Hutchinson and Gary Brown con reports, with Doug Wirth silkscreens standing by.

Those were the days. (And they still are.)

ATKINS: I think of a "Golden Age" as a period when peace and prosperity reign, yet one in which enthusiasm is high and the quality of the material is unusually high -- on the average as well as the "peaks". For me, the period starting with mlg 13 and running up to mlg 22 (tapering off after that) is the best time of SFPA's span -- for the things I mention.

We've had other fabulous times, the renaissance that began after Don came to the helm is probably our second best period. But SFPA was too turbulent, and along with the great stuff there was an awful lot of inclusions and marginal material being pumped into the apa to inflate our page counts. Had we grown a little less frantically this would have been a better period.

Other fine periods were marred by bitterness and too many marginal "transients" to really qualify, though SFPA has always seemed to have no lack of superlative material in its bundles. I think the period we're entering now is yet another frantic one, sparked by rebound and successful recruiting. If we can achieve a balance and reach a higher average quality, I think this could be one of the best times so far.

15. *What's the role of SFPA in Southern fandom? Feel free to give historic answers, as I'm certain that role has changed over the years.*

STATON: In the early and middle sixties, when SFPA meant so much to me, SFPA served a function analogous to that of a courier moving among isolated islands. This was before the formation of major clubs in the South, and it was fairly unusual for sf fans to get together, and even the first couple of MidSouthCons, or DeepSouthCons, depending, could easily wind up in somebody's living room. Not too many fans, a lot of them still in school, or retired or some such, so it was even physically difficult to get them all together. SF fans at the time tended to be a shade or two more liberal than the average southerner, so there was also the psychological isolation. SFPA tended to connect these folks, and at least in my case, as a liberal "child



of the '60s" growing up in a backwater southern town, I felt almost entirely alienated from the people around me, and in SFPA I found a sense of community that I found nowhere else in the south. The south was not a good place, but there were a few good people in it and SFPA made it possible to find them when I needed them. That much I remember real well.

JENNINGS: During the early years after the apa was formed it was a strong citadel of southern fandom spirit. This was especially true when the SFG folded and the apa remained. For a short period of time then the SFPAzine was seen by many people in fandom as being southern fandom. Most of the other southern fans around who were not members were not really that active, and many had become members of the N3F, which has always enjoyed lots of bad publicity from assholes who knew nothing at all about the club. The fact that the handful of non-SFPAnS were also N3F members was enough for some smug fannish cliques in other parts of the nation to dismiss them completely and regard the SFPA as the only existing element of true southern fannish activity in existence.

HULAN: Back in the early to mid-sixties, SFPA practically was Southern fandom, insofar as there was any such thing. There were fans in the South who weren't in SFPA -- a lot more than there were in SFPA -- but insofar as I could tell they didn't think of themselves as "Southern Fandom". The old SFG was a try at it, but it never was very strong, and finally foundered at the time SFPA separated from it. For the next several years, SFPA was the only thing holding Southern Fandom together. The first several DSC's were basically SFPA conventions, run by SFPA people and with core memberships of SFPAnS. After that, I can't really say -- I was in California and by the late sixties my contact with Southern Fandom was almost exclusively through SFPA. I'll let people who know more about the rest of Southern Fandom speak on that.

CARLBERG: SFPA over the years has provided a forum for substantial discussion of the aims and accomplishments of Southern Fandom. Not the only such forum, I should hasten to add, but an extremely strong and respected one keynoted by our perennial support (and usually administration) of the DSC. It also has the fortunate quality of being joinable. Anyone into Southern Fandom and wanting to get farther has the easy option of joining the waitlist and the whole SFPA granfalloon at one fell swoop, providing a connection easy to use for opening a conversation with more than a hundred Southern Fandom activists.

ATKINS: I wanta jump in here for a brief observation. Like Dave, I've been away from the main thrust of Southern geographic fandom for so long that my contacts have lapsed and, as one second-hand perception of SFPA that wandered back to me has it, I'm now just a member of a dull and xenophobic clique of has-beens. But the thing that SFPA was to Southern fandom when I encountered it in '65 was not just a forum or means of connection or the embodiment of Southern fanzine activity -- though these were all extremely important functions, perhaps most important. SFPA was one of the few showcases Southern Fandom had in those days to hold before the eyes of the rest of fandom. We were fighting our way up then, and many people considered us (behind FAPA or SAPS -- order depending..) to definitely be the "third best" apa in fandom. Those who valued enthusiasm and spirit over moribund prestige even put us ahead of FAPA where it counted. There was no other Southern organization that commanded this kind of recognition.



Those were days when, liberal viewpoints fashionable, it wasn't uncommon to encounter a few raw chuckles or barbed comments about Southern accent or origin when one ventured North. The Lil' Abner/Daisy Mae image of Southern residents was in full vogue, aided by the popular concept that all Rebels went out every Sunday night in bedsheets and burned a nigger church to the ground. Despite the fact that Southern fandom was one of the least likely places to unearth such mentalities, I suffered a heaping handful of such comments at cons north of the Mason-Dixon.

(Don't worry. A bunch of good ole boys and I tracked the jerks down later and lynched 'em.)

The fact that SFPA was producing quality material, bursting with enthusiasm, attracting Yankee members and prospering made a real mark. It was a natural place for the active members of Southern fandom to gravitate and perform. It served crucial internal functions for us. But more than that, in those years in the eyes of all fandom; SFPA was our Pride.

MARKSTEIN: Because I tend to see Southern Fandom as SFPA-and-a-few-others, I could probably be accused of having a limited point of view. But it does seem to me that, tho every area has its own local personalities, and by and large, most of the ones who are known all over the South are or have been SFPA members, waitlisters or contributors; or are known to most SFPAns. This may no longer be true. I don't get back to the South as often as I'd like. But it was once true, and anyway, you can't argue with it because that's how it seems to me.

Historically: The DeepSouthCon started as a SFPA activity. SFPAns have figured prominently in its management all along. The majority of Rebel Award winners have been closely associated with SFPA, ...and only two that I can think of offhand (Ken Moore and Janie Lamb) were never members at all. When I joined, SFPA was simply the Place To Be for a Southern fan who was into fanzines. If you could visit the Southern Fandom of some alternate world, where the SFG had died without spawning SFPA, I think you'd see very little that you recognized.

Today, fandom all over has grown to the point where no apa can ever serve as a focal point for the fanatic of an entire region. The days when the SFPAns in an area could put on a DeepSouthCon all by themselves, spend the Big Weekend bullshitting with the other SFPAns, and feel like they'd done a good job, passed about the time the DSC itself passed into three-digit attendance.

One interesting role SFPA seems to play, at least to some people, is that of The Place To Be to pick up on all the in-group gossip of Southern Fandom. I've known at least one (and suspected a lot more) member who published his perfunctory little fanzines and kept his membership running just so he could keep up-to-date on what was being talked about in SFPA. For a long time after he told me that, I felt like someone was looking over my shoulder as I typed stencils.

LILLIAN: SFPA created Southern fandom. As Bob Jennings says, there were days when you couldn't find twenty fans in the whole Confederacy. Out of the early SFG, formed to try to promote fandom in the area, came SFPA. And SFPA has been here ever since, the core of the region, its heart, its voice, its spirit.

Nowadays, though, we're regarded at least in part as "those conceited old farts who feud all the time". But this antique view of our apa is changing. Again we ascend to our proper pre-eminence in Southern apac.



Myriad, being more accessible, is possibly a more popular apa in Southern fandom, but SFPA, carrying the punch of its history, quality and longevity, is certainly riding a resurgent crest. Our 100th mailing fever is not a localized phenomenon. Everyone in the South knows about it. By the time we're through, everyone in fandom will know about it.

The days when SFPA literally was Southern fandom are long gone. But still we serve as Southern fandom's most ardent champion and voice. Besides -- at Suncon, the '77 Worldcon, I overheard a couple of unknown Northern neos say, "That's Guy Lillian. He's in the Ess Eff Pee A." For what that proves...

ATKINS: Is that all, gentlemen? No more comments? ...OK. If the Sergeant-at-Arms will clear the audience from the hall. Gently. We'll stand adjourned. I want to thank these eminent personalities, collected from diverse geographic locations and times, for their generous contribution of their time to participate...

(The sounds of milling humanity. A cat-call or two. Scattered hurrahs. Over it all the strident sound of the Sergeant-at-Arms encouraging exit. On the platform, noises of relaxation. The sound of liquid pouring from flasks; the flash-pop of matches striking. A rich aroma of burning vegetable matter spreads. Low murmurings of happiness from tired throats. It is finished; done. And now, the hall near-empty, they can relax the poses and postures of public stance. The SMOS -- the Secret Masters of SFPA -- are alone together.)

HUTCHINSON: Is that turkey Reinhardt out of earshot?

STATON: The Hank seems to have departed. Probably trapped some neos into a Hearts game.... I don't know why Hank has this compulsion...

ATKINS: Maybe he enjoys losing money; he's so persistent at it. Wish he had the same attitude about SFPA membership...

LILLIAN: That turkey! Through thick and skinny, I carry him! Why can't he see the light? Something has kept me active in SFPA through hot and cold. Egoboo? But whole years have passed in this apa when I gleaned little but criticism...

HULAN: There's the analogy of Hank and his Hearts games....

LILLIAN: No, I think more to the point is SFPA's community and freedom. In SPIRITUS, with limits only distant, I'm free to examine life & thoughts as I wish. In SFPA, there's no editorial whim. I am my own master in a group always interesting, amusing and occasionally challenging.

HUTCHINSON: Yes, you are your own master in SFPA, Guy. And in a group that delights in poking fun, you can be your own master baiter...

JENNINGS: To me, the SFPA has always been a place where you can hold reasonably intelligent conversations with a variety of people who won't pull punches in an argument, have a wide range of interests and who produce a tremendous variety of readable, very enjoyable material. I like the personal attention one gets from most of the membership -- and I know what Guy is trying to say.



CARLBERG: SFPA is the best apa in the world. If you can't have fun here, you just don't like apas.

ATKINS: It's been "fun" all along, but boy have we had some donnybrooks!

INZER: SFPA is a feuding apa -- of that there is little doubt. I wonder sometimes if SFPA would even exist without them. A fight that would only last hours or days -- or at most, weeks -- in the outside world, lasts for YEARS in SFPA.

HULAN: It's not the type, but the quality, of interaction that is most important in fostering enthusiasm.

INZER: How can so much energy be tied up in an unproductive way. It must be the timebinding effect of an apa. When I dropped SFPA time started to flow smoothly from day to day. When I was in SFPA, time came in six big chunks a year.

MARKSTEIN: Is Atkins trying to bring the old dirty laundry back out one more time because it "makes good copy"...??

LILLIAN: Feuding drove my composition on the typewriter to be awful...

HUTCHINSON: You should see what Bridget did to my pastels....

JENNINGS: It wouldn't hurt the group to turn back to the original basic principles, I say. Sometimes I think that Joe Moudry and myself are the only people left in the whole apa who still read and enjoy science fiction. I'd like to see a little more discussion and material about science fiction in the SFPA, in addition to the other material, mind you. I suppose this is a pretty forlorn hope, tho.

HULAN: Reinhardt used to gasp raptured about PLANET STORIES.

INZER: In SFPA I never had to write about SF or anything in particular. I could be my whole self. And while not everyone liked This or That, it was still OK. To me, that was what it was all about. The friendships I formed are among the oldest friendships I have. The Ingroup Spirit was the glue to hold us all together long enough to learn who we were. It was a platform to build friendships on.

STATON: So how do you account for the Great Hank, the Grey Wolf, the Arch Minacker, the Reinhardt Itself?

ATKINS: I'll answer that. Hank Reinhardt was the heroic figure SFPA needed when it was looking for a trademark. He wasn't alone amongst our membership in carrying charisma, but he was the most extreme of all our candidates. Even though we knew his heart was made of butter and any call of distress from a damsel or brother member would bring his chivalric aid on the run, he presented a threatening picture of self to the world -- and it was no false picture at core, for Ulric Grewolf was a genuine master of the martial arts. How often does a prose-group obtain such a prize as legitimate masthead? Despite the fact that Hank could neither read nor write (his huge collection of PLANET STORIES was amassed because he delighted in the covers featuring nekkid women), Hank was welcome in our group because his lack of talents in these literate areas were seen as no barrier by the bulk of the membership --



who were then, and remain to this day, equally unencumbered by such esoteric craft.

Hank was a symbol. That is why he enjoys special privileges, not efforts by the temporal OE to preserve his mythical membership. And all the while Hank laughs at us; delights in what advantage he obtains, yearns for the energy to produce material to salvage his shredding membership -- but fails. For Hank is in soul a barbarian. A king among barbarians, yes, but still a barbarian. But he is our barbarian, and the type of free barbarian all of us would dream to be had we only the time to spare from doing mailing comments, and he is inextricably intertwined with our formation and our ideas of what SFPA means.

HULAN: I never saw much of his material in the mailings I recall...

MARKSTEIN: Hank weren't there often....

CARLBERG: Keeping him in was a Special sort of challenge.

ATKINS: But that's not the point.

STATON: There was a time, Hank was my best subject...

ATKINS: That's the point!!

LILLIAN: The Hank jokes! What's good about SFPA is very good... its traditions, its sense of its own heritage, its crazy wit, its in-jokes -- are addictive and make SFPA a grand place to be.

JENNINGS: So why does Reinhardt keep dropping out?

HUTCHINSON: All our Hank jokes have been meant in good fun. You don't think he misinterprets them, do you? I mean, I'd hate to think that Hank has been nourishing a grudge all these years...

MARKSTEIN: Hank doesn't nourish grudges. He just gets even. But Hank's too good a fellow to think we're serious when we put him down.

ATKINS: No, Hank can't think that. He has the SFPA spirit of good fellowship and outrageous horseplay. Besides, if he had taken offense he'd probably kill us all if he ever got us together in one place.

INZER: Hank is a kind and compassionate person underneath his exterior. He must understand.

HULAN: Yes, Hank has a heart of butter.

STATON: He wouldn't hurt a fly.

CARLBERG: Certainly not his old comrades -- ears excepted, of course.

JENNINGS: I guess I agree that Hank is really harmless...

LILLIAN (rubbing his head): Don't be so damn sure.



BANG!!

BANG!!

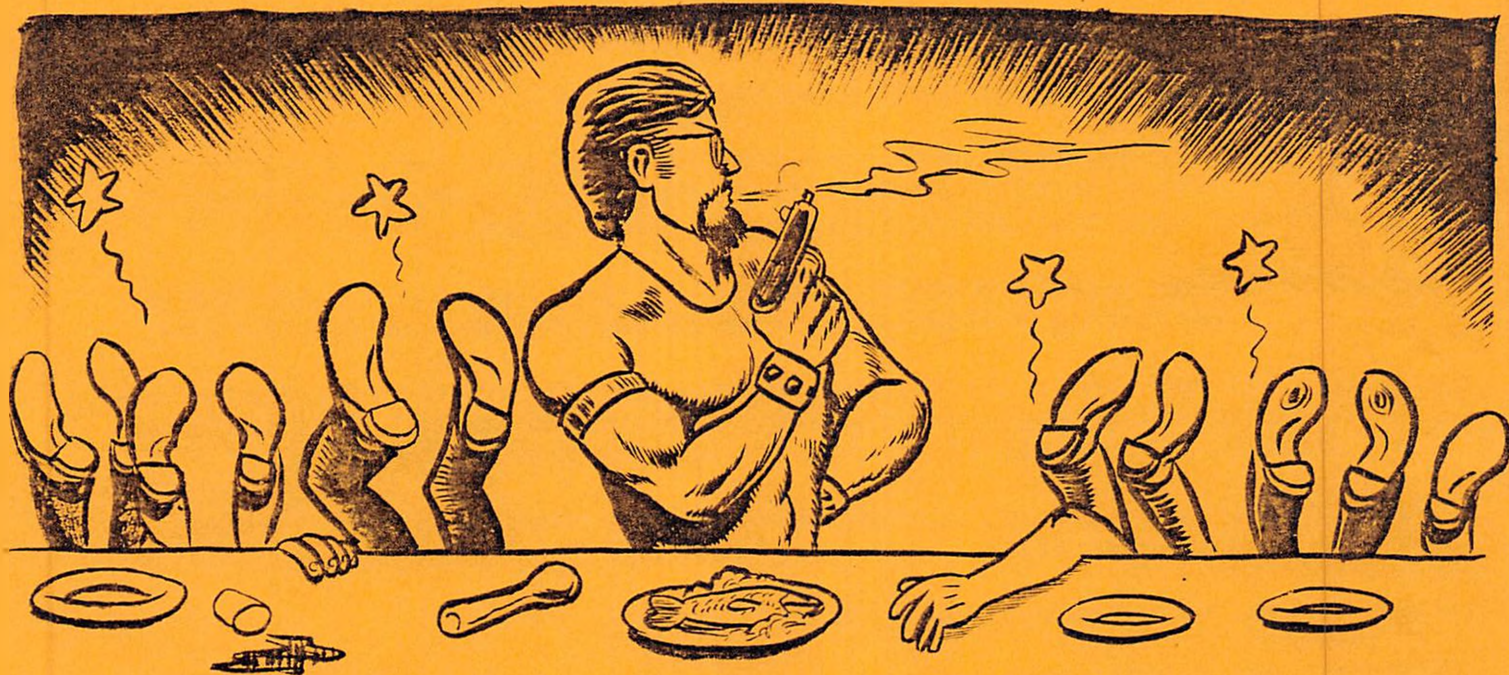
BANG!!

BANG!!

BANG!!

BANG!!

BANG!!



REINHARDT: Now that I've taken care of that minor detail, let me tell you the real truth about SFPA. You can forget all those horsefeathers you heard from the pretenders. There is only One Hank.

In the beginning Hank created the apa and the waitlist. And the apa was without form and void; and minac was upon the face of the apa. And Hank said, "Let there be Jennings and Hulan and Andrews and Staton and Montgomery and Atkins and Page and..."



THE SFPA BOX SCORES: MAILING 99

NAME	AB	HITS	PCT	P( 97)	P( 98)	P( 99)	TOTAL	PPM
ATKINS, L	85	85	1.000	129.5	39.	54.	2203.	25.92
BARGER, B	6	6	1.000	22.	5.5	17.5	55.	9.17
BIGGERS, C	40	28	.700	0.	8.	5.	287.5	7.19
BROOKS, N	77	77	1.000	6.	6.	4.	1132.5	14.71
BROWN, I	5	3	.600	4.	0.	12.	20.	4.00
CARLBERG, S	58	58	1.000	12.	19.	35.	1205.	20.78
CARUTHERS, P	32	29	.906	5.	5.	6.5	148.	4.63
CELKO, J	18	13	.722	0.	12.	0.	158.	8.78
DAVIS, H	29	23	.793	9.	1.	3.	153.5	5.29
FLORES, P	7	7	1.000	22.	12.	10.	81.5	11.64
FRIERSON, M	66	63	.955	41.	2.	18.	1512.5	22.92
HAMMER-JOHNSON, D	9	8	.889	0.	16.	15.	110.	12.22
HICKMAN, L	18	9	.500	12.	0.	14.	220.	12.22
HULAN, D	77	73	.948	31.	32.	37.	2223.	28.87
HUTCHINSON, A	48	48	1.000	14.5	13.	14.	1473.	30.69
HYDE, C	8	8	1.000	11.	14.	13.	97.	12.13
JENNINGS, B	38	25	.658	75.	0.	6.5	519.5	13.67
LILLIAN, G	61	61	1.000	81.	72.	44.	2838.5	46.53
LYNCH, D	3	3	1.000	4.	5.	4.	13.	4.33
LYNCH, N	16	16	1.000	16.	14.	6.	222.	13.88
MARKSTEIN, D	70	70	1.000	9.	7.	8.	2216.	31.66
MORRISSEY, R	17	10	.588	10.	0.	6.5	89.5	5.27
MOUDRY, J	29	29	1.000	9.	4.	1.	198.5	6.85
PHILLIPS, S	12	7	.583	0.	15.	0.	61.	5.08
ROGERS, M	10	10	1.000	20.	28.	12.	110.	11.00
RYDER, S	17	16	.941	12.	2.	13.	111.	6.53
SCHWARZIN, L	18	16	.889	1.5	5.	0.	108.5	6.03
VERHEIDEN, M	49	47	.959	12.	16.	4.	613.5	12.52
WEBER, M	33	31	.939	10.	30.	18.	553.5	16.77
WELLS, G	44	35	.795	4.	3.	5.	172.5	3.92
ADAMS, D	1	1	1.000	--	--	0.5	0.5	.50
ADAMS, P	1	1	1.000	--	--	0.5	0.5	.50
ANDRUSCHAK, H	2	2	1.000	0.	9.	45.	54.	27.00
ATKINS, D	2	2	1.000	--	5.	5.	10.	5.00
BATES, D	2	2	1.000	0.	2.	4.	6.	3.00
BATES, S	2	2	1.000	0.	2.	4.5	6.5	3.25
BATTY, W	2	2	1.000	0.	4.	8.	12.	6.00
BURKE, R	4	4	1.000	2.	1.5	23.5	44.	11.00
CAMPBELL, T	9	8	.889	5.	18.	9.	53.	5.89
CLARK, V	6	6	1.000	2.	1.5	11.5	61.	10.17
COBB, J	2	2	1.000	0.	13.	12.	25.	12.50
COLLINS, J	2	2	1.000	0.	1.	7.	8.	4.00
COLLINS, N	1	1	1.000	--	--	26.	26.	26.00
DOLBEAR, D	15	12	.800	0.	22.	16.	153.	10.20
KARRH, L	10	8	.800	2.	2.	2.	43.	4.30
KNIGHT, B	1	1	1.000	--	--	1.	1.	1.00
MCGOVERN, T	3	3	1.000	4.	10.	13.	27.	9.00
PARIS, S	3	3	1.000	11.	15.	14.5	40.5	13.50
POWELL, D	2	2	1.000	0.	5.	10.	15.	7.50
RALPH, I	3	3	1.000	8.	4.	10.5	22.5	7.50
RAUB, M	14	11	.786	9.	21.	2.	103.	7.36
RYAN, D	4	4	1.000	6.	8.	6.5	22.5	5.63
STEWART, L	4	4	1.000	11.	5.	12.	32.5	8.13



THE SFPA STATS: MAILING 99

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TOTAL MEMBERSHIP AT-BATS = 1000

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP HITS = 914

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BATTING AVERAGE = .914

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP PAGES = 18906.5

AVERAGE MEMBERSHIP PPM = 18.91

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SFPA TOP TEN: PAGES PER MAILING

1.	46.53	GUY LILLIAN
2.	31.66	DON MARKSTEIN
3.	30.69	ALAN HUTCHINSON
4.	28.87	DAVE HULAN
5.	25.92	LON ATKINS
6.	22.92	MEADE FRIERSON
7.	20.78	STVEN CARLBERG
8.	16.77	MIKE WEBER
9.	14.71	NED BROOKS
10.	13.88	NICKI LYNCH

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SFPA TOP TEN: BATTING AVERAGE (TOTAL HITS)

1.	1.000	( 85)	LON ATKINS
1.	1.000	( 77)	NED BROOKS
1.	1.000	( 70)	DON MARKSTEIN
1.	1.000	( 61)	GUY LILLIAN
1.	1.000	( 58)	STVEN CARLBERG
1.	1.000	( 48)	ALAN HUTCHINSON
1.	1.000	( 29)	JOE MOUDRY
1.	1.000	( 16)	NICKI LYNCH
1.	1.000	( 10)	MIKE ROGERS
1.	1.000	( 8)	CLINT HYDE
1.	1.000	( 7)	PAUL FLORES
1.	1.000	( 6)	BOB BARGER
1.	1.000	( 3)	DICK LYNCH

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SFPA TOP TEN: TOTAL PAGES

1.	2838.5	GUY LILLIAN
2.	2223.	DAVE HULAN
3.	2216.	DON MARKSTEIN
4.	2203.	LON ATKINS
5.	1512.5	MEADE FRIERSON
6.	1473.	ALAN HUTCHINSON
7.	1205.	STVEN CARLBERG
8.	1132.5	NED BROOKS
9.	613.5	MARK VERHEIDEN
10.	553.5	MIKE WEBER





99

MC'S

ON SFPA

Where have all the SFPA's gone?

GEE, LON WHO'S THAT FLASHY DUDE WITH THE MUTTONCHOPS?

Beats me, some fur'ner!

DO NOT FEED THE HANK

QUIT GLOATING ABOUT DROPPING THE QUEEN ON REINHARDT AND PLAY, NED! QUACK!

HANK + HANK

STAN & ATKINS

MADE IN OCCUPIED ALABAMA



THE SOUTHERNER (GHLIIIOE) \* Another giant mlg. We do seem to be accumulating quite a variety of contributions. I had a tiny bit of trouble pushing through this one. Lots of material, though, and I did enjoy SFPA 99 a lot. There was a reasonable amount of fine stuff here. SFPA continues to be a marvelous apa. I look forward to 100.

BOY, WHAT A GOOD MAILING (Frierson) \* There are really cheap computers on the market these days -- home-style machines -- and they all offer Basic, which is an incredibly easy language to learn and to use. You've got no excuse, Meade, for not making good on your ~~XXXX~~ promise... If go in you do, I'll gladly send you listings for MOUSE. (It gets better every day.)

There's a note of recognition, by me, in your description of professional colleagues not always understanding what one is talking about (or writing about). I, too, pride myself on the lucidity of my prose. Yet I've been experiencing a number of problems in this latest assignment, which has as one aspect the definition of an entire system. I write design study documents, specs, etc. The target audience varies in its ability to comprehend -- some understand everything and participate in the evolution; others ask incredibly dumb questions, make totally tangential comments, etc. It's frustrating me. Those who do understand, give constructive feedback, encourage me to believe there's no flaw in my presentations. The others lead me to the brink of despair. My latest theory is that they grow tired after the first page and therefore quit. Their comments, motivated by pressure from above, are made out-of-context for this reason. (The prior theory, that they were incapable of understanding, has been discarded as being too aspersive...)

HUIT (Frierson) \* Con parodies abound in thish. Methinks thou couldst well enter today's bidding frays with this type of material, should I indeed not have misjudged many of the contemporary set of con-voters free and uncaged upon the surface of the hotel mezzanine. A whimsey bid, made without hint of parody, might well succeed were it careful to eradicate all trace of sobriety from its claims. Wild promises, flakey fancy, ridiculous claims to resources -- all these ploys have been spectacularly successful in national political campaigns, why should they fail in a Worldcon bid? Indeed, the Con Com need not be obligated to actually stage the convention. Why not merely enter fandom under assumed names, build reputations by the normal unsupported fannish means, bid for the Worldcon on a pretense of fantastic absurdity, then collect the advance fees and vanish? If someone were intent on such a devious ploy he would have to establish credibility as a pillar of the fan community (like, honcho the SFG), try his hand at con literature (need I cite this zine, and various flyers...) and develop and outre sense of reality-presentation.... Not to draw conclusions, Meade, but are you selling shares in your Worldcon bid??

SEVEN MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT (Andruschak) \* FLAP is remarkably healthy, going into the 8th mlg (which by now will be history). The key to FLAP is two-fold (imho): the key factor is the energy of the CO-OEs. Locke and Causgrove are putting really excellent writing into the apa. The second is the formation of a "core-group", which has started to happen. The core-group puts FLAP high enough on its priority list to guarantee some good material, even if but a page, nearly every mailing. The apa has developed a resilient page-count level now; it will live as long as the "motor" -- the OEs -- continue to drive it.

The microprocessor chess "machines" on the market today can't see far enough on the lower settings to avoid simple traps, but then what is the interest in playing simple known traps? My probings have been into the internal algorithms of the software.



It's interesting to try to detect what values, what evaluation routines, have been provided. What type of values for position are programmed in? How is King safety handled? The moves that overturn the applecart show that -- but only as a collection. One pattern, repeated, grows dull early. As for the trap you cite, yes, it's an oldie. But I can't understand why any computer would play the pawn capture you give on move 5. The move gains nothing by any of the standard developmental standards, and it loses material. (Lots.) ((I won't discuss earlier variants from the development theme.)) Those "higher settings" on stronger machines produce better play than this. The better programs, run on fast machines, play (40/40) at Class A ratings. It is basically tactical, yes, but it's a significant level of play. Perhaps I ought to ask what you mean by "high setting". I'm sure the machines would fall into such traps at lower settings.

Good advice about Ellay and "skills at hand" -- the labor market is flooded these days with unskilled and semi-skilled workers. At the same time, certain skills are in incredible demand. Programming is one such avocation.

CATNIP (Dawn) \* If that's how Blossum the Siamese's ancestors got to the States, then I'll say the sailor made a mistake. Blossum isn't a Siamese -- she's a turkey! ## Those Japanese monster movies sure are classics, aren't they? Dumb classics, as you note, but funny ones to watch when you feel like laughing. I think we've seen just about all of them -- and from the way you follow Saturday TV I'll bet you've seen every one at least three times. Maybe four.

Not all "R" rated movies are horror films. Some deal with other topics that cause this rating to appear. Some just have lots of violence in them. The rating system isn't very useful for telling what a film is about. That's funny, isn't it? I would think that a classification system should tell more about the nature of a thing than the movie ratings do. What do you think?

THE NEW PORT NEWS (Brooks) \* No. No. That title is "Gorilla My Dreams, I Love You." It's the flip side of that block-busting 45 rpm hit, "Let Me Crawl you, Sweetheart." Both of these tunes were later recorded on that album which took its title from trouser dropping in the Minnesota winter: "Blue Moon"...

Local TV news ran a series on headaches, saying how prevalent they were in the population and how little there is that really helps. Lots of people, they say, suffer often. I've had a few doozies but they never lasted more than a day. But the experience was enough to convince me that I never want to suffer from a chronic affliction....

I remember years ago back in Gadsden, when I was a kid in grammar school, that I'd walk about a mile to the bus stop where I'd ride the Rainbow Drive route home. The buses ran every hour, so I'd take my time. We got out at 3:05, which meant I was assured of missing the 3:10 bus. So waiting for the 4:10 bus was an art form. I'd read comix, lots, down at the Pittman Pharmacy. It was a friendly place; they didn't yell at kids clustered around the comic rack. They knew we bought our share.

Old Mr. Heckto worked at Pittman's in the back. He wasn't a pharmacist; I think he looked after the stock and was related to Mr. Pittman in some distant way. He took a shine to me, probably because I was the only kid in the group who also read from the paperback rack. I read science fiction, and so did Mr. Heckto. He would come over some days and point out a new title of particular significance. He was hot on E.E. Smith, I recall.



Mr. Heckto liked to talk, too. He'd rattle on about his invention, a method of cheap printing he claimed. Said he was tricked into selling the rights and never knew it. That galled him fiercely. The old man's face would turn a dull pink-purple color and the veins in his forehead would stand out and pulse. Mr. Heckto would moan and forget I was there, but if I tried to sidle away he'd notice and start talking about science fiction again.

I don't know which the old man got madder about -- the theft of his invention or the perversion of his name. "They took out the 'k'!!!" he'd mutter. "It weren't enough they steal my genius, they got to destroy the name of 'Heckto' as well." I heard him revile the thieves enough times. Maybe old MR. Heckto was a bit befuddled. Maybe he was just old and battered. The man had a clarity at times. Anyway, I've always called the process "heckto", ever since those days. Nobody ever gave me reason not to.

FRIENDS IN SPACE (Karrh) \* I've run through the Atlanta airport on more than a few occasions. Delta is so spread out -- when my incoming flight is late (which is usual) I've got to sprint to reach my connection. Delta takes delight in arranging my connection at the opposite end of the complex from my incoming flight. If it didn't happen every single time I'd think it was coincidence. But Delta must be trying to make me into O.J. Simpson... I run through airports. In Atlanta, at least.

THE HYPERCUBE (Hyde) \* Nice Collins cover. ## McGee does get more cynical as the series progresses, but then it IS a progressive series. As I understand it, McDonald's original conception was a 8 to 10 book series with everything being wrapped up in the final novel. McDonald had never done series work before McGee and wasn't enthralled by the idea, but he was a highly successful pb writer of thrillers and series thrillers were IN. The money was too good. So McGee was to illustrate the fallacies in the standard thriller series formula; McGee was to deteriorate. And so he did, but the series hasn't ended. It goes on.... I'm really torn as to which way I vote.

"Soccy" is from Prince Fluffenlave Socrates Smith III. I don't think you were in SFPA when "The Cat Show" appeared. It introduced the cat known as Soccy. The kids loved it. A new Soccy tale is in work and will run in some future Mel. Things keep getting in the way of finishing the story. SFPA 100 is the latest.

One of the advantages of living a quarter mile from work, besides the obvious positive economic factors, is that I've practically got a bevy of my own machines. It's just a short zip up the hill and I'm programming. The habit is hard to break. The Box Scores program, then MOUSE. Next will probably an automated project scheduler (not so ambitious as PERT; rather more practically oriented). I keep two personal packs (our system uses cartridge disk) and so there's no problem with media. The full resources of the lab are at my disposal on off-hours. It's better than any home computer I could afford -- and the maintenance is free.

Anyone can appeal a Box Scores page credit ruling. What you have detected is called a Foul Up (or something like that). Indeed, you should have received credit for East Point Opposite. I shall set this straight, but -- alas -- not in time for the All Time Standings in Icepick #8, which is already in the care (?) of the postal service. (You weren't alone. The postmailers missed also.) Therefore, as a special service, the Zugzwang Press brings a Newsflash Update..... top of the next page. Stay tuned. Film at eleven...



In PPM you are now #32. In total pages, #61. No change in 8A. (Note that Box Scores in this Mel contain the corrected stats for you, P.L. etc.) As for P.L., she went from #98 to just under Reinhardt, errr..., to #94 in PPM. And in Total Pages, from #48 to #46 (just beneath Hank Davis).

The NEC Astra system is quite good, as is a thing called "ABC" (though I forget what it stands for and which Japanese company makes it). The major barrier to the Japanese success in America has been marketing (and I seem to recall commenting to this point in an earlier issue). Their products are generally high quality in the lower end of the market. They're really not capable of competing at the high end yet. But their semiconductor stuff is fine. We get a higher yield rate from NEC than from TI or Intel, etc. The leading edge still belongs to the USA, but Japan is ingenious, perspicacious and eventually gets there.

Like you, I omit topics that aren't SFPA's business from my fmz. I do shall a fair amount of my personal status with the apa, feeling that they are in many senses an "extended family". But I'm well aware that the apa is an open one and people (?) like Bill Bridget appear from time to time. And the extra mls go anywhere. So my discussions are limited to essentials.

Good luck on your job hunting. If you ever wind up in California, check in with the local SFPA contingent. Technical jobs are plentiful out here -- and good ones.

MY BRAIN HURTS (Wells) \* I've never attended a Trekkie con, though your point about a 90% female attendance might change my mind. With that population, even a feeble old geriatric like myself might find one or two ladies to tickle his fancy. Though the ST overlay might be hard to take. You seemed to have no trouble finding alternate topics of discussion: but I'll admit that Dr. Who, Darkover, etc. aren't areas of specialty for me.

Heinlein is another topic. I was talking about Heinlein last nite, at a party thrown by Liz Schwarzin and Jeff Copeland. I was the token fan. (Actually, I was told that my invitation was based on being a "computer person", for this gathering was primarily technical folks.) I opined that Heinlein had lost the ability to write. Nobody much disputed this bald statement. Most looked nostalgic and muttered phrases like "Stranger...", "Double Star...", "Citizen of the Galaxy...", "Door...", "Rocket Ship Galileo..." We decided that the danger point comes when writers stop writing to pay bills and start writing for their idea of Posterity. One brash lad labelled in "senility", though I'm not sure Heinlein was truly senile when he started gathering prosaic wool. We left Heinlein to continue gratifying himself and wandered on to more interesting topics.

Like 'Liz' three black cats. (Whoever could conceive of owning three black cats?) They are nice cats, though sniff-fixated. Most cats are content to smell carefully of new flesh, then make a memory "fix". These cats returned to the olfactory effort time and again. Still, they were nice. One Poof, a space cadet, was even happy about being picked up and gently rough-housed. Mouth, a larger Abby, would tolerate fondling ('cept about the ears). Nappy just hid the bulk of the span. Strangely (or Maybe Not..) Poof reminded me of Ron Bounds, invitee in absentia. They share the same world-view. And that prompted a realization that Bobbie Armbruster (despite numerous claims to want to play Southern Hearts again Real Talent) was missing another opportunity. Marvellous cats. Misty would have enjoyed the party. And speaking of Misty, I presume that he (she? it?) will be attending the next DSC, now that SFPA waitlisthood has been attained? I do believe this is proper. The Wells travel far to attend such doings. Will Misty be denied the opportunity to fraternize with SFPA.....?????



INTERMEDIATE VECTOR BOSUNS (Andruschak) \* Paul Heinrich is a Master now, in case you've lost touch with his rating. I tried playing through the game; but ran into some difficulties. On move 31 you put your Knight on Q3, then defended it on move 41 with ...K-K2. But then on move 43 you played ...K-Q1, apparently leaving the Knight undefended, yet Heinrich played 44. R-N8+ instead of RxN+. I couldn't figure it out. The opening was interesting. You exchanged BxN+ without waiting for White to force it, but things seemed to turn out well for you. White let his pawn complex dominate his thought, then indulged in exchanges. Perhaps this was because he committed his Queen on the Qside rather than try to develop an attack. I dunno. Maybe 6.B-R3 goes in the wrong direction. The balance of the game as played holds, and Black manages to remove all of White's threats quite easily. Some nice sequences, too. What's left looks pretty much drawn until I run into the puzzling moves. Well done.

Afraid the letters didn't do too much for me. Dawn liked the "radar view of eastern California" best. I enjoyed the chess, as you might can tell, but then that's a special interest that not too many SFPAns share. (Though I sometimes run my games also.) Hard saying exactly what makes a SFPazine. Perhaps the best definition is that it's by SFPAns for SFPAns. Maybe that's why a genzine lettercol didn't strike home. Do more MC's....

HOW I LOST... (Paris) \* I liked the opening the best.....

THIRTY-SEVEN SPECKLES (Barger) \* The chronicle of a good party.....

SPLIT DISCO BEAVER FROM MARS (Barger) \* Enjoyable con report; the kind that is filled with nuggets of wit. (More than I can say for the mailing comments...) Good cons just seem to roll on, with an abundance of things to remember and record. Encapsulating these moments, however, is a skill. (Half a page of MC's? That's all?) The cover was great also. I didn't see any related commentary inside, however. What's the story? Now the TV is starting "Women Who Rate a 10." Why am I watching this, I ask myself. Probably in order to assure that TV is as inane as is claimed. That the TV moguls are foolish enough to think that merely parading swim-suited beauties across the screen, endlessly for an hour (except for commercials), will make droves of horny male viewers tune in. I'm only watching in order to write this scathing review. (Of course we forgive you. But full MC's in SFPA 100, yeah?)

ROMAN LESIONS ON THE MARCH (Barger/Burke/Clark/Paris) \* Another oneshot that reads enjoyably -- and I don't say that to all the oneshots with my name in them. There's a quality of aliveness shining thru the confusion. A feeling that these people were into the one-shot, not merely putting words on paper. It's a quality that all good oneshots have, though many fans lose the ability to generate it as they grow old -- too many oneshots dull the synapses, some say. It's a pleasure to have it demonstrated that oneshots can still be done the right way.

WALRUSES IN HEAT (Barger/Burke/Clark) \* Having seen "Dos Equis" popping up in this string of pages (you guys sure do a lot of oneshots, don't you?) I can perceive that genuine fine taste does exist in K'ville. (I don't care what Guy Lillian says about this bunch, if they like Dos Equis they can't be all bad.) Neat definitions, aptly phrased.



EXCERPTS FROM... (Barger/Burke/Clark) \* Dos Equis cans??? It only comes in bottles in the places I buy it out here. Funny writing; well-executed parody, with lots of tickler references. (No, Barger, that's "tickler" as in literary reference, not -- never mind.) However, I note that this parody is laced with salacious softporn references. What sort of pervert would run softporn material thru SFPA???

ON THE MARCH.. waitaminute: didn't this oneshot run before? I mean, the title seems familiar. Owell. WITH THE ROMAN LESIONS (Chorus) \* RAE.

STALKING THE GREAT HORNEY SFPAN (Burke/Clark) \* A parable appreciated.

KSFF JOURNAL (Barger) \* More going on in Tennessee these days than in all the South fifteen years back. Incredible.

I'M A POET, I KNOW IT (Dolbear) \* Lasker's viewpoint does apply to the chess machines. They are ideally suited for a strategy which isolates the weaknesses in an opponent's thought as opposed to the weakness of the board position. But, as I commented to Harry, what is the point in repeating such tactics? With human opponents there is learning involved -- if one batters against weaknesses, they will be eventually defended. But with the machines we have today this is not true. There is no success in the heuristic chess program area -- though there are some notable failures. My curiosity was in the programming; though the first victories were enjoyed. But back to Lasker. His finest quote: "In life we are all duffers." Every time I think I'm doing well and start to relax I remember that barb. Indeed, the game of Life is too complex to be mastered. Those of us who think we have do so eventually discover otherwise.

Very pertinent point on the alimony thing. Though I think the counterargument would go that the wife provided these services in lieu of other employment, therefore the breach should no leave her without compensation. Etc. But your points are all well-taken. The issue, alas, is emotional and not logical -- even in a court of law.

When I was in Gadsden at Christmas I saw an ad on TV. An Atlanta station, featuring a special on Blacks speaking out against "Black on Black" crime. In the snippets they showed in that trailer was a woman shouting about how the Black criminal element had to be punished for crimes against others of their race. "We can't let 'em off any longer!" she cried. Your comments about acquittals dovetail rather nicely. It's a totally human backlash, but to prejudice justice with history is a crime which reaps the whirlwind. I believe we will be moving out of that reaction in the decade to come -- the Reagan administration, of course, having the power to incur a relapse. Our greatest problem as a nation has been that we grant only degrees of freedom, degrees of rights, yet we are vocal in claiming the contrary. It's odd that the freedom oriented nation we are is also the most interally hypocritical. We punish "crimes against the state" with full fury, yet we deny it. We openly discriminate -- yet we'll never admit it about our own section (the Yankees point to the South; the South points to Northern ghettos.) Small wonder that there's counteraction. One of these days I hope we wake up, as a nation, and learn to deal with simple reality. Just simple reality. It's all the frills and fishtail fins that have got us balled up now.

I suppose I define "market" in a broader sense than I communicated -- as in "market share". The automobiles, in the restricted sense, took no market share away from buggy manufacturers. The auto, after all, wasn't horse-drawn and thus not in the same market. But it was in the market for cheap transportation



needs, efficient transportation needs, rapid transpotation... etc. My point is that most real shifts in "market share" are effected by finding a better way to achieve fulfilling a need -- the new way is not usually classified -- at least in the beginning -- as being a genuine competitor in "the field". This comes both from belated critical consciousness and from pressure by the established product-pushers to "keep the upstart out". Of, at least, public awareness.

There's no question, I'll agree, that in many areas of consumer products there isn't much technical innovation left. Soap, toothpaste, toilet paper, beer, bleach, bread crumbs, etc. In these areas advertising plays a huge role -- but I believe it still costs the consumer too much. I believe that corporate fear of not having enough advertising drives the bosses to pay for too much. For the return, that is. Though I can't prove that belief.

As for new technologies, new ways of doing things, shifting markets -- let's look at a time span that gives us some perspective. Say, a hundred years back. That's a small slice of history, a moderate slice of the "industrial revolution". But it is plenty of time to demonstrate what I mean. Within that hundred years almost no aspect of product sales hasn't been profoundly affected by new technology -- either in product type, manufacturing method or some other basic measure of cost. Even the soaps and cornflakes you mention were, by production factors, impacted enourmously by technology -- though not in our generation. But I rant enuff.

A good zine. I'll second your motion that it's psychological investment that makes weight loss happen. That's been my story. The key is motivation. The key is muscle tone. Not much but motivation makes good muscle tone. And the ability to be active, not munching. (So I'm 15 pounds cw at date...)

THAL (Hulan) \* Speaking of birthdays close to Christmas, there's a club in Gadsden composed of people who were born in December. They hold a birthday party for themselves every Christmas season. The group is zany about it all; practically fannish in their irreverence. Their common complaint is that Christmas cheated them out of birthday shin-digs, presents and whatever. The prevailing attitude is humorous, but there's the tiniest trace of seriousness when the official ceremonies are held and the proclamation of December Children is read ritually.

I think I'll pick up a couple of the Judge Dee books while they're still on the racks. Not much time for reading these days, but I predict things will slack off a bit after mailing 100. The Judge Dee novels sound like pleasant pasttime.

Amazing how few are the intersections in our reading patterns. Part of this has to be because of the relative non-reading patterns I followed for most of the seventies. In those years I was lucky to read three books a month, and they were usually McDonald or mainstream fiction. I made no conscious effort, but I practically segregated sf, fantasy and "light" mystery out of my reading patterns. Those times I read, I wanted something "significant" because I didn't want to feel I was wasting my time. What a shame that attitude was... I was stopping the natural flow -- lots of books I could have read very quickly and enjoyed went untouched. And a fair percentage of my selections weren't books that I enjoyed terribly much nor learned from. Things have been slow since Xmas, but I've ordinarily had a book or two going all the time (one heavy and one light). I've noticed no real impact on any of my activities, work, social or hobby. My leaning is that had I begun to restore my reading patterns to their original state a decade ago, we'd be reading many more books in common -- without your pattern changing atall.



PLAN NINE FROM HANGAR 18 (Wells) \* Why don't you select some passages from your correspondence with Al Andrews and publish them? Al was a valued old-time member of SFPA and is probably unknown to most of our newer members.

SOUTH OF THE MOON (Andruschak) \* Always fascinating to gaze over the list of apas. It seems to get bigger all the time. This is the first I'd heard of Coventry-in-apas -- the FRP apas you cite. Sometime during my semi-gafia these things must have come to pass. I presume each member takes a personna and writes him/her/it self into the story, together with other members of the apa. There's probably in-personna MC's, etc. Please do clarify the situation if I'm wrong; I'm interested in this FRP stuff. (Hell, Ronnie Reagan made it; why can't I?) Strikes me as awfully close to a brand of faan fiction prevalent in certain spirited apas, but the FRP games I remember from the sixties were much more Serious in underlying composition. Much more. So what's the scoop these days?

THE DREAM IS OVER (weber) \* I listened to Reagan's address on the economic plan he proposes. (Yes, this is the evening of February 18.) What I heard impressed me. Not that I found the glib statements of turnaround so believable, but I think he's going after more federal overhead than I'd thought he would. I'd been certain the major cuts would be education, welfare, health, environment -- as they were in California under his regime. And that may turn out to be the case when the hoopla dies down enough for the real bones to stick out.

But his fundamental thrust, as I heard it, was to reduce administrative overhead in a variety of fashions. Removing federal "strings" from many grants will subtract a whole hierarchy of "tracers" and "monitors" from the federal payroll. (Theoretically.) This ploy can boomerang on us in one sense -- the control lost may allow offsetting abuses. However, I'm positive on the idea. As I am on the idea of combining agencies, reducing paperwork requirements (especially number of copies -- that means the reviewers should be accordingly reduced. Tightening requirement enforcement for the various doles also seems proper.

The tax cut is also needed. More than the kind of cut Reagan is recommending, but at least he's moving in the right direction. The graduated income tax simply gives the government a bigger and bigger percentage of our real income as inflation debases the dollar. That's how the government has mushroomed so enormously in the past decade. That's why none of the previous remedies have gotten at the heart of the issue -- indeed, the "redistribution" ideas which funneled money through a bloated bureaucracy simply worsened the situation. Heat death.

I'm starting to have hopes that Reagan just may drive through some reform. We need it badly. We are going downhill at a toboggan rate and it'll take real pain to reverse the trend. But the trend way from productivity and toward regulation and "redistribution" must be halted. If the productive cycle can be stoked, the pain will ease relatively quickly. Reagan's moves are aimed at stoking that productive cycle. Let's hope they work.

No, I've not read Kai Lung. In my movements in that direction I've chosen other roads, thus far. Clearly this should be corrected.

The quote on the wall of Baskin-Robbins stores is by Ruskin, though I can't recall the exact phrasing either. And it is true. And it is prevalent. Is it my imagination, or is "caveat emptor" becoming everyday a more telling proverb for our times....



I accept that CU has its problems. Some of the test criteria sound as if they were designed by desk-sitters who know nothing substantial about the critical measurements to be exacted from a product. But on the whole, CU does a good job (imho). They take care, exhaustive care, to get at what the consumer needs to know. (Despite occasional goofs.) They center on quality of performance and repair record -- by which they're really getting at cost of ownership. As for variances with informed opinion, I dunno. The times I've used CU as a guide I've been pleased with the results.

Yes, you made it to the semi-finals of that DSC (B'ham) Hearts tourney. I recall well meeting you then and adding another SFPAn-met to my list. (Don't tell me: you can't remember me from Adam...) I shouldn't boast too loudly, though, for that year Hank Reinhardt finished second. And anyone finishing behind the Hank, well, there's degrees of Hearts skill.....

Ahhh. The battle on Hoth. The neutralization theory can be dismissed easily, for if such were possible it would have been done from space -- the preferred approach of Darth Vader. The ships which landed were in the Imperial fleet, therefore they were available for use while in space. Neutralization gone.

The next idea has much more validity. True, the shield may be grounded by contact with the planetary mass. This provides a rationale for the landing and ground assault. The problem I have with this theory is founded in the radius of the shield. Were it a radius large enough to provide the protection illustrated; i.e., easily a thousand miles, then the ground forces would have taken an eternity to reach the rebel base. The observable speed of the walkers could not have been much greater than 25 mph. Given the perversity of terrain, I submit the average center-oriented progress couldn't have been greater than 20 mph. If the Imperial forces landed at the perimeter (and you have to take the diameter of Hoth into account, I realize), they couldn't have made it to the rebel base in less than seven weeks... The time-span of the film denies this.

Now, it is clear that the ships themselves did not transport the walkers past the shield (say, via taking advantages of the planetary contact loophole to penetrate the shield) for if they had they would have been used in the attack -- possessed, as advertised -- enormous firepower. So the walkers came on their own.

This means I disallow your explanation as the means used in the movie, though I am not shy in granting its logical probability. What it adds up to is: movie lapsa. I think the needs of the script overrode logic. Not an unusual circumstance in such films.

Gee, this is fun. I'm looking forward to your counterblast -- two mailings from now. How we can bull through this with a straight face is beyond me, but the playful exercise of logic in an hypothetical situation like this one leads to more fun than debating real issues, anyday.

Interesting. I use drugs very lightly, though I'll get ripped on alcohol from time to time. The few times I've gotten really far out on Other Substances have left me with several impressions: (1) if I'm alone or with at most one other person I trust implicitly, things are great. I relax and enjoy. But (2) if there's even a few people I start to develop paranoid traits. This doesn't do too much for me. Methinks that my trend away from all drugs is the proper one. Although, a mild mj buzz just seems to make parties better; it's when I get down to the defense levels that I discover how really well defended I am. I retreat but I observe -- and that is an active observation, I've discovered, not a passive one. All in all, I'd rather not be there.



However, if I'm straight I don't get particularly bothered if I encounter people in Altered States (save the psychotic ones). I rather enjoy talking with people who are moderately stoned. They free-associate. They don't bother with courtesy's trappings if the conversation becomes dull -- they jump right to a new topic. If I don't worry about these discontinuities; if I just ride -- these things become enjoyable. I develop a contact high. I float.

It's the cryptic comments, the pregnant silences, the heavy insinuations and the borderline threats which come about when an intoxicatee (like that?) has gone overboard that bothers me. Hank Reinhardt, bless his soul, explained to me the most humane way to disengage such persons from their temporary fantasies. First you chop them across the vocal cords, then you kick them twice in the kidneys. It attracts their attention....

Good zine, as always. I enjoyed Thanatopsis, though the tragedy of the occasions weighed heavy. It's good that SFPA can accept serious writing as well as the usual.

BRAINSTORM (Ryder) \* And speaking of serious writing, Brainstorm was an item that I enjoyed. It read well on several levels. The first was stylistic. You've got a way of personifying characters that appeals; your choice of words is usually apt. On another level, the story has a symbolic meaning that emerges slowly but clearly. You could do worse than try your hand at prodom, Sperhawk. The story needs another pass or two to draw out the elements a bit and develop some more interaction prior to the "hat trick". But things feel good. The story flows. I know it comes from your circumstances and introspections, but it isn't shockingly revealing. We all have such components -- which is why the story is so appealing. I think you've handled the elements well. The first sequence, I'd guess, has seen one or more previous drafts. The others are probably done directly onto master. In the first sequence there are fewer awkward constructions, misleading connections. With a bit of work it could be fleshed out and ready for a prozine. Why not try? You clearly have the talent.

UTGARD (Hulan) \* As I mentioned when we rapped about odds'n'ends a few weeks back, I was surprised also that you didn't finish higher in the Egoboo Poll. I felt your material was excellent, present in quantity and appropriate in tone. Needless to say, you finished high on my ballot. The issue about multiple-running that you raise is a good one. You made the fact that THAL received multiple distribution rather highly visible. I think the membership came to regard it as "not a real SFPAzine". What should have been pointed out was that SFPA is part of a very limited group that receives THAL. We're lucky to be on that list, for it would be less costly if you dropped us. But you didn't, and THAL should have garnered more return. I guess my judgement in appropriateness is subjective, but I make strong distinctions between material intended for a general audience (in the sense of "anybody") and material which is prepared with SFPA in mind, even if only as part of the ultimate audience. Except in rare cases, the former doesn't belong in SFPA -- not when it drags on the Treasury. THAL is clearly the better sort of stuff -- if we read and enjoy it we shouldn't discount it because of circulation.

Ahh, you go after the driver's test analogy. Except that it wasn't presented as an analogy at all, but as a precedent for governmental control of prerequisite qualifications. The point I was making with this reference, and a mention of airplane pilot licensing, was that the government has established its right to determine qualifications/standards/tests for the operation of a complex device. From there I wanted to go onward to examine the franchise.



Once the license is granted, enforcement of performance falls in a different purview. There are clear differences in the exercise of a voting privilege and that of an automobile operation privilege. The issue of "rights" notwithstanding, one is a physical mechanical activity and the other a conceptual judgemental activity. To continue past the precedent to the elemental correlation isn't sound. As this was never the intent, we can end the exchange here. (Imho.)

I like your term: "Art Literature". But I don't like your definition. Meeting "the goals of English Lit critics" is not what it's about. The English Lit critics are like the Egyptian dung beetles -- they roll what they like up into a ball that can be moved around easily. Art Literature itself is not created, truly understood or interpreted by such critics. Indeed, much of what is proclaimed as Art Literature today was viciously attacked by the English Lit critics of its day. The Lit critics tend to be into what I might call Trend Literature, which picks up all the hallowed stylistic and theme saws of the age and flexes them. Trend Lit doesn't last long, but most critics love it wildly so long as the bloom is on.

Genuine Art Literature survives the "test of time" and establishes itself along one of several axes. And lots of it it hits more than one axis. It comes from any branch. All it has to do is keep having meaning for generations of readers. Let's take an extreme case: Conan Doyle. His stuff (for the mid-part) is still wowing them in Minneapolis, Liverpool, Versailles, Albuquerque, etc. Doyle qualifies as a man who wrote enduring material. The Art Literature critics have their problems, yes, but they can't deny reality. Or there's D. H. Lawrence, spat upon in his time as a cheap writer of trashy sensationalism -- yet the Art Lit critics love him today because of "human insight". Between Lawrence and Doyle lies the hard median -- both are poor in their art at ends of different axes, yet both endure.

The different goals you cite are those of communication. Maybe the "media is the message" in these specialized cases, but mastery of the media must be present for endurance. Were it not, the host of inferior imitators which arise following any success (along any axis) would smother and diffuse the originator's work. Indeed, such is usually the case in the near term. But time does its job well enough. In time, the imitators are (1) forgotten, or (2) prove worthy on their own merits. I know you don't care for Chandler, but he has effectively displaced Hammett as the archtypical practitioner of the "realistic detective" school.

Literature has a problem of clarity, as opposed to physics which can reach of reproducibility as a standard of Truth. In literature, truth has no capital "T" save in inferior work. The best of the "one idea" novels qualify themselves. (And look at "Atlas Pontificated" for a counterexample...) It is this working with unproveable concepts which makes literature so valuable -- and so difficult to define. But, enough verbiage... Now, where does Edgar Rice Burroughs fit??

I can't recall ever having seen (or, rather, read) an Apanage mlg so I can't comment to that end, but I'll agree that FLAP has a better average quality of writing than does SFPA. Not really a surprise, in that SFPA is an open apa and the members of FLAP were picked (most for their fanzine abilities, I presume). But SFPA has more spirit than FLAP does -- though this may be merely a start-up phenomenon. Apa spirit is a very important dimension for me in my enjoyment of the group. I've not found another to equal SFPA along that axis. Writing skill isn't the major reason for my belonging to apas, though if it's present in the group I'm pleased. I find that the best of fan writers pale beside the John Fowles of the world. I belong to apas because of fan people.



How about beating a team that won the Southwestern Conference title with an undefeated and untied record in that conference? I've no argument that the Tide should have been the National Champion -- they didn't deserve it. (Tho I will say there've been a number of years when they did deserve, but were aced out by politics.) But the SWC is a tough conference -- take a look at their record against outsiders. Baylor was no cream puff; they were a very strong team. It was a hard physical game, and the clear superiority of the Alabama team was the prize of performance that the players wanted. They had clutched -- failed to win the key Notre Dame game (though I blame the coach a lot for that) -- and now it was all on the line in a national spotlight. 'Bama jelled for the Cotton Bowl. Were the season extended another ten games past that point I will say that imho no other team in the nation could have beaten them -- including Notre Dame, who were damn lucky to win the regular season game, despite a faltering Tide execution and several poor coaching decisions. The Georgia game showed that. (Good thing I'm not a rabid Alabama fan...)

Agreed on your theorems concerning poker, but I'm not sure how they can be reasonably enforced. Part of the game is getting out at the top of the power curve, though courtesy compellis most big winners to play on for a while. Though they rarely take serious risks with their winnings. (Those who do don't usually turn out as Big Winners.) In other words, even a time span rule can't prevent a winner from cashing out ahead -- an early winner, I meant to say.

Table stakes is a bit different. I presume you were speaking of the standard Ellay fandom limited-bet game in which the tide is statistical in primary component, as opposed to the brutal opportunism of a table stakes game. While the dodge is still possible, the penalty for unwise investment can be much steeper. In a table stakes game, I'd say that the time span rule would be a definite plus.

Interesting thing about programming a computer to play Diplomacy is the board structure. Not that it would be terribly difficult, but there are definite problems. The board design is the major one. It can't be represented easily as a matrix, which causes additional overhead in the move evaluations. The simultaneous moving is a second, though lesser, barrier. Recursive evaluation is required. I looked at going after Diplomacy as a project, but decided that the hassles of technique were not worth the reward. (My original thot was that I could then play in the game, were the computer Gamesmaster.)

I guess what bothered me about the Tanith Lee books I mentioned was that even though the eyes of narrative were those of ignorant members of the society, the underpinning for the assumptions on which the book rode were not shored up. It was marvelous, yes, but ridiculous. The best counterexample I can provide is Jack Vance. He will either (a) call it magic and thus avoid the onus of proof -- or reader analysis; or (b) justify the seeming-unreal structures with a few, but well-pointed, observations as to the scientific/sociological basis -- "The Moon Moth" or "The Languages of Pao" are examples. With Lee's DON'T BITE THE SUN and sequel I was forced to choose between ignoring what I felt was weak malarky or taking a critical posture and damaging my enjoyment. I chose a compromise, reading the books as fantasy, then examining the premises. Lee is a very very fine writer, as I stated in the review. But writing alone is not enough. There is logistical work which must either be accurately done or visibly declined.

You should do full MC's more often; I find lots of comment hooks in your work. 'Course, I usually agree with what you say; but not Always.



THIN ICE (Verheiden) \* I was in Portland last week on a whirlwind business trip. No time to try to contact a busy movie exec like yourself, but my planning is to be back in Oregon again before too long a time has passed, this trip to meet the requirements of leisure more faithfully. At that time I plan to give you a call and see if we can quaff a few brews together while discussing the personal habits and ancestories of any SFPAn so inconsiderate as to not show up for this minicon. I now have ein Buisness Connection in Portland, and will probably be in town from time to time. Have already sampled Jake's restaurant and approve. I trust you know the place and also approve. There's fine food (seafood...!!), good sloppy hamburgers (what I had), and the palest blue mountain-lake eyes on the face of the red-headed waitress that I've ever seen....

Well, your combination thumbnail prospectus/ overview sheet looks good to me. I've got \$500 thou to invest somewhere, since I sold my GM stock, so why not send me two dozen good Havana cigars and an invitation to participate? It would provide me with unbounded humor, as I would not only enjoy the cigars immensely but also provide a home for the \$6.87 left after taxes.

TIN SOLDIER (Rogers) \* Nice cover. Who is Julie Scott? ### Well, if you don't get ideas on the opposing philosophies of wl participation from the OE Symposium, let me hit a few points on the theory of waitlist participation in the parent apa. The first is financial: it is the members who pay freight on the wl contributions; this costs the Treasury. Second point is in-group: the waitlisters are mere candidates; why should they be given any priviledges until they've reached Membership? It only dilutes the interaction between Real Apans. Third is control: giving an open invitation to the wl to frank means that any old thing might come thru. Lordy! Outsiders might think it was part of the Real Apa. Fourth is simple privilege: if one lets these upstarts put material in the Real Apa they might develop some idea that they are People, when everyone knows that only Members are People.

This is a drastic simplification (and an unfair one), but the basic philosophy is one of a closed versus an open apa. SFPA is in theory a closed apa; in practice, however, it is an open one. I believe that a mid-ground is best. The totally open structure is good for encouraging enthusiasm and page-count, but it does dilute the apa proper. I like the "Shadow" solution because it limits the wl contributions -- iff it is the only means (other than inclusion in a member's zine) to get into the apa interaction. Then the wl contributions are identifiable and can be treated as each individual member wishes. Such a rule is desirable now, for we are going to be hard pressed to handle the enthusiasm without having our core identity threatened by dilution, but we should not ever deny the wl a path to speedy appearance in SFPA. The real candidates will stick out the inconvenience and be fortified and elevated by the wait; others will drop away. 'Nuff.

The "beef" market in Southern California is rather highly articulated. The number of "meat markets" offering overpriced drinks, poor music and a postage-stamp-sized dance floor is incredible. That they're full to the rafters on weekends is a sign: there are lots of traders in the "meat market". My own reactions aren't so negative as I thought they would be. True, the vast majority of people there are fakes and simpletons, but a few genuine people turn up there in their search for a place to meet members of the opposite sex. The only problem, other than the overcrowding with jerks of both sexes, is that the environment breeds immediate distrust as to intentions, thus defeating what could be its purpose. But if you want a one-night stand and odds on VD, these places are marvellous.....?



Where did this idea that an OE should offer printing services come from? That's total bullshit. An OE should run the apa. That's a hell of a job in itself, if done right. If an OE is also willing to offer printing service, that's peachy keen. But it's no obligation in any sense. When I was OE I received, on a couple of abhorrent occasions, merely stencils. That I ran them was Extra. I could (and did once) have dumped them back to the originator. I know that Guy says he'll print any member's zine, but that's Guy's personal decision. It did not come with the office.

Irvin Koch?????

Maybe he's changed; certainly he should receive the benefit of doubt. But in my day Irvin was a pain-in-the-ass. Gung-ho, yes, but practical, no. As I recall, his involvement in anything meant weeks of hassle to make the most basic functions go smoothly. I guess I don't count energy alone as enough. It has to be productive energy to count. Productive, by the way, is measured in results versus expenditures. Total expenditures, including physic ones by other committee members. But I beg off any current judgments, for I'm in no position to judge today.

Listing as "sue" in a later OO doesn't invalidate my published premise that the OO as of the creation of the puzzle was operant. Sorry. The fact that you did work toward a solution is appreciated -- hell, you even found one under your rules. Super.

Heating

the bedroom doesn't (or shouldn't) have much relation to sleeping in the nude. I've slept in the nude ever since I Left Home and the outside temperature has never been a barrier. I like the heating low, perhaps to conserve energy but mostly to conserve money. And I pile on whatever level of blankets is required to keep me cozy warm underneath, nude. Jumping up in the morning and facing the nippy air until I can get beneath the steaming outpour of a voluminous shower-head is merely a tonic. It's great!!

A GENUINE MINAC MEMBERSHIP SAVER (Davis) \* Your views on that first Nero Wolfe Tv show are in parallel with mine, but much better put. Perhaps this comes from a thorough acquaintance with the character in his native habitat. I've not read many Nero Wolfe novels and within this admittedly narrow range have not been overly impressed with (a) stylistic ability, (b) insight into human character, or (c) background authenticity -- especially after seeing what ridiculous and convoluted presentations he made of professional chess in GAMBIT. It was apparent that Stout possessed, in addition to stark ignorance of the topic, a total disregard for whatever reality might exist. His rather pathetic attempts to seem knowledgeable soured rather amused me. But despite this negative, I always felt that Stout's prime characters were superb creations. They could stand alone. And to see the butchery of the TeeVee series repelled greatly.

INTUITION (Carlberg) \* Yes, Texas still has patriotism and tremendous state pride. I'm delighted that there are still pockets of these virtues in America. But the opposite side of the coin is all too true: rampant parochialism. When I lived in Dallas I was dismayed to discover that a city of its size could be so closed to events in the world outside of Texas. The newspaper was like The Gadsden Times -- it seemed to practically ignore happenings beyond the city limits. And while this is perhaps to be expected in a small town's paper, it is disaster in a city's paper. Perhaps Houston is more cosmopolitan; I dunno. But the image of Texas I gained from living in Dallas fit the stereotypes pretty well. Some I liked; some I didn't.



Your comment to Mike Rogers relates to a conversation I was having with Deb about that period of "entrance into SFPA". I suppose I was a bit disturbed by her view that it was a bit scary getting into SFPA and a lot of people backed away from the imposing front. Or something like that. I've gotten a much clearer idea of what she meant, and now comes your comment. Yes, I suppose we are a bit intimidating. I'd never really thought about it, but the bulk of SFPA material is rather impressive. And we go up from there. It must be like walking into an elegant cocktail party where the guests all know each other very well -- hard to break in. Even though SFPA does go out of its way to extend welcome, it still must be tough to relax and get with it if you're a newcomer. Thanks for the perspective.

I read THE MAGUS first, just like you did. It was the easiest inroad to Fowles, being close enough to my leisure reading interests to justify itself either way. After I got my mind back together, I realized I'd found a truly fine writer. I've since amended that to "truly great". As I opined in the drunken ramblings we enjoyed just a while back, Fowles and Hemingway are "mirrors" of method. If I recall my tipsy critical analysis, Fowles shows the reader what the heart is doing when the mind goes someplace in life, while Hemingway shows what the mind is doing when the hearts goes someplace. Is there anybody out there in SFPA that's interested in this discussion? Steven & I kicked it around a while and dropped it unfinished, but I'm still interested in exploring this idea, which uses one writer's approach to cross-calibrate another's.

Well, the better chess players are an unusual group, yes, but the real ward cases are not so frequent. Indeed, the Fischers of this world are rare. Unless you live in the Soviet Union it's hard to make a good living playing chess alone. Chess players tend to like a good living, therefore many of the better players have alternate careers. They are diplomats, accountants, concert pianists, journalists, teachers, physicists, musicians, investment bankers, computer programmers, merchants, philosophers, stockbrokers, engineers, military officers and corporate executives, to name the professions I encounter running through a mental list of today's Grandmasters. Yeah, I'd say chessplayers have been getting bad press. But who reads good press?

The election returns here were indicative of the pattern I described. It was documented by the local media, which smelled a story. The tendency for Republicans to Pile It On and Democrats to say What Does It Matter was apparently a fact. As for naming two people, from comments by my coworkers I could name at least five. Carter's early concession had an impact. This is a mechanical problem in our voting system, brought on admittedly by communications and analytic advances, which should be corrected.

I've seen a couple or three Flash Gordons now and have definite mixed feelings. I realize you were talking about the movie while I'm rattling on about the TV series, but there are real parallels from what you say. (I ain't seen no movie.) The mindless approach has lots of value. First, it avoids any pretensions. Secondly, it lets the imagination run riot. Given the first, I frequently enjoy the latter. The TV show is mindless enough that I can't even tell Flash Gordon from Buck Rogers. Fooey on this MC.

Incredible stuff on Lennon and the Beatles. You were really into them, weren't you? (Aren't you?) A delightful zine to read; best in the mailing. Those letters from the Houston POST -- I guess they indicate that I was right about Texas. Limited minds. Closed minds. Not that all Texans are like this -- far from it. But look to who the media gives play.



THE RUSTY AND VERN SHOW (Burke & Clark) \* Great cover. ### By the way, I got two of these in my mlg.  
Let me know if you're missing your copy. Let me know by letter; I don't promise to respond to an MC. #### This is a very enjoyable one-shot. You guys are justifiably proud of you placement in the recent mythical Poll. The only comment hook I see, tho, is the Heinlein discussion. I get no enjoyment from his recent work. For me, he has lost whatever magic it was that made him so delightful to read back in the days of DOUBLE STAR, THE DOOR INTO SUMMER and STARSHIP TROOPERS. It is the very fabric of his writing that has changed, become pretentious and diffuse. This is a subjective judgement, of course. I'm just saying that I have trouble reading his current stuff. Though there seem to be plenty who share this subjective view.

CARRYING THE TORCH (Burke) \* An excellent enjoyable con report. SFPA seems to be into a revival period for con reports. We had a flowering of them five or so years ago, then a cooling down. Maybe it relates to how active the average SFPAn is in cross-section Southern fandom, but the reports are good when they're bubbling with enthusiasm, as yours is. Nice wordsmithing, too.

Can't say much in informed response to your New Wave piece, though. I'm afraid that I've been left in the musical moraine. My collection sorta stops in the mid-seventies. Van Morrison. Neil Young. The Grateful Dead. Jefferson Airplane/Starship. Rod Stewart. Bonnie Raitt. 'Course the collection goes back into lots of directions, but it did kinda stop. Some of that is finances; I've been very frugal in recent years with album dollars. But I have to (re)lectantly admit that I've gotten rather comfortable musicically speaking. There are enough good albums in my collection that I can leisurely cycle through them and feel the delight of rediscovery. Maybe I add four albums a year now. I suppose that this, more than any other visible sign, means that middle-age has arrived.

SATYICON FLYER \* The wheel has turned on me twice now, between attending and not attending. Damn, but I want to be there! But the latest pressure is unavoidable work. We are into some major negotiations for a company of our size and I've been saddled with the technical part of it. Part of my new responsibilities, and too critical to even think of neglecting. I am, after all, a stockholder. The time is in conflict with this con. So, I'm wishing you all a marvellous time. I'll have to read reports of Hearts games, like Rusty's, won by new faces -- and I'll have to wait until OSC to set these hierarchic misunderstandings straight. But mostly, I'll miss the finest in-person SFPA has had in a long time.

SPIRITUS MUNDI (Lillian) \* OK. Your ridiculous and unfair expectation that SFPAn get their pages in by deadline may cause me to miss this mailing. Not that I was planning to do more than minac anyway, but it's the principle of the thing. And you call yourself "the People's OE". Tyrant! Tyrant!

My plans for the future include writing an indexing program and applying SFPA unto it. This will not happen soon, as much more pressing programming projects are already enqueued. But I do believe it will happen. Once done, I'll be able to run an index to all of SFPA each mailing. The major barrier, other than getting to the programmingg, will be the massive data entry task. If I ever get so far, maybe I'll throw a party and have countless fans frantically keying from old OO's....



I've never understood why you refer to Gary Steele's zines as "pure apazines" with a straight face. If the combination of a short attention span and a localized obsession (as strange as that combo sounds) is the Ultimate in apazining, then I'm in apas for all the wrong reasons. I don't want to be Tough on Gary, but his meandering stuff was sometime I saturated on very quickly. If I had to, quick, pick an example of the Ultimate apazine it would look more like Stven's INTUITION in this mailing (99). Cogent. Well handled, stylistically. Points of careful thought; points of gleeful dry wit. Lucid reproduction. Rippling with variety. If what you meant about Gary's work was "typical apazine", I'll agree that this is true of the form of the average apazine in the average apa. But Gary gave us better than that, often. Sorry to snap, but this "pure apazine" business was starting to get on my nerves. I'm trying to do a "pure apazine" too, you see, and be damned if I want to wind up with a short attention span or localized obsessions or hair on my palms...

Speaking of computer games, I've built an Othello program that has, a couple of times, beaten me. Wrote the whole damn thing in a weekend, then took a couple of lunch hours to tune it up. As the number of Othello players at work is large enough to give the program a work-out, I can report that it is winning about 90% of its games. That figure startled me. When I first learned the game I decided it was subject to algorithm. My early attempts to learn were frustrated by a lack of experienced players to lose to. Only Dave Locke could beat a mere beginner. But programming the machine, plus getting hold of some Othello literature, gave me a boost. The program plays rather well, as Stven can attest.

But as for the day when computers beat the best human players being the time to hang up our cleats, WRONG. Mankind's great skill is in building tools that excell. Because it was the easiest to do, we long ago built tools that dwarf or physical abilities. In the same sense, we now admit that our calculative abilities are dwarfed in terms of math. Why not admit that it is inevitable that any reducable logic be mastered by machines? After all, the machines themselves are creations of mankind?

I guess my point about Reagan's 51% wasn't to compare it to Carter's pathetic showing, save to say that the vote was against Carter and not so much for Reagan. Since the lection, though, I've watched Reagan try to mount a relentless roll-back on Federal spending and I'm impressed. We neeeeed it. Despite the man's drawbacks, I see his tightening of the federal waistline as a strong and positive action. I've been muttering that it should be done for years. I'd be a hypocrit to say that I'm not in favor of the actions. I pray the rest holds up.

Good points on McGee in your response to Dave on that topic. Yes, Travis is risilient. I don't know about the rest of you, but some of life's more thumping experiences have left be battered and bruised about the soul. Dick Francis has his heros go through incredible physical ordeals, but almost none of them ever doubt seriously or waver in their steadfastness. What MacDonald does with Travis McGee is show some of the doubts and uncertainties that occur when Lige Gets Tough. The message I get from Dave is that he doesn't want to deal with this reality when he's reading for enjoyment, which is unimpeachably fair. He's not called the writers we like bad, after all. But if these writers can take us through the entire trip, back to victory and resurgence, why not let them?

I got a couple of the Pelz-coordinated Tarot decks. After all, I watched them slowly assembled over the years. Super art. I'm not enough into Tarot to have much of a



critical reaction to the additions to the deck. Bruce's explanation sounds reasonable, and definitely not subversive. The extra art has to be appreciated. The only problem I might have in the incredible variety of interpretations, which run the full gamut of fannish art. I've had a difficult adjustment, in the times I tried using the deck for Tarot rather than as art, to the varying moods. They don't always fit into a pattern. As I expect to see a pattern emerge from a Tarot reading, this has been disturbing. But with anything new there is time required for a leveling. I'll evaluate again in a year.

ASTERIX IN PERSIA (Hutchinson) \* A nice cover, depicting American wish-fulfillment via a Gallic vehicle. ###  
Funny, I remember the Isley Brothers' version of "Twist and Shout" as being the "real" version. Of course, my father told me about (I was much too young to have been a follower of the Isley Brothers. Cough. Choke.) The Beatles were young then; imitating with variations.

There is abuse of the Food Stamp program. I saw a bit of it. ### Gee, it's hard to respond to an expert on Zip Codes. Let me play, instead, another rendition of how good this postal area is. They got the "growler" off this route and now there is a new, but very courteous, fellow delivering my mail. It continues to shock me. Was I living for years in renegade postal zones, areas dominated by directives to dismay and frustrate the public? Or am I now in an unusual and caring area, concerned with service and jobs-well-done?

I tend toward the latter view. Two incidents: I mailed my rental check from an outlying PO deposit last month. It didn't arrive where it was supposed to when it was supposed to. My landlords were polite but nervous. Eventually I wrote my replacement check and they picked it up in person. Three days later they were kind enough to call and explain that my original check had arrived. Yes, it had been correctly addressed. Yes, the postmark was correct. But the envelope had been sent to Pasadena, where it had been postmarked again, ten days later. In the meanwhile the envelope had been opened, then stapled shut. My check was intact, thank Ghu. The address was typed and uncluttered. So, wha' happen?

Secondly, I was at the local PO station on a Saturday morning, waiting in line. As sometimes happens, a creep came in and broke line, going directly to the window. When the clerk explained that this was wrong, that there was a line, the creep began blustering about his Rights, his Connections, his Obvious Importance, etc. The clerk calmly stood his ground, explained that the creep could see the Postmaster, etc. But the creep had to clear the window and let the people in line have next call. With aplomb, the clerk refused to let this asshole barge into line. I cheered (mentally). A similar confrontation in Irvine had seen the clerk cave in and endure the glares of those in line. Strangely enough, as I was Next, I went storming up and started a mean counteract. (Vocal, too.)

"Are you going to allow this line-breaking?" I asked the clerk. "This man just walked in and now he's trying to push ahead of all these people who've been waiting patiently."

The clerk rolled his eyes. "I can't do nothing, mister," he said. Wonderful. So I was supposed to do something. So I did.

"Tell him to go to the end of the line like anyone else."

"Butt out, buddy," said the creep. "You don't know who I am."



"Well, who are you?" I asked, raising my voice another notch. "What's your name? I'm sure all these people who were here before you were would like to know. What's your name, mister? Say it loud so we can all hear who's cutting in. Maybe we don't like that."

The creep pinked about the jowls and glanced furtively at the two dozen pairs of eyes fixed on him. "Jeez, don't get violent! I got a reason. I'm double-parked out front. I don't have time to wait in line."

I turned to the line. "He's double-parked. He doesn't have time to wait like the rest of us.." And I turned back to the clerk. "I'm next in line," I said. "I want service now. Before this jerk."

The clerk was trying to blend with the exciting decor. He was turning puce. From the line came a couple of nasty comments. Mr. Big looked it over and fled. I got my package mailed and the clerk looked embarrassed. He was trying to say, "what could I do?"

I felt a bit sorry for him (and once the adrenalin reaction that had propelled me was past, I was suddenly afflicted with ten wobbly knees). But the correct answer was provided by the clerk at the Culver City station. He maintained order; he threatened to refer it upward. And it was done smoothly, without affront but with clear and meaningful reference to authority. I like my local postal station; I think I want to meet the Postmaster and congratulate him.

Good zine, yasss, but not your usual standard. Come on back in full force for 100....

CLOSE TO THE BORDERLINE (Nicki L.) \* While I'll agree that fandom has a large share of people who are shy or ill at ease around strangers, I don't think we are a hobby group containing people who can't cope with people relationships. There's a more intense "people relationship" between fans than there is between members of other hobby groups I've seen. One of the foci of fandom is its people. I tend to think of the typical fan as not very aggressive in new situations, however, and perhaps a bit introverted. But the latter is hardly unusual in a microcosm that draws its primary membership from avid readers.

From your comments on the Chattacon weekend I presume more questionable fan politics were underway. Seems to be a hotbed of such in that area. It's always a shame when politics get involved with a hobby, for it means real trouble and pain is on the way. I suppose the root of politics is power-hunger, and there'll always be people around who are hard-up enough for such to try to take it in a hobby group. At least I've never seen a hobby group free of it completely -- though I've seen groups that had very little. Now that Southern fandom is as large as it is, it sure seems to have plenty of room for all sorts.

RANK MINAC (Dick L.) \* Indeed, one need not marry a fan to later find oneself married to a fan. People do change. I started out married to a fan, for example, and a few years later discovered that I wasn't really. It wasn't so much a case of fandom itself fading, as of Other Fandoms proving stronger. We're really all (or at least the proverbial vast majority) involved in Other Fandoms in parallel. I certainly am. And it may happen that when demands on time come, the Other Fandoms offer more return in whatever currency is most valuable to the individual. But the time I woke up fandom and I were both on the negative side of the balance sheet. My feelings are that there is no genuine "fannish nature". There are those for whom fandom is a good, sustaining hobby and those for whom it is not. Lots of people move



into and out of fandom. Most are "fannish material". The ones who stick, I think, are the ones who make friendships inside the microcosm -- but geographically dispersed. Else the stickers are those who base nearly their entire social life inside fandom. (And these are usually the political ones.) Most of the fans I know best (because I've wanted to know them best) have an active social life outside of the microcosm, though they value their fannish friends as fans -- sharers of a madness. Fandom is a minor component in my current social life (though there have been times in the past, and may again be in the future, when it was dominant). I think the issue of fannishness is in fact irrelevant. I further think you're implying this in your comments.

Yes, I'll agree that Pitt was the strongest of the college teams this past season, Georgia's #1 ranking notwithstanding. My brother and I came to the same conclusion, before the bowl games, one delightful drunken evening in December. Pitt failed to obtain optimum press, did trash dismally against Florida State, and had no High Staging bowl game -- but they played the best overall ball of any club. This last was a hard season to evaluate. It was freaky, at best. Were I voting, I'd be forced to give it to Georgia on record. Fair is fair. But I personally think Pitt had the best team. (Though '8ama was jelling fast and by the Bowl Day was probably the best team in the nation. But they jelled too late to get my honest nod.)

As I understand it, copyright violation involves unauthorized reproduction of material when such reproduction is not intended for private use of a licensee (one who has previously purchased said material). Whereas video piracy is unauthorized reproduction of copyrighted material with intent to profit thereby. Perhaps Meade, our legal beagle and bar supporter, can clarify.

"Massive contributions" aren't required for full participation in SFPA. It suffices to do a near-complete set of MC's with some thought in each (or most) and a care about layout and presentation. Your short stuff is very good. Why not try the next significant step one day and see what happens. This is a marvelous apa for return.

THE SPHERE (Markstein) \* Tonight I tried cooking potatoe pancakes for the second consecutive evening. There must be something wrong with my technique. First night I used olive oil and got it Hot. The pancakes tasted great (I added sour cream, an egg, and various spices to the mix). But today the olive oil moved through my gastrointestinal system with impressive speed.... So tonight I tried cooking them in butter. (Yes, I did divide the batter into two portions, to forestall questions as to Why.) The resultant product had not the crispy neatness of last night. I had to cook them on lower heat -- the butter started browning at my original setting. So what's wrong? The pancakes still taste great. (I'll wait until tomorrow to comment on their Purgative effects...) But they don't have the superb textural qualities of last nite's batch. Any potatoe pancake chefs in SFPA care to share their wisdom??? (Boy, was I glad to read that anything but controversy interests you, Don. I figure that potatoe pancakes can't be controversial...)

By the way, thanks for the typesetting. You will notice the headings in the OE symposium, I'm sure. ## As for pornography with the superhero set being dull; I'm sure it is. There were lots of pornographers in his day, but Henry Miller didn't make his fortune because all pornography was alike. I have this fancy to do some real satire in the field, but despite Curse of Fanac don't think it appropriate to run it through SFPA. (If I ever get the time, anyhoo.) Suggestions, maestro?



MONKEYS AND CUCUMBERS (Morrissey) \* An interesting sidelight to me in the light of Reagan's retrenchment on federal spending (save in the military arm) is invoked by your comment on 9-digit zip codes. It set me thinking that technical innovation is rarely the province of government, and I set me thinking about space travel and the recent emotional pleas in this apa (among others) that spacetravel should be a government-sponsored program. (Oh, private funding was invited too but the basic idea seemed to be a return to immediate post-Sputnick NASA funding levels). There's a Heinlein story called "The Man Who Sold the Moon." It was written before Heinlien thought that words from his pen were in themselves more significant than the thoughts contained therein. (Hi, Rusty!) That story makes a point -- that a commercial route to the moon is a viable one. The idea grows in significance the longer I think of it. Commercial companies went for satellites in a big way once the economic advantages of telecommunications were revealed. Government expeditions will plant the bragging flag and withdraw; commercial expeditions will squeeze for profit and endure -- colonize.

Rich, as regards the One-Shot puzzle, the concept of necessary-but-not-sufficient comes into play. The missing clue eliminated any single undisputed solution; it introduced multiple possibilities as to solution. However, none of the possibilities are conclusive solutions. When you point out the multiple possible solutions you are not introducing alternative answers; you are reiterating what Dick Lynch has already noted: that there was no conclusive solution. My apologies are already proffered.

Boy, do the advantages of not doing a mammoth stapling job, via the Apa L idea, weigh heavy. The idea is discussed in the OE Symposium elsewhere in this issue. But I really dislike the "one bundle" idea when it involves special stapling of all zines together. The individuality which is lost is too much. See Don's points in the Symposium.

SLIP SLIDIN' AWAY (Raub) \* Sorry to hear of your broken leg, but I suppose some people will go to any length to try to justify minac. Here's wishing you rapid recovery and hope the cast came off without much trouble. See ya' in 100.

PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE (Campbell) \* You did get wound up about my review of ATLAS CHUGGED, didn't you? Well, I got the same way when reading the book. It frustrated me to see that Rand had real truth inside her arguments, but was so damn concerned with proving them Perfect As Was that she destroyed much of her credibility. Working through your response, I come to the part about how one does create the worker/owner cooperation inside a business. I went lightly on that topic in the Rand review, not only because it didn't belong inside the review as other than a conceptual reference, but also because the topic is extremely complex -- there are lots of "solutions" but few that work in more than a few unique situations. But let me try to better articulate some of my thoughts on the subject.

First, let me propose that workers be paid in four types of compensation. "Fringe benefits" are important -- group insurance, vacation, etc. Almost all companies have fringe benefits to some degree or another and the trend has been to increase such benefits. Whether it will continue in our current economic climate is another question. The point is, it is an established means and a desirable one.



Direct monetary compensation of a baseline work period is the most prevalent way of compensating workers. Whether by "salary" (for a "work week") or by wages (hourly), the typical worker has an expectation of carrying home so much per pay period. This arrangement promotes stability: we budget expenses against our expected income. The baseline compensation idea is a good one for this reason; it gives us insight into future resource availability.

There is another type of monetary payment related to productivity. Most salesmen are on commission: what they get (in large measure -- most sales positions have a small base salary as well) is related to how much they sell. Likewise, the bonus accorded a lot of management and key line people is based on corporate (or divisional) profit. How much is a measure of how much. The profit sharing plans extend this idea to all employees.

What is wrong with this idea is not only manipulation, as you point out, but also that the broader the participation the less related any individual's actions are to the overall result. Two things occur. The production line worker sees little reason why he or she should bust their individual ass -- not only are they a tiny tiny cog but their piece of pie will be tiny too. And good old Henry over there, he's sitting on his butt all day and he'll get just as much. (If he doesn't get sacked first -- but, oh yes, the union will protect him.)

Secondly, with the steep gradients that exist in salary structure there is a de facto sharing of profits before the public profits are ever computed. This is evident to all. (Or at least to those with even dim wits who chose to think about it.) Once again, those at the bottom of the heap are discouraged.

If we could tie this extra compensation to individual performance, however, and determine a satisfactory set of measurements upon which to base awards, the efforts (effective efforts, that is) of each worker would determine what measure of extra compensation would be awarded. It's not hard to do this measurement in a "piece goods" environment, nor is it terribly difficult to measure cost center expenditures versus production. But there are many areas where measurement enters the subjective realms. Product development is one such. (I know...)

Besides this measurement problem, the unions hate such ideas. They've fought them on practically every front. Highly productive people are called "curve busters" and informed in many ways to slack off. The unions want as many people as possible involved in production. Their income is based on the size of their membership, and any measure of efficiency (which then benefits all consumers in lowered prices -- or the workers in such a reward arrangement by higher bonuses) is opposed because it reduces the union's real income. Not to get caught up in this idea, but America should carefully examine how the incentives for all of its organizations are structured.

However (back at the ranch), we can see that if such measurement could be found and fairly applied, the companies themselves would prosper, the productive workers would prosper, and the economy itself would progressively become more healthy.

To fit such a program into our structures the base rates must be lowered -- and most drastically at the highest-paid end. That is, a large enough share of the corporation's revenue must be involved in this type of a plan to allow for significant importance to be attached to performance. And the share must also be large enough, and sufficiently graduated, to include



the average adequate worker in the reward distribution. Also, such distribution must be more frequent than annual -- I suggest quarterly. Otherwise, the end is too far from daily sight and evaluation, by spanning such a long time period, becomes unnecessarily complex and error-prone.

Now, there is a fourth type of compensation that I would propose: ownership. If there were provision, in any year that a corporation increases in an earnings per share sense, to dilute somewhat the common stock by issuing new shares to those employees who had performed well above average, then the vesting of ownership would be more than a mere reward -- it would bond those employees more tightly to the corporation. (I realize that all the subjective evaluation problems again rear their ugly heads, but the thrust here is too important to worry about those problems.)

There are some tremendous advantages inherent in this simple idea. One is that a successful corporation would gradually shift its ownership toward the very people who had been driving it toward success. This would increase the influence of the successful participants. A kind of feedback to enhance the continued chances of good decisions, involvement, thought and concern. A second aspect is the "bonding" phenomenon already mentioned. A third is that this type of compensation is in reality financed from the outside -- that is, it will be the market value of the stock that converts to monetary reward.

There are dangers. The foremost is the tricky nature of dilution. If the stock issue is too large, the dilution will damage the market value disproportionately. (Prices reflect turnover of a tiny fraction of a corporation's outstanding stock.) A conservative approach to issuance would be required -- thus limiting the scope of the program to those on the very top part of the curve. But, as all are involved in the sharing of true profits, this shouldn't be a demotivator. More likely the opposite if indexes into salary, etc., aren't included heavily in the stock distribution.

A second real danger lies in decision-making. Running a corporation isn't easy. Sometimes the obvious or popular avenues are disastrous. If the influx of new owners disturbs the top-level management (which, if not successful itself, would not be seeing new ownership), then the whole structure could sag.

But enough dull rambling. These are some ideas I have on correcting the motivational problems in the owner/worker relationship by restructuring the reward system and extending it to include ownership. Kick them around if you like. It's an interesting topic to me.

CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE (Brown) \* They ran a local TV feature on the "new celibacy" and I watched part of it while fixing dinner. There seem to be a number of ideas encompassed in the broad label that's been affixed. One thought is to simply counter the incredible emphasis that American culture puts on sex, the idea being to promote other relational bonds by deemphasizing sex, or even banning it. This concept, like most others that distort normal patterns, is imho a blind counterreaction. I.e., it doesn't solve the problem with understanding but builds a wall -- probably because the persons involved can't handle their problems any other way. The issues surrounding the sex act are too primal and powerful for the practitioner of "new celibacy" to directly cope with. Most of this type (among those interviewed) were young and faddish. Twenty years ago, drugs were the new mass answer.

There were a few people who seemed to really dislike sex.



I suppose there are people who get all their jollies elsewhere and perhaps feel resentful that sex isn't a hot number for them. Those interviewed were outspoken about the damage sex can cause (save as a procreative means alone). Stuff and nonsense, I says. I saw little in the documentary to recommend the "new celibacy", though there are some earnest people involved in the movement. Why, I can only guess.

The kind of "thrillers" you refer to are really exercises in sadism and mental illness. To me, this type of psychotic violence is the real "obscene" material. TV doesn't go as far into the graphic aspect, but shows similar material from time to time. Not to mention a glut of plain vanilla crime and violence. We all cry out in horror and indignation at the wave of crime and senseless murder that seems to be rising in America, but I wonder how many of us seriously consider that watching such is the leading vicarious entertainment of our time -- and the material of entertainment with which the nation fills its emerging minds.

Good to hear that you're getting the feel of SFPA interactions. The solid zine you put into this mlg shows it to be true. Let's see more of the same!

I HATE SURPRISES... (Hickman) \* I've not got the packrat urge like you do, judging from your descriptions of treasure troves, but I've got it enough so that moving has become a distinctly more traumatic experience over the years. I'm thinking of having a gigantic clean-out session once I get past the next couple of months of hyper-activity (on all fronts). The place needs it; I need it. (Mainly, I need space to move about in...)

TRIVIA (Hickman) \* I used to like the Poppy Ott books even better than the Jerry Todd series. The same author (whose name I forget) wrote both, I believe. The Poppy Ott books always had a touch of the bizarre and lots more imagination than the Todd books. There also didn't seem to be as many of them.

Seems to be a trend to require participative imagination less and less in contemporary entertainment. It's related, I think, to the advances in technology we've made. The interactive element can now be supplied externally. Look at the electronic games that are appearing; they are in their infancy now. In ten years we'll see incredible games at relatively low cost. I'm starting to get highly interested in computer games -- the element that fascinates me is simulating intelligence: either as the opposition or as an administrator. Solitaire mastermind is a good example of the latter, or Hangman. And, strangely enough, I think the computer games will be putting imagination back into the entertainment they provide as time passes and techniques are understood and mastered. The computer is a tool of the mind; as such it's capable of leveraging rather than pacifying our imaginations. I look forward to the future in this area.

SAILOR'S KNOT (Tom McGovern) \* Well, you've stumped me with the Dylan quiz this time around. It sounds familiar, but I can't place it. Sounds more like his later work than his earlier, and I'm less familiar with the albums of the past few years. Don't even have them all. \*sigh\* You're going to make me go on a Dylan kick again, I can tell. The decline of Dylan interest has, for me, been keyed by my own divergence from his message, especially the "born again" pounding I've been hearing him do on the FM. I like his older stuff -- up through "New Morning".



GUNFIGHTERS (Jennings) \* You paint a terrible picture; I sincerely hope circumstances only seem so depressingly bleak -- that good fortune comes your way in a tide that compensates for the string of tough breaks. ## As for the Ego800 poll, what's so disgraceful and irritating about finishing 4th (against a last year's placement of 5th)? Are you trying to say you feel you should have won, or what? I can understand your consternation in the Sercon category. I feel you held clear sway in that category. I read your comments and startled, for I recalled you as finishing in the top cluster. So I dug out last mailing and found that I was correct. Maybe it's just this winter of discontent speaking. You are a highly respected and valued member of the apa, Bob.

I'm waiting the rains out before starting my walk to work again -- my favorite tool for combating those extra calories; burn them off. The winter has been a tough one here also, but not for incredible cold and frozen pipes. For other reasons. Now the sun is breaking through for marvelous windy days with clean air and tumbling white clouds sailing briskly along. I note that there's no a reasonable measure of daylight left at 6 PM, which is the signal to start hiking. This winter I gained back everything I'd lost last summer. \*sniff\* With the exercise comes, strangely enough, a less demanding hunger. The body gets tuned up, I guess.

There's conservatism in the approach that I recommended by taken to Hearts, but it's conservative in the sense that any sound guide to poker is conservative -- it's cognizent of the odds. Further, I'd not feel comfortable about showing, in a primer, other than the essential sound approaches as the mainstay. I did suggest that these were precepts made to be violated in certain circumstances, but that the player would have to determine those circumstances. And as far as the results of a fundamentally sound approach go, over the years they've been rather good against all styles of competition. I've been playing Hearts for stakes for over 25 years now and if the approach I take weren't winning, believe me I'd change it. But I'm always interested in other ideas. For instance, I'd like your specific thoughts on Hearts strategy. How does one be less conservative? (And win...)

FREDDY THE PIG ONE SHOT (Various) \* I read all the Freddy the Pig books -- several times each -- when I was a youngster. I recently saw a pb edition of one of them in the children's section of a local bookstore. I was disappointed that more weren't available and I've seen zero since. Bob says that Dell is reprinting. When???

STARJAZZER (Hammer-Johnson) \* You should read the novel ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST. Kesey is able to do so much more in the book than they were able to do in the movie. ### Ever read WHAT DO YOU SAY AFTER YOU SAY HELLO? You'll find it in pb in the psych section of many bookstores that keep the mainliners in stock. It deals with scripts, and discusses how the fairy tales of lore are indeed a set of Life Scripts that are played out by many people. Imprinting, maybe. Your natter on the correlation between yourself, your world and the characters in Oz books was a blast. Bern thinks that if we can identify our real scripts we can rewrite them as we please. With great effort yes, but surely.

I hit LotR when I was past the age to identify with Bilbo or Sam. Indeed, my choice was Gandalf the Grey. I picked up a secondary model in Aragorn, and with the passage of years this has perhaps become a more dominant model,



probably because my professional stock-in-trade has been shifting steadily from Wizard to Captain of Men. Not that I've ever surrendered the Wizard state: my technical specialty is The Impossible Project. I supplement that with offhand magic -- games skill, technical confectionaries, concise position papers tying unexpected corners into neat logical knots for inspection. I've felt it important to be a systems architect and quick-logic power as well as an officer. There are too damn many officers without other distinction.

I wonder if Bern considered the blending of disparate roles. I liked the Wizard and studied to become one in certain areas -- not a great number of areas, but considerably more than one. I like the role of Captain when it was thrust upon me, so I nurtured it. So now the Wizard commands his magic and his vision -- but he is not alone. Behind him are his loyal legions. An interesting duality. Shared, perhaps, by one Alonso Quejana, the Don Quixote de la Mancha.

There was probably influence from TRINITY in the Digit. I drink in the style and moves of the better writers I read, from admiration and desire to understand how they do it. This is one marvellous way to learn: examining the works of the successful. As for The Digit itself, I was delighted to hear that it was enjoyed by the ones I most intended it for. If the ABC fans were discussing their roles, I consider myself a success. (Was the plot really hard to follow?) The most enjoyable aspect of fan fiction, for me, is that of personality. It has to be handled for fun. (Although there is a serious vein; it's just seen rarely these days. Alas.) This is a tough assignment for a fanfic writer when he's not met most of the people involved. I still recall some of my grander goofs in this regard. But the conversational flow in SFPA has been superb, and it is to this fortune that the personality match must be attributed. Indeed, I'll probably feel comfortable in tackling the next madness, when it strikes.

Amazed at fandom's potentialities and frustrated by it's limitations? There must be at least a tome concealed beneath that statement. Pray, elucidate. You have, I assure you, a potentially rapt audience. (And, no, "rapt" is not the subjunctive mood of the verb "rape". Close, in some ways, but definitely different. So do it.)

Shadow is a complicated issue indeed. Not Shadow in persona, which is doing quite beautifully, but the question of member interaction and the potential disjoint identity-evolution you cite. Time alone throws the dice. My policy is this: I don't contribute to Shadow because I am yet in SFPA and have no time nor energy for yet another apa. The focus of my activity is SFPA.

However, my policy towards the waitlist has always been to welcome and interact. I will comment on Shadow, in Mel, to whatever extent is allowed by making it the last zine in MC order. To go farther would be to effectively extend my bounds of SFPA responsibility -- copy count and comments -- beyond the point at which I feel comfortable. And so I interact with Shadow as a SFPAN, but as a SFPAN of the sort I believe SFPANs to be: open. The result, I hope, will be a healthy SFPA; good new members arriving as positions open. But the pressures that Paul has applied are an ultimatum of one sort or another. (A) Open SFPA to unlimited membership immediately or lose you waitlist. Or, (B), We are better and will leave.

I happen to believe that neither is true. The situation is one of a healthy symbiosis. The intangibles SFPA provides fuel: Shadow; and Shadow fuels SFPA. It would be an organic mistake to sever the connection. I believe serious thoughts in



this direction are diminishing. Time brings Shadow into SFPA. One of the things that has made SFPA so good over the many years of its life is a limited membership in which the ties survive strongly and serious dilution is not a major threat. Shadow should understand that only a span of mailings separate them from membership. Nobody wants to keep them out. But nobody wants to restructure SFPA either.

(And, hey, I know you understand what I'm saying. No problems. I just took off on your comments in this SJ and let my brain flow. I think the question isn't well understood and thought I'd muddy the water a bit.)

I didn't mean my review of SHIBUMI to be unkind. I thought I was positive about aspects of the book. But when I put on my Reviewer's Cap I try to get down to where the rubber meets the road. (So I'll have a good year...) ((Or is it a fire stone?)) ((( Bridge stone???))) (((F. it))) Talking in calibrated terms of judgement, as opposed to unbounded superlatives or rote negatives, makes my reviews less accessible than those of the typical fan reviewer. But the reviews are still subjective. They represent my opinions. I just try to (A) say why, (B) say what the why was about, (C) offer a relational reference of kind, and (D) discuss the standards of evaluation. And, oh yes: (E) I don't always succeed.

The past is terribly hard to break from. The magnetism it exerts is compounded of habit, old knowledge, old paths, ...comfort in familiarity. I think these are real values, though they rarely appear on our conscious mental balance sheets. I got a call from Stvn Crlbrg earlier this Sunday. He's headed back to Houston. No Ellay dream. I was slow in speech (Stven must think me an idiot), but I was reviewing so many things long unthought to see if they had application. It would have been a meaningful addition to the goodfens of this area had Stven decided to stay. But I could think of nothing I couldn't refute adequately with a moment's thought.

The danger of the past lies in that old saw, "Those who can't remember history are condemned to repeat it." (That's not an accurate quote, but close enough.) As one whose personal track record at repeating history is impressive, I will attest to the truth of this maxim. The past is a record of what happened. The future is a hope for what may happen. The present mediates. Eventually, the present catches on.

Superzine like the old SJ's. Good to see your fanac bounce back so positively and here are hopes and wishes that the rest of your life is going so well. Don't be depressive -- be impressive. You have such fine talents along that line.

KIPPLE (Ryder) \* There's a syndrome all too often succumbed to by successful (commercial) writers. It's called "laziness". The visible symptoms are sloth in plotting and stylistic embellishments meant for the reader. The writer begins to lose insight, or rehaps interest, in why his earlier books were considered valuable by enough folks to make him a success. Instead, he meanders, abandoning art for a kind of mental masturbation. This is sometimes called ~~fanaticism~~ senility.

TALISMAN (Biggers) \* If Reagan can truly reverse the secondary position of America in world affairs it will take time. Not that we aren't Rich and Powerful. Of course we are; we give away billions every year to prove how Rich and Powerful we are. Or perhaps you didn't mean that kind of influence. Are you one of those neo-Nazi right-wingers who believes that if somebody comes up and pisses in your soup the thing to do is knock his teeth in? Oh, heavens! Everybody knows the correct humanitarian thing



to do is recognize that this person/nation has an aggression problem (poor dear) for which Society/the American Nation is to blame. Therefore, smile at the poor unfortunate and remark as how the soup tastes so much better after that "something special" he added. Then ask if he'd like an unsecured loan of 450 billion dollars to build submarines and ICBM's with. Poor fellow needs some self-assurance.

If you're one of those neo-Nazis and just stand up and smash in the teeth of people who piss in your soup, you'll be sorry. Before long people will catch on to your anti-harmony stance and quit pissing in your soup. Just wait and see how that feels! There'll be nobody to loan monet to and have not expect a return of some kind. You'll have to be satisfied with Might, Majesty, Power and Dominion. (And then how can we expect other nations to respect us?) I hope you're not one of them Fascists....

The waitlist may have surpassed its parent in size, but, as Gandalf observed before the army of the West marched forth to the Gates of Mordor: "There are names among us that are worth more than a thousand mail-clad knights apiece." Watch our dust in 100. The army of SFPA is small in number but mighty in action.

Errr.. punk is dead. Maybe in Atlanta. ### On the subject of outside guests at Southern cons, if I may. That's cool. All I ask is that they not be billed as Southerners if they ain't. Just as SFPA has a provision for non-Southern members to promote a more cosmopolitan viewpoint within the apa, so do Southern cons benefit from outside GoHs and viewpoints. But such should not be the rule. ### BYODCOMZ.

MARCHING MARTIAN MERKINS (Moudry) \* Welcome to the ranks of telecomm cliff-hangers. Thee and me and.. who else? 'Tis very true that I've had my ups and downs, activity-wise. I doubt if SFPA's had another member swing so widely between the two extremes. Nothing wrong with that -- 'twas honest turmoil and I never shorted SFPA disproportionately. No doubt another such time of minac for me will come before long. When it does, I hope the telephone lines are open.... (Guy?)

FRACTIONAL SOUTHERNER (.GHLIII) \* Awlrite... I'd have done the same...

FLAMBEAU DE LA PETIT ROCHE (Caruthers) \* Hello, doll. I was serious about the pepper jass. Pepper is good stuff: kills strange buggies in yo' innards. Why do you think the Mexicans chow down on Jalapenas? I'm strung out on The Band now (doing golden oldies) and the pepper angle holds up well. I've been considering starting a Pepper of the Month Club. Tremendous market potential, though the public is woefully undereducated today. I envision a TV campaign. Gorgeous redhead comes on camera (disclaimer) and touts the virtues of pepper. She's wearing a bikini. "Pepper helps sunburn", she says and rubs a pepper mixture tenderly on those areas that the sun could reach... "Pepper helps toughen unexposed skin before sunbathing," she says and removes the upper garment in order to demonstrate her point. It's nipple and tuck with the censors up to this point. Then the gorgeous redhead says that, "Pepper is highly stimulating," and starts to demonstrate this point. At which time the advertisement ends it regularly scheduled run. We sell billions of bucks worth of pepper, but American prudery is outraged and we must apologize. So some innocent young girl comes on camera (disclaimer) and avows that no salacious content was ever implied. I envision Brooke Shield for this part...

A generalized title: "N-Flame"??(?)



FRAGMENTS TO SHADOW (not much time left; sorry friends)

---@ Ward Batty: you were a music major and don't appreciate poetry? Sir, poetry is the music of words. They grew up together, poetry and music. (I don't claim that much of what masquerades today as "poetry" really is. Some years back the Bastards Criticizing tried to redefine poetry as "flights of the manic depressive mind". Ever since then, we've suffered.) But real poetry is Fine Stuff. Read, aloud, Byron, Auden, Housman, Rilke, Yeats, Poe or Tennyson. ---@ Liz Stewart: If you like magicians you should have a chance to go to The Magic Castle in Hollywood. It's a private club formed by magicians, but since the founding days has looked to the outside for financing. The Castle now accepts outside memberships (courtesy; for weekdays and non-special weekends). The general public now courses through the Castle, bringing lovely green. As I've a friend who is a member, I've been there a few times. Lovely joint. You go downstairs for a drink and the bartender does close-up stuff for you. Magic. The bartenders are (mostly) magicians-in-training. Out of towners in the art, looking to sustain themselves for a time in Ellay. They're mostly good sleight-of-hand people. Incredible to watch. As are the regular shows and the interaction amongst the clientele. One nite I was sitting at the bar and a fellow noticed I was smoking Gitanes (French cigarettes). "May I solicit one?," he asked. "I've not had a Gitane in years." So I gave him a Gitane and he lit it up. Then proceeded to make it jump thru hoops -- vanishing, reappearing out of ears and pockets still lit. Later, the bartender told me he was a charter Castle member. Great place. ---@ IAN RALPH: RHS is once again live in Ellay. Reviews are so-so, treating it as a piece of lunacy that tries hard but doesn't quite make the cut. As I've heard so much about RHPS, I think that an expedition to RHS might be worth the speculative capital. Question: is there a theme? Or is it all spectacle? (If it's just spectacle, I'd rather see EVITA...) ---@ JIM COBB: Burritos are super; especially here in California. The only better lunch-truck food is the stock of gorditos. But if I remember B'ham, it must be hard to find a gordito there. Even on the lunch truck at Rexon, all the gorditos are usually gone between breakfast and noon. Gwell. ---@ TOM McGOVERN: Great cover. ### I see you don't care for the "New Dylan" much more than I do. (By the way, I found a version of that line you challenged with in an old Zimmerman number from 1954. Early stuff, indeed. Now I'm interested to find where it popped up later.) And if Dylan does go back to his original call, with original material again, I may resume the following. ---@ SANDY PARIS: Was that you in Yellow Coveralls on the cover of a recent OUI? ### These references to RHPS, cumulative, produce a counterreaction in me. Ever seen The Fantasticks? Ever heard of it? You and Bob, if opportunity presents, should go. I get the distinct feeling that the temporal isolation I sometimes feel acutely isn't theme nor meaning, but merely mode of presentation and jiggel-bell attachment. People never change at heart. But fashion does. ---@ Dave Powell: The restaurant biz is a tough one, at least out here. Most new ventures go under within a year. The profit margin is too slim for amateurs unless they do all the scut-work themselves. Which makes it tough to expand. ---@ NANCY COLLINS: Gee, I hate to nitpick, but double spacing isn't Cool. (Is "Cool" current these days? I doubt. It was all the rage in 1939 when I graduated from post graduate school. Shows how times change.) Good luck as Shadow Leader. ---@ DAVE RYAN: If the media is impeaching marriage, I've not really noticed it. The impeachments I've seen were from columnists, not the Media in Authority. The media itself seems to be conversative with regard to this institution. ---@ Paul Flores: Question: if SFPA members did their MC's to Shadow as extras and mailed them to you, would that be a way to increase inter-activity. I'm not going to run run that many extra copies of Mel, but I'm flexible....



AN EXAMINATION OF THE PSYCHOSEXUAL  
SOCIETAL IMPLICATIONS OF DUCKS LACKING TROUSERS

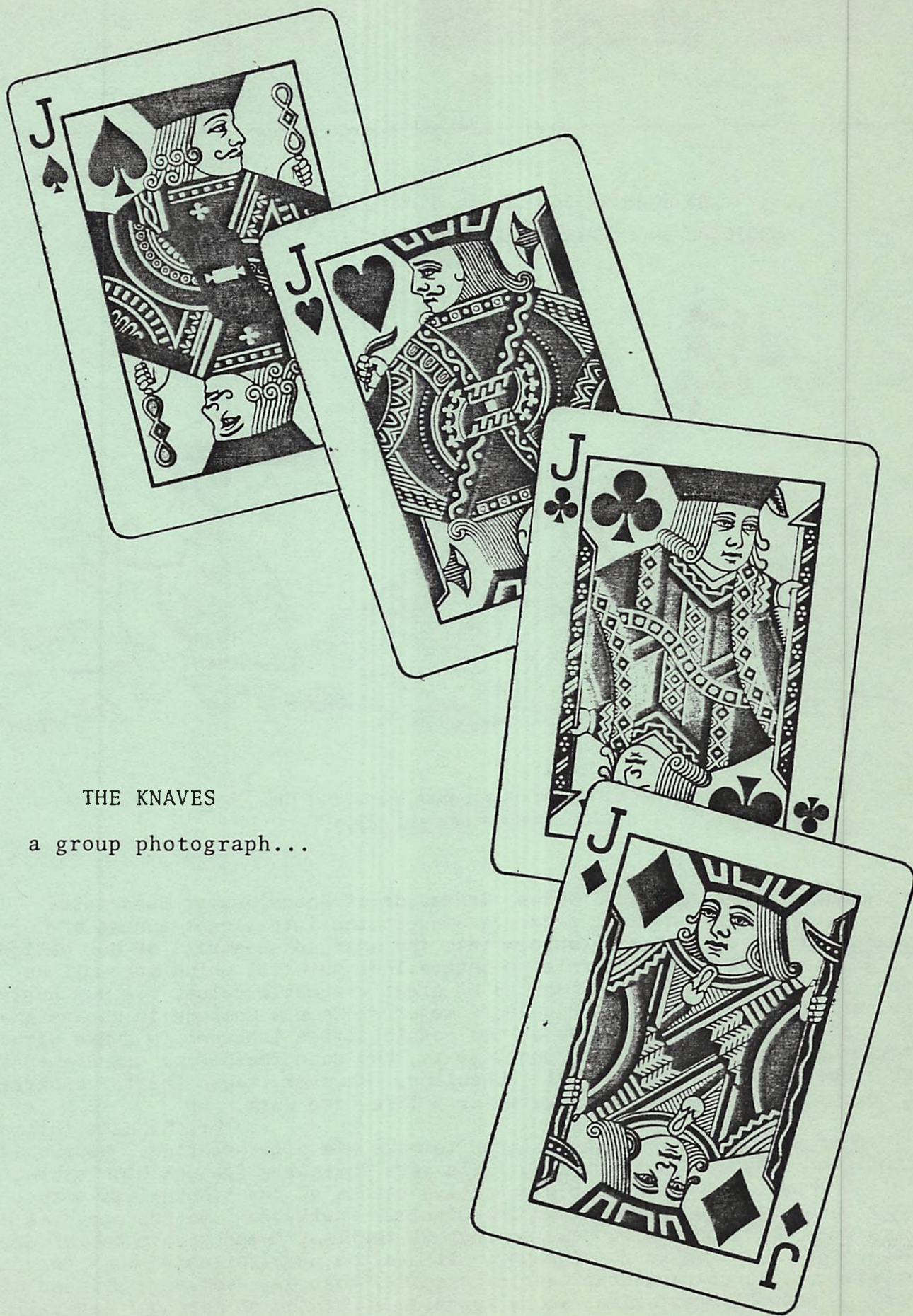


*"It's true I'm only a duck, Leda, but I'm  
sure I could make you happy."*

The studies of Dr. Erhard Grabass, Professor of Scatology at Wassamatta University, deserve a wider exposure amongst the intelligent subset of our population. Dr. Grabass' probings into the charged substrata of our national folklore have produced exciting theoretical material which may well be used to identify Freudian offshoots of great pragmatic value. It was during his early days as an Animal Husbandry major at Cowpat College in Kansas that Dr. Grabass first became aware of the possibilities inherent in ducks without trousers. Eventually he was caught at it, and soon thereafter transferred to Berkeley, where he completed his schooling. However, those initial experiences at Cowpat were to become the basis for a life-long work.

Dr. Grabass noticed a form of popular literature designed to make his interest rise. Masquerading as children's fare, these enticing tails were obviously fraught with secret significance. From the clear provocative stance of the trouserless ducks, their downy bottoms thrust aloft in salacious invitation, to the pederast uncle who treats his innocent nephews to unusual thrills, these "comic books" were undoubtedly animalistic pornography. It was the penetration of this form of perversion into conventional American society that Dr. Grabass addressed himself. A careful statistical study revealed a catalog of personal habits in-





THE KNAVES  
a group photograph...



In the March 1974 issue of Melikaphkhaz, number 41, appeared a piece of faan fiction titled "Smoke". The story introduced an alternate universe of special fondness for me, for it took as a launching point my entry into Southern fandom and from there departed tangetially from the reality which came to pass. In "Smoke" I envisioned the universe of the Knaves, where all went well for the crew of fannish Hearts players that were based in Atlanta during the mid-sixties.

In March 1974 SFPA was issuing its 58th mailing. It was a boom period for the apa and enthusiasm was extraordinarily high. I was highly active again also. It was this well of enthusiasm that prompted me to write "Smoke". Perhaps it was also a sensing that times would change again, soon, and that if I wanted to reach back to SFPA's first great boom period to make a tribute, it should be addressed to the current 1974 enthusiasm. As the best audience, of course.

There was no plan for the story in my head when I sat down to the typer. For months I'd had thoughts of those good days in Atlanta and how much things had changed since then. I wanted to recapture the good part of the past in a story. So I began from the beginning, casting it in the format of a fanhistory article. With astonishing rapidity, the story began to write itself. I watched the typerwriter to see what would happen next. The phenomenon made me realize that I wasn't really writing fiction -- in some alternate universe, this was what had happened. A crossing of the worlds was occurring, and the Lon Atkins of that Knaves' universe was doing the typing. The Lon Atkins of this world was merely observing.

In that story the Knaves were born. As the reprint starts overleaf, I'll not bother with describing the genesis. A few comments will suffice. Perhaps a lot of current SFPA has never heard of Lee Jacobs, but he was a Fan Presence in his day. Lee died shortly after leaving Atlanta to return to his native California. It was a blow to us all. In "Smoke" I undertook to keep him alive. For me, it was the only way to tell the story. Billy Pettit had essentially gafiated by then, but I had to drag him kicking and screaming back into the fannish mainstream also. In spirit, that is. Hank Reinhardt most of you know.

In September of 1974 the follow-on piece appeared: RED AS FLAME. I've always regarded RAF as the best contribution I've ever made to SFPA ingroup delight. It was my most ambitious fan fiction undertaking, blending a parody of Travis McGee into the universe of the Knaves and featuring practically every member of SFPA (at the time) in a participative role.

It was in RAF that Hutch McAlan made his first appearance. The tough and savy Florida beach bum was acknowledgement of the tremendous influence Alan Hutchinson was exerting in SFPA. By pitting our new champion against the wiley and powerful Hank, I tried to connect the old world of mid-sixties SFPA with the evolving world of SFPA in the mid-seventies.

RED AS FLAME was well accepted. The group chortled and whooped (and George Inzer complained about his role). RAF seemed to have caught us in candid pose. When my plans for SFPA 100 began, there was no way I could see to avoid reprinting it.

-Lon



# SMOKE

Don Markstein asked me to make some notes about the Atlanta years of SFPA to help him out with the history of the apa he plans for the upcoming fiftieth mailing. I hope Don doesn't think I'm stealing his thunder if I turn those notes into a nostalgic article -- he'll be the (relatively) impartial historian that an old'n'tired fan like myself can't muster the youthful energy to be. Let me tell my side of the story and Don can merge it with other accounts and publish the OEfficial version. Now that Billy, LeeJ, and Hank have all left the South, I guess I'm the one to straighten out all the various tales that float around. After all, I was OE for four terms, chaired the Atlanta Worldcon in '71, and was the Jack of Diamonds when the Knaves were riding high.

Late in '65 I decided to pull out of academia and find a real job in the real world -- I'd been a student too long. I went south over the Christmas holidays and looked into job openings. I wanted to locate in Atlanta, but without job experience I didn't know what I could find. I had a connection into Brown Engineering in Huntsville and figured that wasn't bad either -- Wally Weber was there and so was Billy Pettit (though he was moving to Atlanta soon). The only shot at Atlanta looked to be Martin-Marietta, but they wanted scientific programmers and I had loads of math but no computer.

Sitting down to type a resume I was torn. I knew a fellow at Chapel Hill who wrote Fortran programs for the University computer. He could teach me what to do in the month I had left there. At the last moment I added a comment that I'd done a little Fortran work while in school, then bought a basic text and started learning.

At the same time I was visiting around the South I got started on the apa political trail. Larry Montgomery and I were driving to Atlanta for a gettogether with the local fen. Larry was talking about his forthcoming campaign for OE and moaning about his poor chances. Somehow we decided that I could win, as a vigorous new face. I was dubious, but the idea was well-liked in Atlanta and a campaign to bring the SFPA OEship back to the South was mounted.

After my January exams I was back in Atlanta for an interview with Martin. An agonizing week passed before I received an offer to start work immediately as a Programmer Trainee. In frantic haste I searched for an apartment and spent nights



on the Reinhardt living room couch. (I shared it with the cat.)

It was Lee Jacobs who provided the answer. I'd known that Lee worked for Martin-Marietta as a tech writer, so I'd asked him to keep an eye out for places. When he saw that my search was going in vain, he made the offer of sharing a place. Lee rented a duplex in the city of Marietta (no relation to the company). I took him up on it and had my stuff relocated from Chapel Hill to that address. The thought of reading his SAPS and FAPA mailings delighted me. The thought of regularly playing Hearts with Hank rang all my avaricious instincts.

Related to all this was the fact that I was the Chairman of a floating DeepSouthCon. My chances of putting on a successful convention seemed enormously multiplied and before it was over I intended to involve every one of these scoundrels. What that would lead too was unexpected to me, but perfectly predictable to any long-term observer of the fan scene. Lee Jacobs cringed when I made him Hospitality Chairman.

Back to the main narrative. My first party was a great bash. Ten cases of beer were iced in the bathtub. Six fifths with mixers stood like brave but doomed soldiers beside the kitchen sink. The typer was strategically ready on Lee's coffee table. And -- ahem -- a card table longed for sportsmen.....

They came. From Atlanta: Hank the Barbarian, Gerald "Pro" Page, Jerry Burge, Jeff Jones, George Puckett, & Mike McSomething with his black gloves. From Huntspatch: Billy "the Kid" Pettit and Wally Waste-basket Weber. From Anniston: Larry Montgomery. Such a company of the great. Lots of boozing and puns. A one-shot better forgotten. The very first of the great Atlanta Hearts games.

After the neofen had been cleaned out properly the stakes went up to a dime a point. It was Hank, I think, who suggested it. We were all winners then by a few bucks so it seemed a good idea. In the game were Hank, LeeJ, Billy, and of course me. Play was suddenly fierce. I watched LeeJ reveal his phenomenal card sense and snag Hank neatly on a couple of attempted moonshots. Billy was struggling just to stay even. I hung in conservatively at first, but before it was over I pushed on lucked out on a 'shot. Hank seemed to get wilder the deeper in debt he got. Sheer bravado and courage was his weapon, but skill cut him down time and again. When dawn peeked in through the windows we called it quits. Hank was out almost a hundred bucks. Billy only four. Lee and I were about even as winners. We took paper on Hank.

RALLY! was taking shape about now. A lot of my time was going into organizing the zine with Al Andrews. We were shooting for April to launch the first issue. My campaign for OE of SFPA was also taking fire. I forgot about Hearts until one evening Hank called. He wanted a first-rate game. "Before Lee runs for Europe," was the way Hank put it. The same four convened at Hank's place that Friday.

Some discussion went down concerning the stakes. Hank wanted to play for a buck a point. Billy was nervous but agreeable. "I've been taking it easy on you guys, but these are the hands of a professional gambler," he said, holding up a couple of mildly overweight paws. LeeJ was calm and opposed. I didn't like the idea of those stakes with friends. Hank was adamant. I guess Lee and I were thinking of those \$50 IOU's when we agreed to play. Billy was made of money.



One of the strangest nights of my life was unfolding. I know a lot of versions of what happened are out but none of them are even close to the truth. Well, some more than others. Hank shot the moon on the third deal and it seemed to set him up. The banter got a bit harsh underneath the banter-surface. The card-play was hard as nails. I glanced at LeeJ and saw him serious -- an unusual condition. Hank had quick-stepped to an early and large lead and was rubbing it in. My \$50 paper on him had evaporated. With Hank at -23 and us others all over 30 the play changed.

Soft like velvet the change was. Small talk died. Slowly Hank began to climb towards us. The easy slap of cards on the table was the only sound other than the explosive hiss of beer cans being opened. Hank moved out front. LeeJ shot the moon. I followed.

I still recall the score of that first game: Hank 106, Billy 54, Lon 37, Lee 35. The next three games blur in memory. We opened up some veins of humor now and then, sure, but the tension was apparent as well in the dead silence during the play of most hands. Even the cards seemed to have turned against Hank. He was being slaughtered. Billy was hanging even -- what he owed LeeJ and me, Hank owed him.

After the fourth game we broke for food. There was an all-night Toddler House over on the highway. Hank was brooding. LeeJ suggested that we admit the stakes had really been for pennies and call it quits. That looked to be the way out, but Hank wouldn't hear of it. "I'm going to beat you bastards fair and square," he said in his best teddy-bear manner. Five games later, with the sun beginning to peak in the windows, Hank was out \$2115 on paper.

The long night had taken its toll. Billy was jittery and starved. Hank put down his knife and went into the kitchen to fry some eggs. He was calling for another game at \$20 a point and none of us would agree. I looked at Lee and saw that he was gray around the edges. "Let's have breakfast and go, Lee," I said. "Hank will come around when he's slept some. None of this is real."

The words were heard in the kitchen. Hank bounded out with a roar. "You bastards aren't going to win and quit! I'm due for good cards!"

Lee stood up. "Damnit, Hank! Be reason--" His face twisted. The last syllable died as a moan. Lee clutched his chest and fell forward across the table.

Hank almost caught him. He eased Lee onto the floor, shouting at the same time for somebody to call an ambulance. I saw Hank put his ear to Lee's chest, then start massaging it. Somehow the phone got to my hands and I dialed "0". "I'm at 2499 Skyland Drive. Connect me with the nearest emergency hospital!"

The ruckus had awakened Janet. She had time to brew us a pot of coffee before the ambulance arrived. All of us piled into Hank's car and made it to the hospital in jig time. LeeJ had had a heart attack. The doctor assured us that he was in good shape now -- no worries. Of course an EKG would be necessary to analyze the situation, but probably rest and gradually increasing exercise would be the treatment. No more all night card games. The dollar-a-point games were forgotten, the score sheets left at Hank's. Relief was our motif.



Sunday I brought Lee home. He was weak but in good spirits. A bunch of local fen came over in the afternoon to chat. I ran them out about 7:30 and left Lee in bed with a good science fiction book. Me, I went out front and cut a noxious one-shot for SFPA.

Thursday evening Hank appeared, acting mysterious, and shared a six-pak. I could sense he had something up his sleeve and just hoped he wasn't planning to revive the Hearts games. My gut tightened when he got out the score sheets and announced what he owed us. Lee laughed. "Good joke, Hank, but that never happened."

"I pay my debts," Hank grinned wolfishly. Tossing two bundles of bills onto the table, he zipped out the door. My name was on one packet, Lee's on the other. In nothing larger than a twenty there was \$994 in mine and \$1005 in Lee's.

"Omighod!" I said. "What's Hank gone and done now?" Lee just looked thoughtful. "But he doesn't have this kind of money, Lee! He must have robbed a bank or something."

"Stay cool," said Lee. "Hank knows what he's doing. Our only problem is getting him to take the money back. I know how Hank plays Hearts. Stealing beer money from the handicapped is OK, but I'm not going to take the shirt off his back." So I called Janet and extracted a promise that she and Hank would come over Saturday afternoon for beer and chatter.

I'd hardly hung up when the phone rang. It was the billypettit, calling to tell us that he was Atlanta bound and looking for a place to stay until he located a posh luxury apartment. Of course he was welcome to the sofa here. He'd be in Saturday night, after he got the movers squared away that morning. His stuff would be in storage until whenever. Yes, he could use our typer for one-shots.

Events were really converging rapidly. My campaign for OE was going strong, with about half the roster leaning my way. It looked good for an Atlanta OE and DeepSouthCon. Planning for the con was in high gear too. Jerry Page was concocting some wild ideas for the program and the hotels were quite friendly to preliminary probes. More than that, the atmosphere was really getting faaanish.

Saturday arrived and Hank drove up at the wheel of a brand new Caddy convertible. We crogged. Janet explained. "A rich uncle of Hank's that I didn't even know about died and willed Hank the entire fortune. There was a strange clause in the will that Hank tell nobody about it, but you two are friends. It's mainly the rest of the family that Uncle Ebenezer was worried about, but Hank is sharing with them. It's so wonderful."

Lee and I exchanged glances. 'Twas going to be hard to give back the gambling money. Hank was Hank. Nevertheless, we tried several times. Hank was adamant. His feelings were hurt. Honest card debts were to be paid. (They were about the only kind.) Hank would be glad to win the money back at Hearts -- not now, but when LeeJ was recovered. Before we knew it Billy was there, protesting as Hank stuffed money down the front of his shirt. We were all pretty mellow. Billy had a case of beer with him when he arrived, so supplies were at hand. It was inevitable that a one-shot would unfold.



As I rolled the first stencil in I thought about a title. There was Hank, our well-beloved barbarian; there was Billy, boundless of energy; there was Lee, the original Mr. Cool. Here was me, nouveau-master of one-shots. A strange collection. Our Hearts rivalry flashed through my mind and I cut the title -- "Four Knaves." I know that Don plans to reprint that zine for his history, so I won't quote from the text here. I will natter a bit, though, on mellow memories.

"This is the Jack of Diamonds, sharpest of the four, reporting on the formation of a clique which shall rise to dominate Southern fandom and build an empire whose wall of bheer cans will reach to the moon." I didn't know then what I was writing. Guy Lillian, who not long ago extorted one of the few remaining overruns from me, has called the "Four Knaves" (sic) "no less than a Manifesto of fannish destniy..." I tend to think of it as an accident of fate that got four capable people moving towards some common goals.

Lee Jacobs took the typer and read my lines. He laughed, then began to type: "Call me the JACK OF HEARTS..." Hank was next. Lee had already started ole Hank's section: "Death is the JACK OF SPADES..." Billy was left with... "I suppose that makes me the jack of clubs which is ok because I'm going to be busy with a new ASFO...."

Oh, we all indulged in our fannish fantasies. I nattered about a Golden Age for SFPA and a Worldcon in Atlanta. Billy was big on the Worldcon, based on a powerful ASFO. Hank wanted bloodshed and card games and beer and women. Lee put his talent for humor to work and sketched the Four Knaves as the new SMOF, guiding great events from their fan pads. Maybe it does read like a Manifesto.

When we'd cut the sixth stencil and given it up, Billy was caught by the dream. "We can do it," he said. "Here's a toast -- to the Four Knaves and the future!" We all drank deep. It was a dream for me too and in Hank's informal way, for him. And LeeJ -- his wise fannish eyes twinkled with humor and laughed and laughed.....

All drunken evenings turn into fuzzy mornings and people go their way. Lee got stonger swiftly. He took up hiking and more energetic than ever. Billy found a place and began to split his time between collecting and boosting the local group, stretching out recruiting tenacles. I boiled with fannish zealousness. The capper was an enormous trek in April to see the mysterious Joe T. Staton in person. "Lenity", the one-shot spawned by the trip (and my favorite one-shot, by the way) is reprinted by me later in this issue. April was also the month that saw the first issue of RALLY! come out. Al Andrews has passed away, but his spirit has lived through two successive co-editors.

May was the month I learned about my narrow victory in the SFPA OE race. It was also the month we firmed up a hotel for the DSC IV and sent out flyers. Finally, May was the month of the great Hearts battle. The Knaves had been flying high on their own projects. LeeJ had received a clean bill of health from his doctor and we were set to celebrate. The party raged hot. There must have been three dozen people there, including Ned Brooks, who had blown into town on a vacation. Hank got us into another \$1-a-point game & lost his ass as you would guess. The upshot was that we agreed to a \$5 game on Sunday afternoon. Guaranteed no later than 10 PM we'd quit. Well, in a repeat of his earlier disaster Hank dropped \$3700.



Curious how Hank didn't mind us taking IOU's. In the summer that followed we accumulated vast sums in Hank-script. It was just the way the world was turning then. The Four Knaves had become reality. All of us participated in the con, which had a record-breaking attendance of over fifty.

That con was a story in itself, that I won't go into here. Suffice it to say that besides all the regulars at Atlanta gatherings, Joe Staton made it over from Milan, Ned Brooks brought troops, Ron Bounds returned south, Larry Montgomery was there, Bill Bruce flew in, and Dave Hulan came all the way from California to receive the Rebel Award. The con was a real blast. In the absence of a competing bid, Atlanta won again for 1967.

Now the idea of a Worldcon in Atlanta really caught fire. We talked about the possibility and chose 1971 as the magic year. At the Tricon Lee and I had done some probing (despite Lee's vow not to participate in any of the work) and had detected tentative support. Billy, with his penchant for wheeling and dealing, had lined up even more. Now we began to get hip to the realities of campaigning for a Worldcon. It takes lots of energy, time, and money. Bless Hank. Not only was he becoming the figurehead personality for our bid with his outgoing personality and audacious lies, but he paid off another thousand of gambling debt and we threw a classy room party. Years in advance, yes, but you have to start early.

There are some good stories from these months. I recall one particularly rowdy party at Billy's -- the one where persons unknown threw eggs against the windows about midnight. Wally Weber revealed the truth concerning Squink Blogg. Larry Montgomery was pressuring us to do a one-shot for the short lived ALAapa. And Billy played one of the great tricks on Hank. He filled a Coors can with water and gave it to our discriminating barbarian. Hank never noticed. Of course the fact was "accidentally" revealed and we accused Hank of turning beer into water with the laying on of hands. The rest of us mortals had to use a slower process. Billy lived through it too.

The bug in Jerry Page's bonnet was publishing. As the Atlanta organization grew stronger Jerp's dream of a new horror magazine, as grand as the old Weird Tales, emerged into the light of the full moon. Only capital for such a venture was lacking. Jerry himself would be Supreme Editor and Jerry Burge would head up the art section. Pressure from this source would later bear fruit, but not exactly as Jerry envisioned. The Knaves had their own ideas.

Al Andrews and I spent October planning a RALLY! Poll which would be a splendid satirical undertaking. We had a lot of fun picking the categories. Least Coherent Writer, Most Promising Young Fugghead, and the Jacobs Golden Bheercan are a few I remember offhand. The one that was to cause the avalanche, however, was the SuperFish Award I'd planned especially for Hank Reinhardt. I'd added up the "play money" Hank had been using in our Hearts games and found that he owed me \$9880. I understood the joke and wasn't pressing to collect. Just watching Hank lose so beautifully was reward in itself. The point was to jab my good buddy yet again. Did I ever.

I suppose this is a good time to put in the official disclaimer that's been the Knaves' policy since very early. Because of many ramifica-



tions that I won't go into, Hank's prodigious losses are treated as myth. Fun for all, but not real. (Back in Huit #5 Meade Frierson did a humorous write-up about the legal implications of Hank's huge losses and the subsequent rise of the Knaves. Our comment then was "No Comment" and it remains so, but you might be interested in reading what Meade had to say if you want to see what I mean.) So that money Hank provided us with can't be recognized, you see. Now that the record is straight for outside eyes, I'll finish my journey into the past and chronicle the rest of the Atlanta chapter of SFPA.

Hank's dander was up when he got the SuperFish Award, complete with RALLY!'s usual sarcasm. He instigated another evening of Hearts with the stakes \$50-a-point. This was to be his recoup of monies lost, but it turned into Waterloo. What followed was the renowned \$200-a-point game in which Hank ran his total debt to \$75,000. This little item was reported in RALLY! and generally accepted as more of our B.S.

It told on Hank, though. He was moody for a couple of weeks and the rest of the Knaves had to josh him along to get any work done on our Worldcon bid. Then right before Christmas he cheered up suddenly. We were all glad to see Hank regain his perspective, but I had the notion that there was some secret reason at the bottom of his mood swing. What it was, I had no idea.

The 23rd mailing was due in February and I was determined that it would be a giant. As I was now co-editor of Quip -- Len Bailes was gafiating in the west -- the annish of 100 pages would be there (tho a sad thing happened and the Quiver didn't arrive in time). This was taking all my energy and I hardly saw Hank except to twist his arm to make sure he had a zine in. LeeJ was busy on a great piece of fanfiction (Scourge of Georgia) about Hank. Jerry Page was getting the ASFO clubzine together with Billy's help. February came and went like... whoosh! It was March and Billy called the Knaves together.

"If AgaCon is going to get off the ground we've gotta organize! The Disclave is coming up and we need to be there. We have to have a committee! We have to have a chairman! We need buttons and stickers and flyers and full page ads -- no pun intended."

"I don't like AgaCon," I said. "How about AtaCon? Or HanKon? And we are the committee. Besides, we can make Page do the flyers!"

"Be serious. This is serious business."

"With a half-swing of the kinjou," interjected Hank, "I could cleave him down to the sternum. Shall we vote?"

Billy ignored the threat. "I think Lee should be Chairman. He's the only BNF we've got. The only real one."

"Oh, no!" said Lee. "No work for me, remember? Try Hank."

"Does the Chairman get to give all the admiring young femmefans private lessons in fandom?" asked Hank.

"No, he's too busy running the convention to mess around."

"Count me out. I'll be too busy to be Chairman."



"Well, I'm not going to do it," announced Billy. "My hands are full with ASFO and my collection and the club zine."

There was a silence. "Don't look at me!" I said. "I'm a neofan and nobody knows me and nobody would follow me!"

"Like nobody voted for you for SFPA OE," said Lee. So they did it. The bastards drafted me.

April was here and it was time for another Reinhardt production. Those Hearts debts had been forgotten by us, but Hank remembered. That first Friday in April he showed up for a Knaves getogether and proceeded to both swash and buckle. Things were firming up and we had a fair bit of con business to handle. We'd decided to push the DSC V as a preview of our worldcon and were busy trying to lure Northern fen down for the occasion. We then decided that Hank was too full of beans for anything but Hearts, so a sedate \$20 game got underway. Hank was in good form and lost very little (Billy getting tagged).

After the game Hank brought a paper bag in from his car. "What the hell are you doing, Reinhardt?" I asked. He grinned. The bag was upended over the table and money money money spilled over everything. It was a fortune. Thirty seconds of silence were observed.

A cacophony of questions erupted at Hank. To them all he was a bland smiling image. All he would say was that some assets had been liquidated and we were paid off. No more Superfish Awards. We'd all better be careful because -- grin, grin -- barbarians had been known to kill for this kind of money. Bank it quick.

Hank left. The rest of us were thrown into a debate. What to do? The possibility of giving it back to Hank was nil, but where did it come from? This was a fruitless topic, so we drifted into the issue of what to do with it. There was more than \$75,000 there. Fannish empires grew. Our Worldcon assured. A little publishing house. The Atlanta slanshack. No end to it.....

Next morning began very late. I climbed out of the rack, took a leak, opened a coke for breakfast, and got the paper. Even in my numbed condition the headlines smacked me between the eyes. "Ohghodohghod," I moaned and staggered back to Lee's room. To wake him up I made a sound like a Coors can opening.

"Look at this!" I thrust the paper at him and he read: "SWORDSMAN ROBS BRINKS TRUCK FOR QUARTER-MILLION." Lee ("Mr. Cool") Jacobs paled.

I called Billy but nobody answered. Ten minutes later his car squealed up outside and he careened in with a paper flapping wildly. The Knaves minus one caucused. We all knew it was Hank. It had to be. What to do now was even tougher than deciding what to do with the money. Finally we called Hank, not mentioning the Brinks robbery, and told him that an emergency session of the Knaves was in conference. He moaned about being awakened rudely, but agreed to come over in an hour. We spent the time posing moral questions and recounting the cash. Hank would have give himself up, we agreed. He was the Jack of Spades, after all, and the Knaves were tight. We'd visit him in prison. Maybe with good behavior he'd be out on parole for the con (Worldcon, that is).



Hank arrived wearing his red and black flannel shirt. We sat him down, fed him a beer, and showed him the paper. "I admire that man," said Hank. "It took guts to do what he did."

"Yes, Hank, but he did wrong. He should turn himself in and clear his name. That's the right thing to do."

"Why? Try telling that to Conan." We croggled.

"Hank, there's right and wrong."

"I couldn't agree more. Wrong is getting caught." Time for another round of beer. We regrouped our forces.

"Hank, you have to understand. We know.... Take the money back. Make a plea of temporary insanity -- you're a cinch! With good luck you'll be out in time for the Worldcon here. We'll respect you for it."

"Knives!" Hank's upper lip quivered. "Knives!" Then his face changed and he looked, ghoddamhim, like a puppy that had been kicked for no reason. "Just like that you judged me. Without a shred of evidence. How much is the reward? Go ahead, turn in your old friend and have ballistics tests run on all his swords. I've got nothing to hide. Go ahead, turn me in -- I won't do it."

He stopped at the door before he left. "I'll tell you one thing. Whoever did it was a real man." He drove off with the convertible top down, leaving us doubly perplexed.

"He's conning us," said Lee.

"Yeah. But what do we do about it?"

"We talk a lot." That was where we were, left in debate. Hank had us figured perfectly. As long as he refused to admit it, we'd procrastinate. Maybe he was innocent. How could we know? (Except who but Hank was crazy enough to stick up a Brinks truck at swordpoint?) So we were left there in kind of a mental Tantric yoga exercise, hung on the point of climax, without release.

The money was neatly packed into a jetpak labeled "FAPA 103" stacked with dozens of other jetpaks full of fanzines. It's easy to hide stuff in a fan's house. Until some kind of resolution was reached we agreed to leave the cash untouched. There was lots to keep us busy.

Jerry Burge had done a couple of great drawings for our flyers. These, together with buttons Billy had made up, we were trying to distribute at all the regionals within reach. My limited budget was a pain, but I did make it to the Disclave. After all, I was a member of the WSFS. 'Twas a good trip. Ron Bounds was getting pretty enthusiastic about the Atlanta bid and helped me set up a small room party.

In June Billy Pettit flew out to the Midwescon. We all expected fine things of Billy. This was our farthestest penetration west. Sunday about noon the phone rang. Billy had been robbed. ("At swordpoint?" I asked.) Everything he had was gone -- checkbook, wallet, credit cards, etc. All but pocket money. His plane left that evening. I sympathized. Clearly something had to be done.



FAPA 103 provided Billy's salvation. I wired him \$300. It had been the only way to get enough cash on a Sunday. Now that the cherry was broken in a good cause, like saving the billypettit from debtor's prison, FAPA 103 seemed sooooo much more accessible. In the face of Hank's bluff refusal to admit that the money was criminally obtained we all remembered the fannish dreams.

Summer was galloping along and DSC V was looming ahead. Jerry Page had been the real work-horse, as the Knaves were gadding about to other parts of the country. We all pitched in, of course, to make things run smoothly. Rick Norwood has said that this was the first DSC that was a convention, not a getogether for Southern fen. It was largely due to Jerry Page.

With DSC VI going to New Orleans, Jerry had nothing to do but think about what he'd learned getting the program booklet printed. His plan of a horror magazine was sprung on the Knaves. "I've noticed you guys have money to throw around," was the way he put it, hitting with the proposal only a week after we'd returned from NYCon.

The presentation was impeccable. Jerry had dummied up sample pages, done detailed cost breakdowns, examined distribution routes, etc. He wanted his magazine. He talked about his thoughts involving magazine production. Slowly we were convinced that it could be done -- and even turn a small profit. Finally we told Jerry that the Knaves would have to discuss it privately.

"Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" asked Hank.

"Yeah. Not just a horror zine. Something for everybody."

"These things have failed before."

"Not the Knaves -- we've never failed."

"Are you gentlemen serious?" asked LeeJ.

"You bet we are." "Sword'n'sorcery!" "Fanzine reviews!"

"Then the Knaves have to incorporate. We need a legal fiction. The money has to move in slowly. It'll be like a Ballard Chronicle...."

It was. Ten weeks later Knaves, Inc. existed and was funded with \$8,000. Against his will, over bitter protests, Lee Jacobs was Chairman of the Board. Our first official venture was to found a new magazine, Knavery. Jerry Page was Editor-in-Chief. Knavery included, as an independent section, Tales of Terror. We'd promised Jerry that later the ToT might grow into its own magazine (as it did, in 1971). The theme of Knavery was multiple interests. Science fiction. Fandom. Horror. Some music -- jazz and rock and folk. Natter. Black humor. We published on a monthly schedule, with our major distribution within the South. Knavery #1 hit the stands in February, 1968.

I was well into my second term as SFPA OE then. The mailings had been thick ones, filled with ingroup material. It was good material, rich with life. The April issue of Knavery had an article on Hank Reinhardt supported by Staton cartoons. Stuff on Hank and Staton cartoons became regular features. Other SFPA material appeared. We had tapped the great vein of contemporary folk humor.....



This was a glad time. New fannish faces were popping up in the Atlanta area, many of which are with us today as SFPA members. The Knaves invested in property, buying a nice-sized lot that we would resell in 1970 to double our money. The Hearts games continued, Hank losing, but there were no more swordpoint robberies. SFPA was into a true golden age. We were into our second round of regional cons and were now expected to be the best room party hosts going. Support was building fast. The Atlanta clubzine had suffered with the advent of Knavery, but since K was stirring up clouds of egoboo we weren't complaining. Very fannish times, they were.

Suddenly the demand for Knavery soared and we went from a press run of 4,000 to 40,000. The reason was our discovery on the campus. Call it a fad or something, but college kids had discovered the microcosm that Knavery represented and wanted more. We beefed up the fannish section, began to use fanspeak more heavily, and caught the summer lull just in time to keep our perspective. We'd been selling K for a quarter -- breaking even. Commercial bandits that we were, the price went to 30¢. Now we could afford to pay our contributors real money. (Albeit very little real money.)

New Orleans '68 was a real ball. We relaxed in the festive atmosphere (though the con was crowded to the bursting point, attributable to the plugs in Knavery). That was the con that I signed your current OE, Don Markstein, onto the waitlist as a neofan. I know he says he was not a neofan then. I say he was. Down in the bar we discussed bidding strategy for DSC VII, but when push came to shove we retreated in favor of Janie Lamb's tape recording. Nashville it would be.

BayCon was great too. The most interesting thing to emerge for the Knaves was either the alliance with the LACon group (Pelz/Crayne) or the contact we made for distributing Knavery on the west coast. With the end of summer we hoped for a resurgence of interest in K on the campus, and we weren't disappointed. Tying Tolkien material into the magazine was probably the trigger. By December our press run was 110,000. The empire was taking shape.

At last I expanded the SFPA roster to 24. The waitlist was huge. The February 1969 mailing saw Don Markstein enter as a member. The Northern barrier was keeping out scads of fans (and K readers). This spring saw the founding of both RAPA and GLORI. Seems like GALAXY was formed around then too (Stven?) At any rate, the boom was on. SFPA remained the most prestigious apa in the South, and in the eyes of the new barbarian invasion was probably the best apa of them all. It was wonderful, but I was beginning to tire of the OEship despite its ego-boo. Billy Pettit was anxious to succeed me.

June was the month we firmed up the plans for the Atlanta slanshack. Exactly whose idea it was I can't say. We all did so much talking in the early stages that it just evolved. After finding the right zoning we began designing an 80-unit apartment building attached to a ten-story office. The Knaves would have a home. Finance wasn't really that much of a problem in an expanding Atlanta. The photo of us all breaking the first ground -- Billy, Lee, and me with shovels and Hank with a mace -- ran in K.

It all goes so fast from here. Fate accelerates. I've skipped a lot of things in getting to this point in my narrative. I'll skip a lot more from here on out. Most of it has been chronicled before. I guess



my aim was to recapture the genesis as I remember it. The founding of the Knaves, the first motions of the juggernaut -- that's all wrapped in the glossy mythology fandom spins so well. I've wanted to touch on some of the real events that nobody knew about but the Knaves. I've left out ten thousand stories, but they're left for Billy or Lee or Hank. Maybe I'll do a sequel myself.

Things are pretty well known from that November, when the Slanshack officially opened. There were seventeen fans living there by December (and 106 today, I think). A lot of accounts start from that point. We gave the Shack a good play in K. You've all seen the articles.

The Worldcon was rolling our way on silver wheels. A lot of hard work had gone into our bid and now it was paying off. The work continued, of course, but support grew stronger every day. All of us but Billy, who seems permanently attached to CDC, had begun devoting full time to fanning, the business interests of Knaves, Inc., and living the good life. How Billy found the time for all his activities I don't know. He was serving as OE of SFPA (as of August). That left me looking for another fannish outlet, so I revived RALLY! -- idle since Al Andrews' death. My new coeditor was Tom Hestin, a young Atlanta fan of great promise. (How time passes -- Tom's totally gaffed now, in med school at the U of A in B'ham.)

Time marched on, and the focus of Southern fandom, which I'd connected with Atlanta in my egocentric way, broadened perceptibly. Meade Frierson was the sparkplug organizer of the SFC. The New Orleans group took on strong, active characteristics. Tennessee fandom bloomed. So much more. I was kept busy in my role as Fannish Editor of Knavery, Chair of the Atlanta bid, publisher of RALLY!, multiapan, and fan-about-the-country. Some of the good things I remember helping to shape during this period were Joe Staton's arrival on the K staff, the 1970 DSC in Atlanta, and instituting the Hank Award.

Our trip for the big vote at Heicon had some strange repercussions. I suppose you could say that one of the strongest binding factors the Knaves sowed the seeds of our scattering. After the con was over Lee stayed on in Europe for five months. The wanderlust caught up with him again. Yes, we won the Worldcon, beating Boston handily. This isn't the place to go into bidding strategy. I've talked about the hard work and the frequent appearances, but there's lots more and I guess I'll do an article on the behind-the-scenes stuff one day.

Our victory party didn't really take place in the Knaves' suite at the hotel, though that's where we popped the cork on champagne. It happened the next night at a little restaurant in Heidelberg. The rich dark beer of Germany flowed freely. We drank our toasts of victory. Joked our jokes. The fine air of triumph in the night infected us with an urge to talk. It was the old times we chose first, then the times to come. An era was passing.

"I'm buying a Porsche," said LEEJ. "Gonna take it back to the States myself. A Targa. Fine machine."

"Great! When will you pick it up?"

"In about three months. Guess I'm forced to languish in Europe till then. It's a rough life."



We joshed Lee about his rough life. I felt like a cosmic observer, as I watched Billy absorbing the information and putting these facts on a scale in his mind. For a couple of years now Billy had been turning down offers to go to Europe for CDC. Now I was sure he'd accept. Despite the fact that he was independently fixed now, as were we all, he'd stayed tremendously interested in his computer career. The position in Europe was enormously attractive.

Sure enough, Billy relocated to London in November. When Lee returned from the continent in February he paused in Atlanta for about six weeks, then headed for Los Angeles, his own favorite city. That left Hank and I as the only active Knaves in Atlanta. Things were going super smooth though. The ASFO was taking on the work that the Worldcon demanded with volunteer enthusiasm. I was stuck with the Chair's job of organizing, delegating, and negotiating, but I was enjoying it a lot. Hank was a Georgian born and bred, so he was there and active.

Billy and Lee both planned to be back a week in advance of the con, which was good. Billy actually organized a charter flight over, though he didn't take it himself. The AgaCon itself I won't detail here. There's a personal account in Mel #25. A more polished and edited version ran in K. Was a good experience.

The aftermath of the Worldcon was a time of lassitude for me. I took it easy on most fronts. Later in the fall I spent a month in Ellay, enjoying the fan scene there. LeeJ had a fabulous place in the Hollywood hills. It was warm enough to use the pool even in October. Sunshine and lazy days. The poker parties at Larry Niven's place were a delight. I was picking up the California infection.

Meanwhile Hank was catching the travel bug too. He packed the Reinhardt clan and departed for Europe that next spring, for the purpose of buying antique weapons. It was a trip that's still going on. After Europe there was the rest of the world waiting. Of course Hank's official residence is still Atlanta, and he'll be back. When is the question. Maybe two more years?

It left the Jack of Diamonds alone at the helm of Knaves, Inc. Well, the West Coast branch is into investments, property, restaurants, etc. under the able direction of Lee Jacobs, Jack of Hearts. The magazines pretty much run themselves. Jeery Page makes a fine tyrant. Even RALLY! is now being published by Co-editor Don Markstein, who's also just taken over SFPA from me. The great machine is pretty much self-perpetuating. Us old'n'tired fans are just in the way.

So that's it, SFPA. The inside history of the Knaves as recounted in the senile ramblings of an old man. I suppose I wanted to leave this document behind me, because I'm getting wanderlust myself. For years now I've been promising myself a chance to write that novel pent up somewhere inside. Billy's making noises about coming back stateside. He's found himself a wife over there in England. Maybe a palacial Georgian mansion is appealing now. At any rate, things will be in competent hands. A couple of months and I'll be in Paris, trying my hand at fiction. As I leave there are good feelings for everybody who's been a part of the story. Thanks, y'all. Let's join in that traditional toast, known to Southern fen for years:

"Here's to Hank Reinhardt, whose friendship has enriched us all!"



A Big Brazen Book



**RED**

AS

**FLAME**

by

L O N D . M c D A N G L E



RED AS FLAME, a novel, by  
Lon D. McDangle.

A Big Brazen Book --

division of  
Zugzwang  
Publications

Prepared for the

Southern  
Fandom  
Press  
Alliance.

First printing September '74.

The character of "Hank" based on  
a suggestion by Alice Cooper.  
Any resemblance of the characters  
to creatures living or dead is  
ridiculous coincidence.



**F**

OR me it was to have been the perfect end for a hard day of sun bathing on the beach. Back to home for a pitcher of gin fizzes and a porterhouse steak. Afterwards a battle across the chessboard with Meyer.

Home is the "Inside Strait", a 400-foot houseboat moored in St. Petersburg bay, Slip 69F. I won her in a Go Fish game years ago with a Patagonian millionaire when he folded an inside straight straight to my full house. Poor bastard.

Home is a haven, or so I thought until I parked Gentle Ben, my '50 Dodge that I'd rebuilt into a dump truck, at the curb and spotted a wiry dark-haired fellow pacing nervously on the deck of the Strait.

I didn't know him so I approached cautiously, but relaxed so as not to show it. You can't afford to in my business. Ever since that run in with the IRS I'd been leery of strangers.

"Mr. McAlan?!?" he blurted as I stepped on board.

"Call me

Hutch," I said. I don't stand on formality in my business.

"Mr. McAlan

thank goodness! My name is Guy Lillian. Your name has been given to me by G.H. Wells as a man who can help me. He described you as, ah, a specialist in salvage operations. I hope we can reach an understanding. This is a matter of great meaning to me!"

"Slow down, Guy.

I see G.H. may have given you a mistaken impression of what I can do. By the way, how is he?" This last was angled to get an identification sign out of Lillian. If he really was from G.H. I had to know it before our talk went much further.

Lillian was reluctant to be diverted.

He fidgeted and swallowed a sentence before continuing. "He's fine. You must help me! He told me to tell you -- this is really strange. He told me to tell you, 'Plop'."

I chuckled, recalling the Plop caper G.H. and I had been involved in together. Two million dollars in gold at thirty fathoms. That had been a comfortable chunk of my retirement all right! I believe in living now. When the money runs low I work and the rest of the time I live high. The Plop affair had been nice. It was G.H. who'd sent Lillian.

"Mr. McAlan, please listen to my story though it may sound positively weird. You're my last hope. I can't go to the authorities. Nine years I've waited, thinking it was all lost. Now there's hope. I've got to have the paintings back!"

I calm-

ed him down and hustled him below decks for a drink. He took a Scotch and Pepsi on the rocks. I put that beautiful sad lady Carly Simon on the quad system and we both sat in big leather easy chairs, facing. The tale he told was a strange one. It centered around the Atlanta Brinks robbery of 1966. The notorious one where a man armed only with a sword took \$250,000 in cash from an armoured truck. I remembered it with nostalgia. 1966 had been a good year for me too.

Money was not the precious thing Guy Lillian had lost. He led into it in a round-about way, for the obsession he held had its beginnings long ago in his youth. I saw his face soften with the memories. His nervousness dropped away. I poured myself another drink from the pitcher of gin fizzes I'd prepared and listened to his rambling tale.....



② "To understand my particular interest, Mr. McAlan," spoke Guy Lillian, "you must know that when I was a lad my nanny had red hair. Flaming red hair. Her body was as lush as a cantaloupe patch in the morning dew. I had a tremendous crush on her.

"One evening after I'd been put to bed I summoned up my courage and tiptoed out of my room. Downstairs Mama and Papa were listening to the teevee. I peeked through the key-hole of my nanny's room. What I saw changed my life.

"Nanny was in the big stuffed easy chair she would sometimes sit in to read during the day. One leg was up over each of the arms, Mr. McAlan. She didn't have a stitch of clothes on. Her hair was spread out like a fiery halo surrounding her blissful face. The nipples on her big white titties were poked up red and hungry. I almost fell over but I caught myself without making a sound.

"She had a cucumber in her right hand and was ...using it ...down in that wild auburn bush. Mr. McAlan, I could tell she was an artist! Every night for a month I'd sneak back to her key-hole if there was a chance. She had a real feel for vegetables. The memories she was making burned deep into my mind.

"Then one horrible night in August Papa caught me. I got the hiding of my life, but what hurt more -- the next day Nanny was gone. Sent away. The next one was a terrible old battleaxe."

Lillian paused, overcome with emotion. I took the opportunity to refresh his drink and mix myself a new pitcher of gin fizzes. When I returned from the bar he was taking a color slide from his pocket. He handed it to me reverently. I aimed it at a lamp and studied the detail.

"A good photograph of the painting. She certainly is a natural redhead. I take it that the banana, carrot, and cucumber are the reasons for your special interest, Guy."

"Can you make out the signature, Mr. McAlan?"

"Not quite. Should I recognize it?" If this was by one of the old masters it had never been in any museum I'd ever heard of.

Lillian sighed. "No reason to expect you to. That happens to be an original Douglas Wirth. It was one of fifteen Wirths stolen from that Brinks truck. They were a consignment earmarked for me. All these years I've thought them lost, now this slide turns up and lets me know they're out there. Not for sale. I've got to have them. They belong to me rightfully!"

"I don't understand, Guy. If stuff like this is what you want why not hire some redheaded chippie and make photos to your heart's content? Hell, you can buy some pretty wild Scandinavian stuff right here in St. Pete!"

"Please. This is high quality pornography. The best in the world. I told you these were original Douglas Wirths. Please understand, I am a gourmet. Only the best is good enough. Otherwise I can't -- well, nevermind. Just accept that I must recover the paintings."

"Why not go to the law if you've got a legitimate claim?"

"This is the South, Mr. McAlan. Local standards prevail. In the name of neurotic decency my precious paintings would be burned -- or wind up on the wall of some judge's den. Besides they'd probably bungle it."

"I see what you mean."



"So you see you are my only recourse. Will you help me, Mr. McAlan? I'll pay your fee."

"I take half, Guy. Half of what's left after my expenses are subtracted. You can choose between half and nothing. For your paintings I'll take half the value. What's high grade porno worth on the market these days?"

I'll give him credit for taking it in stride and bouncing back a reply with no hesitation. "Each painting varies in value. I had offered \$28,000 for the fifteen. Of that, \$10,000 was on deposit...."

"Oh, great. I'm not a five grand talent, Guy."

"I'll pay you the difference -- \$18,000 -- if you recover my Wirths. The cash in the robbery I don't care about. Let's say that the cash will cover your expenses. Fair?"

It sounded more than fair to me. That was a quarter-million he was leaving open. It had the sound of a tricky but profitable operation. I was getting a bit low on funds. Face it, operating a 400-foot houseboat takes bread. "Maybe," I said dubiously. "What kind of information do you have? I like the idea, but -- Spill it all."

"All right." He was hooked. "I got the slide at a convention from another collector. Name of Faruk von Turk. He's a mysterious character. Owns a Post Office box in New Orleans and nobody knows anything else about him. He's reputed to have a fabulous collection, specializing in the Victorian period. When I saw the slide I barraged him with questions. Stupid. He clammed up. He hasn't answered my letters. I tried checking New Orleans but he's not listed anywhere. That name must be a nom de filth. That's all I know!"

"Slow down, Guy. You're getting excited again. I can find him. But what's more important, what else do you know? Who was getting the paintings for you?"

"Oh, that. Joe Celko was handling it. He's a big Atlanta dealer. I'd heard that some wild Wirths were up. Joe got the bid and let me know they were redheads. I looked at the prospectus -- photographs of five of the paintings -- and put down my deposit. I had to have them. Then came the robbery....."

"Who else knew about this?"

"Nobody. I bought the whole group before Celko could put them up for bid. I'm a good customer of his. He gives me first crack at my specialties."

"The artist must have known. Where does he live?"

"New Orleans. I guess he knew. I never asked. Douglas Wirth is a man of whim. Cares nothing for the money his work earns. It might be ten centuries before he'd do redheads again."

"Hmmm." There was one last thing to be checked out. "Did it ever occur to you, Guy, that the slide you have might have been taken before the paintings were shipped?"

It was a shot that hit him hard. "I can't believe that. Here is the photograph of that painting that was included in the prospectus. Examine the lower left hand corner."

He handed me a color photo of the same painting. It looked the same to me at first, but the picture in the slide was scratched. As far as I could tell it was a scratch on the painting. It could have been a bad slide, but I didn't think so. The whole venture had the ring of truth. I'd dealt with my share of weirdos and Guy Lillian was



an honest weirdo if ever I'd stumbled across one. Anybody who'd prefer some redhead jazzing herself with the vegetable world qualified. That quarter-million in cash was exciting enough for me. "OK, Guy, I will take your case. Have you got this Douglas Wirth's address? He looks like the logical place to start."

He fished out a scrap of paper while gushing his thanks. I glad-handed him out onto the wharf and sent him away. He left his card. All the while I was realizing that the model for those paintings might still be around. She was some dish for the eating. But first -- that porterhouse steak.

**T**

HE flight to New Orleans was bumpy. I hadn't expected turbulent air this time of year, but the stewardess did her best to divert me. Standing in the aisle doing knee-bends I wasn't the picture of the average passenger. She was first distraught, then curious. When I climbed down the ladder at New Orleans I had an open invitation to call her that night for a little fun at some importer's townhouse. They swam nude in the pool, she said. I had the distinct impression that my 6'6" of muscle and sinew would be a welcome addition for her. Frantic little chickadee, victim of this modern age, whose only relief from boredom was a succession of promiscuous sexual encounters.

I love it! As I left the plane her number and bra size were nestled in my pocket. Mr. Guy Lillian's expense money would be well spent indeed.

I checked in at the Monteleone, Room 831. The pool topside was a pleasant diversion before business. Douglas Wirth was listed in the phone book at a Laurel Street address. Wherever that was. He answered on the fifth ring. "Mr. Wirth? ...My name is Hutchings McAlan. I represent a cartel of upEast art buyers who greatly respect your work. Is there a possibility that I might see you today? ...Good! Five o'clock, then. I'll be there."

Precisely on time I rang the doorbell at 5967 Laurel. Young, intense longhair answered the door. Clearly an artist type. He peered at me for a moment as if I were a fish from the deep blue sea.

"Yeah, McSomething. Come on in." He turned and retreated into his castle. "I work in the garage. You wanta see some paintings, come on out."

We went out. Clearly Douglas was out of porno for the time being and into gothic abstract. I didn't want to meet his model. "Very impressive, Mr. Wirth. You've captured the essence of the troubled soul of our times."

"Cut the bullshit, man. What's on your mind?"

"Your work, Mr. Wirth. That's very much on my mind. I represent a group of discriminating gentlemen who appreciate your talent and wish to see you contribute to their collections. I'm empowered to purchase existing paintings or commission new works. Naturally a certain variety is desired. These gentlemen are quite interested in your work. Shall we discuss it further?"

"Sure. Everything here except that one is for sale. That one's for a friend."

I inspected the paintings for effect. He did have talent. "Several of these would do quite well. However, I need to balance the group. One of my clients is taken with your paintings of young ladies. I don't see any work in that vein...."



(5)

Wirth chuckled. "You mean my 'feelthy pitcher' period. The shallow excitements of youth. I'm not doing that scene now. Look! I'm into a much more meaningful period. Your client should grow up and learn to appreciate real art."

"Perhaps you still have a painting or two in that vein? My client is generous."

"No. They've all been given or sold. Well.... Maybe I'd do one on commission. It's shallow stuff but it was fun at the time."

"I've always felt the the temperament of an artist was such that his passion of the moment became his work. Best we save that commission for something you feel more strongly about. Perhaps someone in the area has one of you blue paintings and could be persuaded to reluctantly part with it. Does anyone spring to mind? A collector?"

"Yeah. I know just the man." Wirth grinned. "He'd never sell, though. He might trade."

"Excellent! Can you arrange for us to meet. You see, my client is also a collector and is willing to trade for the right item. I'd have to see your friend's offering soon, however."

"OK, I'll call him. What about the commission? I guess you want something special. I've had this idea for a really big canvas. Might take me a year to finish, though."

"Tell you what. Let's tie down the requirement for that particular type of item and then discuss the bigger picture. It makes a difference to what you'll be doing on commission."

"Yeah. I'll call him now. 'Xcuse me for a couple minutes --- the phone's in the house. There're some sketches on that table. I'm gonna work them all up. Maybe you like some." Wirth left without a backward glance, taking long strides but giving no impression of hurry. Briefly I debated following to eavesdrop. There was no percentage in it. Either it would be von Turk or it wouldn't. If it were I'd have my chance.

Wirth returned to catch me thumbing through the sketches. "Like any?"

"Yes. This one in particular."

"Oh. Listen, the Turk is interested. He'll talk tonight if you're not busy. We'll go over to his place about eight, eight-thirty."

I thought about that stewardess and her skinny dipping party. Poor chickadee would never know what she'd missed. "That's what I'm in New Orleans for, Mr. Wirth --- to do the job. Why don't we go get some dinner? We can talk a little more about terms and paintings, then you can direct me to this collector's place."

At 8:23 we pulled up in front of a big rambling house near the University district. Doug suggested I park on the side. It was easiest to go right in the back way. During dinner he and I had loosened up considerable --- all the way to first name basis. It was indeed the mysterious Faruk von Turk we would be seeing. Doug had lots of entertaining stories about the gentleman, his collections, and his exploits. I was looking forward to meeting him, I said.

We tramped through the gate and up the back stairs to the high porch. A dark-haired mustachioed man was shooting moths with a long-range can of bug spray. This was von Turk, from all descriptions. I wasn't surprised to hear him counting his victims.



6

"Faruk!" hailed Doug. "This is Hutch McAlan. He's down from New York to get some of my stuff. Wants to maybe trade with you. Enhance your porno collection by swapping something with class for one of my whimsies. Hutch -- Faruk von Turk!"

"Hmmmm," said von Turk as he shook hands with no apparent energy. He looked like he was considering trying the bug spray on me. How like a moth was the foreigner?

"Mr. von Turk, a pleasure! I've been hearing about you from Doug. We seem to have some interests in common. Doug's work among them."

The Turk muttered again. He'd evidently given up on the bug spray and was deciding to endure me for awhile. Doug was restless and shooed us all in the door. We descended a dark narrow set of stairs off the kitchen to enter the realm of von Turk's collection. An ancient pinball machine leaned against the wall. Books and magazines were strewn everywhere. In a corner, seated in the lotus position, was another long-haired fellow in dirty slacks and shirt. He glanced at me through his long dark stringy hair -- a look both distainful and baleful at once -- and returned to his magazine.

Doug led the way to a misshapen pile covered with canvas. Underneath were four dozen paintings of various sizes. He found his own work quickly. There she was on all fours, looking over her shoulder with sparkling eyes, a six-legged dog astride her. She was brunette. The other two were blonde.

"Anything else? My client has a preference for short curly hair." So had been the redhead in the slide. If this fishing expedition didn't pay off I was faced with a choice between a more extreme investigation or searching for another lead.

"I did some like that," said Doug. "Faruk doesn't have any. He likes long flowing tresses."

"Gee," I said thoughtfully, "I heard about the slide you had at that convention, Mr. von Turk."

With an elegant shrug von Turk grunted: "Celko. Splendiferous dealer. Why should I pay his prices?"

"This blonde with the Pepsi bottle has kinda short hair," said Wirth. I had to get engrossed with the possibility if I wanted to keep them alive. Our little investigation had been attracting the attention of the fellow with the magazine. At the name "Celko" he jumped up and stalked over.

"You're phoney from toupe to elevator shoes, Mister! Get out of this or Hank's sword will be carving you into catfood!" It's hard for a 5'10" man to glower at a 6' 7" mass of muscle, but he tried. My mind was correlating like crazy. Suddenly I was on a new track, one that seemed hotter and more real than New Orleans. Atlanta was where the robbery took place. "The Knaves will eat you for breakfast!" he spit, then threw his magazine in my face and exited stage right.

"Don't mind Don," apologized Doug. "He gets excited. You look a little like Steve Hughes. Taller, of course. Come look at that blonde again.... She's got a magic about her. I was always proud of the expression on her face. I can't tell you what local fan modeled for it, but you'd know the name..."

I folded the magazine and stuffed it in my pocket. The new trails were fire to my instincts of the chase but I was too much a professional to leave this situation unfinished. I'm proud to say that my bullshitting abilities were intact. I left with an invitation to return with slides of



trade merchandise in hand. Von Turk mellowed to a remarkable extent. He showed me the originals from his Ned Dameron portfolio. It was well after midnight when I dropped Doug Wirth off and headed back to the Monteleone. ⑦

The lobby was mostly empty. A few conventioners staggered towards the Carousel Bar. I took the elevator that worked up to my floor. I opened the door to my room with care. I have a few tricks learned the hard way to make sure that no one has come in while I was gone. I won't tell you the frustration chambermaids cause. Tonight it was all OK.

That magazine had to be a clue. I will never forget the applause I gave my intuition when I saw the title -- Knavery. It tied into the pattern -- Don had warned me about the Knaves, whoever they were. The publication address was Atlanta, Georgia. The Brinks robbery had taken place in Atlanta. Joe Celko, the dealer who'd offered the redheaded Wirth paintings to both Lillian and von Turk lived in Atlanta. It didn't take much analysis to see the common thread.

When the morning broke I was on an early jet out of the Crescent City. Next stop was St. Pete airport. Too many unknowns were suddenly clouding the picture. Who were the Knaves? Who was Hank? Did I really want to be catfood? It was time to call on Meyer's unique talents.

**M**

E Y E R. G. Brown was a miracle of a human being. That I knew from the day I first met him, hustling fifteen beach bunnies onto his yacht, the "Al Capp". He's the kind of man that puppies run up to for affection or pretty little teeny boppers approach for spare change. Meyer G. inspires instant trust. People talk to him as if to their grandmother. What doesn't show about Meyer G. Brown is the fact that he's a financial genius. Meyer knows the ways wild and ways wary of Wall Street. He's retired here at St. Pete harbor not because of those proddings from the U.S. Attorney General's office, but because he grew tired of the demands of his job. He's worth a bundle.

Tonight we ate our steaks to the tune of idle small talk. I needed to be brought up on the gossip of the marina. Afterwards there was a classic battle on the chessboard. I blocked the center and pushed my forces up the king-side. Meyer was cool. He held me with a wedging sacrifice, setting the stage for my helpless observation of his conquest of the queenside. It had been a close thing and we both knew it. One more tempo...

"Hey, Meyer, you lucked out. Next game.... But let me give you a tougher one. There's a magazine called Knavery. Who runs it? I suspect a group called the Knaves. Can you check on them? Find out who they are and where they are. Maybe you'll find a Joe Celko involved. The whole operation is based in Atlanta."

"OK, Hutch. Give me two days to ask some friends in that area. The usual percentage?"

"Of course, Meyer! It may be nothing; it may be a lot. And listen -- keep your ear tuned for the name Hank, will you."

The second day we were having steaks again on Meyer's floating castle. He'd done his work well. "Knavery is a low cost magazine popular with the younger set. Particularly big on college campuses. It specializes in nonsenses, as near as I can tell. Science fiction, tall tales about a myth called Hank -- yes, I recall you were curious about the name. It's the most visible part of



⑧ a corporation called Knaves, Inc. -- worth about \$180 million. There are four owners, listed as C.L. Jacobs, A. Atkins, B.H. Pettit, and J.H. Reinhardt. Primary holdings are real estate in Atlanta and Los Angeles. There's also a chain of restaurants, some bars, and the publishing house that puts out Knavery, Tales of Terror, and various fantasy books. No Joe Celko known to be involved."

"Hmmm." Meyer opened another bottle of Chateau Lafitte '29. It was good to be back in St. Pete enjoying the simple waterfront life. "Meyer, are there any intimations of shady activity. Does Knaves, Inc. perhaps deal in porno on the side? Anything like that?"

"No. Contactwise they're above board. There is an interesting fact, though; related to your assignment if one has a bit of imagination."

"Don't tell me. I'll bet Knaves got started not long after the Brinks robbery. Started in a small way, that is, then just got bigger and bigger."

"Hutch, you sometimes astound me. For one so lacking in fine judgment over the chess board you frequently hit on curious correlations in the jungle of life. Knaves incorporated in 1967, for the apparent reason of winning the World Science Fiction Convention bid. Which they did. But it managed to mushroom quickly into publishing and real estate. Remarkable, don't you think, for a group of amateurs."

"Maybe they're not amateurs, Meyer. Tell me about this Hank character you call a myth."

"A fine invention of the Knaves. Hank is a modern barbarian, complete with sword and mace. He swashbuckles about walking through walls and making a fool of himself at Hearts -- the card game. There's a fabric of ridiculous anecdotes in the magazine Knavery. Probably the engineering of the Brinks robbery led them to invent this joke on the world. At any rate, it seems to have been the spark that established Knavery as a college humor magazine."

"Meyer, you're disposing of Hank all too lightly. Suppose he's real. Think about it. Four clever men mastermind the robbery. The muscle is this Hank -- stupid but an animal, a man of tremendous strength and absolutely no fear. Messrs. Jacobs, Atkins, Pettit and Reinhardt benefit from his exploits -- master players manipulating the mighty pawn."

It took Meyer aback but he gave no sign other than refilling his glass with red wine. Thoughts were playing tag in his mind. "Hutch, there's an odd rumor I came across in the investigation. Knaves opened a restaurant in Marina del Rey, California, and the Mafia tried to put the muscle on for a protection payoff. Most places knuckle under quickly. Knaves didn't. When a hit squad went down to burn the place they were found later in the Marina, hacked to bits. The police called it a maniac's work. The Mafia lost fifteen more hit men before they gave up. They leave Knaves strictly alone now. Better to endure one crazy than to lose more gorillas."

"Hank! He has to be real -- and dangerous! With nothing but a sword he's faster than a man with a gun. That character at von Turk's told me Hank would cut me into catfood. Brrrr! Is it worth fifteen dirty paintings, Meyer?"

"You've damn near killed yourself in the past for less, Hutch, but there's never been your equal. I reluctantly admit that the day could come. Maybe this Celko cat has the paintings and you'll never go near the Knaves. On the other hand --- It's your decision, Hutch. Whatever you decide I'm behind you 100%."



(9)

"You're a good egg, Meyer. I'm on this job now. Nothing's going to derail me."

I took Saturday just for loafing and doing about six hours of housekeeping work on the Strait. Amazing how hard you work to keep those saucy ladies of the sea looking trim and neat. Sunday I flew up to Atlanta and began checking on Joe Celko. If there were a connection with the Knaves I wanted to approach carefully. No sense in tipping them off.

In the yellow pages under "bookstores" I found what I was looking for: Celko's Dirty Book and Picture Shoppe -- "We have novel-ties". I drove out, parked three blocks away in a side street, and strolled past. The place was dark; apparently Celko didn't sell porno on Sunday evenings. The back door was flimsy. Nothing but a cheap old burglar alarm protected it. Crystal clear was the implication that nothing of value was inside. I made a mental note anyway, just in case the need might arise to gather correlating material. Leads can spring from odd places.

Early Monday morning I cruised past Knaves Tower, an attractive modern twenty-story building on the north side of town. The Knaves, Inc. publication empire was headquartered there. Employees were trickling in. Up in that tower was someone who knew where Hank was lurking. Atlanta was going to be a beehive of clues. I just had to be careful not to get stung.

Joe Celko was a medium sized fellow with a string tie, a bland smile, and cackling eyes. I browsed in the shop, deliberating over such titles as "Sex Kittens Learn Acupuncture" and "Deviant Sexathon" until the place was empty of other customers. In a manner that suggested deeper desires than paperback novels I sidled up to the counter and caught Celko's eye. "I hear you have some really special items," I said hoarsely.

"Ah, yes," he said, his eyes coolly measuring me. "Tinfoil condoms."

"No no no! Nothing so crude. I'm a collector of art. Faruk von Turk, that tight-fisted fool, let it slip that you have an original Douglas Wirth for sale. It would crown my collection!"

"Sorry, Mr. ...Errr. You heard wrong."

"You don't understand. I must have it. I'll pay your price. I'm a wealthy man, Mr. Celko. Orange groves, tourist courts, retirement villages, gas stations. Name it. I've seen the slide. I know you have it. Name your price and don't play coy!"

Terrible regret bubbled in Celko's eyes. He knew he had a live one and avarice exploded within him. But the answer was still no. "I am sorry, sir. That painting was never mine. It was my little joke on Mr. von Turk. The painting was stolen years ago and never recovered. Of course I had the slide for a prospectus -- Douglas Wirth himself made it before the painting was shipped. But perhaps I could interest you in a set of truly fine photos made in France....."

"Shit, boy! I told you I want the Wirth. Now tell me how much you want or get off the pot. I don't hold with tomfoolery! I told you I'm buying, not bargaining."

"Please, sir. I don't have the painting. If you want to leave a way for me to get in touch with you I can scour the market. I have connections..."

I snorted and stomped without the courtesy of a reply. Too clearly he had no power over that Wirth painting. That he knew of it was equally certain and that excited me. Atlanta was the key city indeed.



⑩ Leaving Celko's Dirty Book and Picture Shoppe I drove downtown to the offices of the Atlanta Constitution. Their morgue would have the best available public accounts of the robbery. Sifting through the data I might learn something new. Some shred that would connect yesterday to the present. After all, I knew who had done it. The whole thing was coming home to me as an incredible feat. Years ago I had passed it off as a sign of the insanity of our times. Now I wondered how he had done it -- robbing a Brinks truck with only a sword. I wondered how the armored truck had been opened. I wondered how the guns inside had been overcome. But mostly I wondered if it had been a fool that rushed in, or a killing machine.....

The newspaper accounts were a bit muddled. The reporters were more intent on the dynamite sensation aspects of the happening than they were with reconstructing the event. Buried in the middle pages were fragmentary interviews with the guards. Their story was too incredible to be believed, so the slant was that some hallucinatory gas might have been used. I decided my best bet was to see if any of the four men were still in the area. A check of the phone book turned up two candidates. That was pretty good.

I drove east into an older area of Atlanta. The duplex wasn't well kept. The yard needed at least two weeks of work to see grass growing green again. With a firm rap on the door I announced my arrival. Then another knock, solid and authoritative. Just as I was about to give up the door opened and a young fellow in a bathrobe blinked at me.

"Mr. Gary Steele?"

"Yeah.

Wha the hell!?! I work nights, mister, not days."

"Sorry for the inconvenience. McGurk. Special investigator. The D.A. wants some questions answered. Do we talk here or downtown?"

His pointed black beard bobbed. "Why hassle me? I'm just a working man. There's no trouble at the plant is there? I've been keeping a tight security watch at night. I do my sleeping during the day -- when people let me."

"We're not interested in that. Yet. Shall we step inside, Steele?"

"Yeah." He shuffled back and left the door standing wide. "Let me put on some coffe, will ya? That ain't a crime yet."

I stepped inside and shut the door. Steele's kitchen was an alcove off the smallish living room. I shoved a pile of comics aside and sat on the shabby sofa, facing the kitchen. Mechanically Steele put a pot of water on the burner and began to rinse a cup. He paused, shrugged, and rinsed a second "You take cream or sugar?"

"Black. '66 was a big year for you, wasn't it, Steele."

"Oh Christ! Not that again. Why don't you guys give up on that angle. Listen, man, if I'd been an inside man do you think I'd still be in Atlanta living like this? Shit! I'd be in Mexico living the fat easy life. Or maybe some place in Europe. For sure not Atlanta! Why not just leave me alone, huh."

"Maybe the D.A. thinks 'it's a big case to crack. Maybe he thinks you know something you never told anybody. Is he right, Steele?"

"Hell, no!!!!" Then the steam went out of him. He brought the coffee in muttering, "But what's the use..." It was time to shift positions. Steele was in the clear, I could feel it, but he'd been there and I needed his story.



(11)

"The D.A. thinks he's a big man. He thinks he's got it figured and you're one of the pigeons, Steele..... Maybe I think different. Whoever solves this case is gonna make a splash."

It took a moment to get through to him. I was either a tricky cop or an ambitious cop and he wasn't sure which. Either way I was dangerous. "Uhhh, yeah. So what do you want from me?"

"On the record I want to push you, hassle you, put the heat on so you'll get edgy and do stupid things like lead us to the cash and the rest of the gang. So much for the bullshit. Off the record I want to know exactly what happened. I'm behind the theory that this big swordsman is real. So maybe it happened. But how? Any thing at all you might remember is a clue. Are you with me?"

"Maybe.

I been pushed enough, man. I'm tired. Ask me questions, I'll answer. You'll get the truth -- that's all I've got left."

"I believe you, Gary. Start at the beginning. Don't leave anything out, no matter how insignificant or ridiculous. Give me your ideas too. You were there; I wasn't. Thanks for the coffee, by the way."

"No sweat, man. It started like any milk run. We picked up the stuff at the airport and headed back uptown. I was in the back with the loot. Larry Montgomery was with me. We were on Southwest Middle Peachtree Avenue -- that's an old area with two and three story buildings. Crummy little businesses and beer bars. Suddenly the truck stopped. Larry looked through the window into the cab and turned pale. He said a Viking had just clobbered Gene & Arnie. I hit the radio alarm button.

"In a few seconds there's a rattle at the back doors. Larry had his BAR ready but I was pretty cool. That's what got 'em freaked later, because I didn't draw my gun. I'd seen those doors a thousand times -- nothing was going to open them before the bluecoats arrived. I'd pushed the alarm myself.

"Then the door on the left -- the right of the truck, my left -- made a sound like metal being torn and flew away. Ripped right off. I went for my gun then.

"It all happened so fast. An axe came whizzing through the opening and smashed the BAR to junk -- knocked Larry on his butt and right out of the ball game. This weirdo in chain mail leaped in and cracked the flat of his sword across my wrist just as I was drawing. The pistol went flying. I froze -- the tip of that sword was at my throat.

"His eyes were insane. His teeth laughed at me. One flick of his wrist and the top of my shirt was cut open, but I wasn't cut. That scared the shit out of me. Anybody with that much skill I didn't want to meet. 'Turn around and lie down, quick!' he said and I did. He was fast throwing my gun out and getting the loot. Money. Some other box supposed to have paintings in it.

"Then he scrambled out. I got up and jumped out of the truck -- that took guts, man! The guy with the sword was scaling the front of a building like an ape. The loot was in a big cloth sack. He looked like Attila Claus. Then he was gone, over the roof. Larry staggered out and shot his pistol in the air. Big deal. It was over like that. Screwed up my life like you wouldn't believe. So want to know more? I can't tell you."

"Sure you can, Gary. Those doors interest me. How did he do it? Did you see any kind of portable hydraulic jack?"

"No. There might have been something in the bag but



nothing was left at the scene. It was just brute force." He paused for a moment, hesitant to reveal a previously ridiculed theory. "I think he did it with his bare hands. Go ahead, laugh: you didn't see his eyes. Once I saw a crazy pick up one end of a piano and flip it up on end. Nobody believes that either."

"Maybe. Or he might have some trick. What did he look like?"

"Squarish face -- no, rectangular. Black hair with some grey beginning to show. Nothing unusual about his features but his expression was bloodthirsty. About six feet. Really solid build. It's hard to say with the chain mail. I'd know him if I saw him again."

"You may get a chance." I ran over the robbery again, probing on various points. Nothing startling emerged. Speaking firmly I told Gary Steele to keep a low profile, to tell no one about my visit. Later I'd be in touch. The interview had confirmed the reality of Hank. I would have to move carefully into the sphere of the Knaves and find the connection. There was one more stop.

Driving the Brinks truck had been a Gene Reed. I arrived at his apartment expecting to learn little new, nor was I disappointed. Six newspapers were piled on his doorstep. No answer for my pounding. Mr. Gene Reed was not at home. I refused to place any significance on the fact. He might be on vacation or getting a running start on the back-rent collectors. Next on the agenda was Knaves headquarters.

**B**

Y midafternoon I was seated in the waiting room of Gerald Page, Executive Editor of Knaves Publications. It was a good shot to approach via this route because the publications people were likely to know about Hank. I'd also noticed that Knavery featured a lot of art. It was a long shot, but that might tie into the paintings.

As I waited I surveyed the others in the room. A large dour-faced man with his arms folded over a portfolio stared into space, no doubt contemplating the imminent destruction of the world. A young couple, dressed hippie style, chattered animatedly about whether Knavery might commission them to write-up the Strasbourg convention since they were going to be there anyway and could give a fan's eye view of things. They seemed innocent happy flower children and I enjoyed eavesdropping as I awaited the Mighty Editor's convenience.

Finally the luscious blonde receptionist asked me to please step in Mr. Page's office. It was a huge place with two glass walls overlooking the city. Page was seated behind a mahogany monolith. He had a big nose and keen blue eyes. "Have a seat, Mr. McAlan. So Time has commissioned you to do an article on Knavery and our family of periodicals. What a good idea. How may we help you?"

"An interview with you, Mr. Page, would be the most help. Then I'd like to talk to some of your staff, see an issue being put together, gather the inside personality of your organization."

He glanced at his watch. "I can give you thirty minutes myself. I'll gladly assign some one to take you around after that. Where shall we begin?"

I turned my recorder and started in on the typical questions -- how did it all begin, what were the philosophical tenets of the Knaves, how had the rather unique format evolved, to what did he attribute the campus



popularity, etc. Page was fluent in reply. He was disposed to wander onto the topic of Tales of Terror, obviously his pet, but I gently steered him back onto my own interests. Finally I worked up to the zinger. "Fascinating. Let me ask you one more that's been a puzzle to many. Who invented Hank? He's such a charmingly outrageous creation. Who had the idea?"

Page leaned back and chuckled. "One might say that I did, but it wouldn't be fair to Hank. You see, he's a real person. Of course I embroidered on his antics and magnified his foibles. There really is a Hank who collects edged weapons, plays Hearts terrible to behold, and runs around doing ridiculous things. We've never denied he was for real, people just assume he couldn't be."

"Incredible. I'd like to meet him if possible. It would really add to my article to do a brief interview with the legend itself."

"I'm afraid that's impossible to do. Hank's not in Atlanta. He goes where he pleases. Why not even the other Knaves always know. Besides, he almost never grants personal audiences these days."

"It would mean a lot."

Page frowned. "Well, I suppose I could check with the Jack of Diamonds. He'd know where Hank is if anybody would. Leave your address and I'll contact you if it can be arranged."

We finished up the interview and as my first preference was art, Page was soon introducing me to Joe Staton, Chief Artist for Knavery. Staton was a pleasant good-looking young man who seemed a bit shy with strangers. He apparently served as art editor for the magazine but was so involved in his own work he eschewed the title "editor" like the plague. When we interrupted him he was putting the finishing touches on a drawing of a fetching Naked Lady.

"That's nice work, Joe. Somehow she looks familiar." Page had left us quickly.

"Just a scribble for the corner of a Mark Verheiden article. Sit down someplace."

Since I was interested in art it wasn't long before we were chatting like old friends. I touched on some of the names I'd seen credited in Knavery, then tried Doug Wirth. Joe said, yes, they've run his stuff from time to time. Nothing in the last year, though.

"He's done a lot of painting, hasn't he. Do you have any of his oils here at Knavery?"

"No. We never had anything but pen and ink from Doug. The fanzine illo type of thing we specialize in."

"I'm surprised with Knavery's penchant for unclothed ladies that some of Doug's paintings haven't shown up here."

"Oh, those kind of paintings," Joe laughed. "If you've interested in them you should try Cuyler Warnell Brooks. They don't call him Nasty Ned for nothing. Probably has more of Doug's work in that vein than anybody else in the world."

"Does Brooks work here?"

"No, he lives in Newport News and does a dynamite business in mail-order pornography. Surely you've heard of Brooks Books."

I filed the name away as a possible trail to follow later. For now I'd approach the Hank issue. "Joe, I've never heard of Brooks Books and probably never will again. Not that he doesn't sound interesting, but I get my kicks with the real



14 thing. --But let's get on with our talk. I'm fascinated by that little club you say feeds so many ideas into Knavery."

"Then you're in luck. The OE of SFPA is in town; in fact he's here at Knaves, Inc. It's after quitting time -- come on, let's go up to the bar. He's sure to be there and you'll get so much material. He's into the history of SFPA and knows all the stories."

We took a flight of stairs up to the top floor of the building. There was a private club there for Knaves employees. Joe said it just couldn't have been any other way. Bars were the favorite atmosphere of the Knaves themselves and it was a fannish tradition to boot.

The bar was large, plush and dim. Tinted window shades kept the sun out while displaying the view. Joe peered about, then spotted his man. He led the way as we threaded our way to a booth on the far side. My eyes were adjusting as we walked. The girl burst onto my retinas like a flare in the night. It was the red-head in the paintings.

Joe stopped at her table. Me too. Her lovely face had a saucy, provocative expression, just like the paintings. I'd be 100% positive if I saw her without any clothes on, but I doubted if that invitation would be extended forthwith. This was such an appropriate place to discover her that I felt the bonds of coincidence grow perceptibly stronger.

"Hutch, I'd like you to meet the OE of SFPA, Don Markstein," Joe jolted me out of my reverie and back into the ugly world of reality. I ripped my eyes from the redhead and focused on my friend from von Turk's. Oh great -- Don Markstein was the dark-haired crier of doom who'd said Hank would be chopping me. The chick from the paintings and my number one fan: it was Old Home Week. Huzzah. Hoorah! Hutch McAlan in the whipsaw of fate. At least I was using the same name as in New Orleans. That counted for a little.

"I've met Mr. McAlan," hissed Markstein. "He chooses to ignore the oracle and penetrate the labyrinth. Let me find the minotaur and whisper in his ear that a thief is creeping through the sacred passages. Can any god frown on a willing sacrifice?"

"Don likes to talk in riddles," said Joe. "This pretty lady is Peel C'ruthers. She does a Trekkie column for K from time to time."

It took all of a microsecond to switch my attention from Markstein to Peel. "Charmed, Miss Peel. From the time I arrived in Atlanta until this moment I thought the dream of Scarlett O'Hara was dead. You renew my dreams."

Peel smiled and wiggled slightly in her seat. Markstein choked on his beer. Joe waved me into the half-circle booth and seated himself beside Peel. I was next to Markstein. It was a curious situation that I evaluated. Don Markstein might well guide me to Hank, but not in a way that I wanted. On the other hand Peel might know the legend on her own terms. A time of opportunity and peril.

"Hutch is interested in SFPA, Don," said JOE. "He wants to know more about the ingroup stuff -- like Hank stories. He's doing an article for Time."

"What a remarkable man to do stories for Time and agent for wealthy art buyers all at the same time. Tell me, Mr. McAlan, what kind of agent are you?"

"A man who scrambles to earn a living, Don. I enjoy some small knowledge in all the arts."



(15)

"Oh, Mr. McAlan, you must have so many interests!" sang Peel. "May I call you Hutch?"

"Please do, Peel." I skillfully ignored the thrust of Markstein's attack. "You must have many talents yourself. Joe says you write a column and you're definitely pretty enough to be a model. Tell me, are you in this Seff-pa too?"

"I was. I'm on the wait list now."

"I wouldn't make you wait." Since I first saw her I'd been softly touching her with my eyes and she was warming to the caress. We had things to talk about. More things than she might think.

"Ohhhh, Hutch. You big devil. You're not even a SFPA member."

"No, but I'm waiting."

"You'll wait forever!" said Markstein.

"Hey, you guys, cool it!" interjected Joe. "Tell Hutch about Hank. He's fascinated by our barbarian Hearts fish. He wants to know how we dare win at Hearts. I told him Hank has a heart of butter -- that's our secret -- but he won't believe me. Come on, Don. Confirm it."

"Hank knows his friends. With them he is merciful. Hank knows his enemies. Those he chops into catfood. You are an enemy, Mr. McAlan. Hank will destroy you."

In the silence that followed Jerry Page appeared. His water-blue eyes plumbed me. "Don dislikes you, Mr. McAlan."

"Yeah. What's the matter -- do I have bad breath or something? Not been using my manly deodorant?"

Peel giggled. Page frowned. "Don is perceptive," he said. "Perhaps he knows more about you than I do."

"He knows I'm both a writer and an art agent among other things. How that qualifies me for Instant Hate I don't know. Does Don dislike versatility in others?"

"No," said Page. "Perhaps you particular interests...."

"He's after the Wirth paintings," said Markstein. "First at the Turk's and now here. He asks about Hank. You put it together, Jerry."

"How curious," replied Page. "He does seek after doom. It is better to pity such a one than hate him, Don. Send him on his way with aid and good wishes."

"Will somebody enlighten me?" I asked. "Why am I doomed? I'm just a man doing a job. Well, two jobs. If Hank likes his privacy believe me I'll give him a wide berth. There's other stuff to feature in the Knavery story. Just this Seff-pa itself is great material. Tell me about that. Let me keep my head."

Page smiled benevolently and vanished. Don stared at the bubbles in his beer and ignored me. Joe launched into an account of the little amateur press alliance. Peel made subtle eyes my way. I made subtle eyes back. We'd have knocked 'em dead on As the World Turns.

So it went until a waitress appeared. "Mr. McAlan? Call for you. The phone is over there in that alcove."

As I walked over I wondered how Meyer had found me. It could be no one else but he. Of course he knew I'd be checking into the Knaves. The switchboard had probably directed him to the bar. Whatever, it had to be important. Meyer wasn't in the habit of calling about trivial things with long distance rates being what they are. It must be a clue about Hank.



The phone was one of those fancy turn-of-the-century models. I spoke into a dead line and apprehended the trap just as two rubber-steel arms apprehended me. Quick lift and THUMP! Flat on my ass and the unknown assailant landed on me like a mountain. Only my rigorous physical training (I military-press 500 pounds eighty times a day) kept me from being a rag doll. I twisted aside to narrowly avoid a second squash. A leap and I was astride my feet.

Blonde curls, falling in ringlets about that angelic face. I knew my opponent from countless teevee exposures. "Why, you're Goergeous Goerge!" I spouted. "I used to watch you on the tube! How about an autograph? Make it 'to Meyer, with affection, from his wrestling idol' -- OK?"

Goerge breathed a mantra at me and testified as how I had bad karma. Well, good try, McAlan. I poised for his next lunge and blessed my mother for forcing ballet training on me. The rush came and I dodged nimbly only to slip on the wet floor. Bad luck for carrying my drink to the phone! Goerge landed on me like the overland mail, parcel post. Whoosh! went all the air out of my lungs.

While I was getting reacquainted with oxygen Goerge got up again. We all know what happens to that which goes up. Shortly I was making like a crepe and losing count of the landings. Mercifully there was a pause before I lost consciousness. Groggily I stared level eyed at four shoes. No wonder Goerge won, I thought, he's a quadruped. Then I heard Page's voice.

"Tsk. Poor Mr. McAlan seems to be under the weather. Too much to drink, I suppose. Would you help him downstairs to a cab, Goerge. Pay the fare in advance. Thank you."

I was picked up like a big coil of senseless rope and thrown over an ample shoulder. Fuzzy impressions of a dark corridor, then we were descending in a freight elevator. Padded canvas hung on the walls of the elevator cab. Somewhere within me the spark of awareness rekindled. Pain in my ribs. Pain in my gut. A cold foreboding warned of imminent pain in my neck. Whatever strength I could gather I'd need when the elevator stopped.

The doors slid smoothly apart and Goerge stepped out into a parking basement area. It was one of those multilevel ramped places and I had no idea whether we were above or below the street level. Purposefully I was carried towards a battered van. With every step my arms and legs flapped and slapped against my captor. Suddenly my dangling right arm became an instrument of vengeance and with every bit of strength I drove my fist into Goerge's crotch. He let out a moan like an impassioned mantra and doubled over. I was dumped off his shoulder.

As I hit the concrete I was scrambling to my feet. Knee and palm abrasions were my last concern. I ran up the incline rather than down on the theory that there were bound to be more exit routes upwards. After all, if I arrived at the bottom and found no street, I'd be trapped. Upwards was the building -- elevators, stairs -- and if nothing else a maze to dart into for hiding.

I made the first turn and dashed into another parking level. Down below I heard the slap of heavy footsteps on the concrete. Goerge must be recovering. I imagined he was rather angry about my little trick. I saw no door but the elevator. Automatic reject on that. Goerge was following too rapidly. Try another level up.

It was the top. The elevator was my only choice. Staggering a bit I trotted over and stabbed the Up button. Damned elevators were too slow! I could hear Goerge puffing up the last ramp. I started to run towards



the back of the level, hoping that there were down ramps back there, when a car engine caught and roared. My legs, leaden already, threatened to collapse. Part of me wanted to lie down and forget about life but I kept driving myself. Headlight beams caught me as the little MG convertible bucked out of its slot. I dodged aside. Then the sportster was beside me and an angel's voice yelled: "Get in, you big lunkhead!!"

I vaulted over the door and fell into the bucket seat beside Peel. She gunned the engine and we screeched tires accelerating. It was Goerge's turn to dodge as the little bomb went tearing down the ramp. I waved goodbye as we passed. Goerge shook his fist and hustled for the elevators. Tough luck, big man. The victim was gone, flying around impossible squeeling turns in the suicide seat of the liberation express. Out onto the asphalt street under the warm Georgia night. Gone. Fled to God knows where with a pretty stranger lady and fast fading from consciousness.....

**B**

I R D S were singing. Morning sun splashed onto the bright blues of my bedspread. Slowly I moved my aching body. I remembered that I'd fallen down an elevator shaft last night, or maybe come between two bulldozers in a mating frenzy. You may live, McAlan, but you'll be crippled from the ankles up. Forget the downhill slalom, man. Take up braille crosswords.

The bedroom door opened a crack. Two bright eyes peeped inside, then a pretty girl entered with breakfast on a tray. I didn't know her. "Oh, good! You're awake. I hope you feel like sitting up to eat, McAlan. I'm Binker, by the way. Peel has gone into town. She'll be back this afternoon. I hope you like poached eggs."

"Love 'em. I'll try sitting up. I was thoroughly homogenized last night. Near-sighted wrestler mistook me for a milkshake as yet unshook." With not one groan I got myself propped against two pillows and attacked the bacon, eggs, grits, and toast. "Don't go, Binker!" Munch, munch. "Tell me a bit about where I am and what's happening in this crazy city."

"Well, you're a guest at the palacial Hughes mansion in delightful Decatur. Peel brought you in last night, out cold, and got Steve to carry you in here. You're a big man. We all had to carry you. Peel says Don Markstein and Jerry Page are trying to have you killed. She says you're a lunkhead. She likes you, McAlan."

"Where do you stand in all this?"

"A friend of Peel's is a friend of ours." She shrugged. "Who knows what that crazy redhead is into?" Binker grinned widely. "But helping to thwart the Knaves is a reward in itself. You must be onto something hot. They usually keep their cool. Of course none of the real Knaves are here anymore. Page is in charge of Atlanta. Markstein mixes in a lot too."

"You know the Knaves. Do you know Hank? Where can I find Hank?"

"McAlan, I see why Peel calls you a lunkhead. Eat your breakfast, now." She whisked out the door and I was left alone with poached eggs and deep thoughts.

The meal gave me the strength to go back to sleep. I needed some healing. In the late afternoon, when I awoke again, Peel was waiting rather impatiently. "There's a message for you to call somebody named Meyer."



①8 It must be important! Are you FBI or CIA, McAlan?"

Peel. I'm in this on my own hook."

"Hoohah. Neither,

"God, you really are a dunderhead! I can understand trying to go up against Hank when you've got the Army, the Marines, riot guns, napalm, and tanks behind you, but going it alone is just plain stupidity! Lord! McAlan, you got whipped by the Goerge. Think what the Hank will do."

"Goergeous Goerge just took Round One. I'm not finished with him yet. Notice -- one Hutch McAlan alive and well. As for Hank, I'll find a way to handle him."

"McAlan, you belong in the old joke. You're sitting in the saloon when this big six-foot-six bruiser comes in, tearing off the doors, chugalugs a bottle of red-eye and kicks the shit outta the local sheriff. He picks you up by the collar, boxes your ears, and starts to go. You ask him why. Hell, I ain't staying around here, he says. Big Hank is coming!"

"Peel you amaze me. Here you are bucking the Knaves and you're worried about what Hank might do to me. How about your sweet skin?"

"Maybe I don't mind a fate worse than death," she grinned. "Are you going to call this Meyer or not?"

So I did. Meyer sounded his cheerful self -- the professional Meyer G. Brown image. "Hutch! Guy Lillian's here. There appears to be an interesting development. Guy has a letter apparently offering him the paintings for a modest sum. The import is that if he calls off the dogs they'll give him the paintings cheap. He's not sure if it's above board, but he's leaning towards accepting. I've reminded him of your agreement, of course."

"Now if you can handle the details I'm sure a mutually satisfactory conclusion can be reached. It will take careful examination of the conditions. The letter was from a Meade Firesign in Birmingham, Alabama, of all places. He's an attorney. You should act as Guy's agent and contact him. You know the ropes, Hutch. Put some pressure on. Whoever "they" are, they're ready to settle. Looks like an easy solution to the problem. Guy is very happy. That's him you hear singing in the background. So get in gear and see Firesign tomorrow."

"Yeah, Meyer. Tell Lillian I'll find his paintings. This whole thing is more personal now than it was then. Thanks, Meyer. Good night, sweet prince." I hung up. Peel was bursting with curiosity at the one-sided conversation. Why not tell her -- she might know this Firesign.

"Oh, Meade -- my goodness, yes!" she exclaimed. "He did such a fine job of defending Lester Jaundice on that morals charge. Meade's such a good lawyer. You'll like him. He has a cute mustache! I'm glad the Knaves are settling. Nobody gets hurt."

"Why do you say it's the Knaves? Firesign hasn't revealed his client."

"Oh, Meade is the lawyer they use in this part of the country. Besides, it's the Knaves you're bugging, isn't it? You're some tough dude, McAlan, to get them to settle. What is it you're settling about?"

That struck me as funny. Did she know or didn't she? Why was she so willing to get involved if she didn't know the paintings I wanted. "Peel, there's a guy in New Orleans named Douglas Wirth who did some pretty wild paintings of a redheaded lady enjoying herself. Raunchy stuff, some people



say. One of those people is paying me a lot of money to find the paint and the canvas. I hear the model is a beautiful girl. I hear she has your features, Peel."

She blushed. "I don't know what paintings you're talking about, McAlan. I know Doug Wirth's work -- it's good. If some girl did pose for paintings like that I can't imagine that she'd want them circulating."

"She'd destroy them?"

"Maybe. She might even want them for herself. I don't know -- I'm not that girl, McAlan. Forget the idea. I don't think you're after just paintings, no matter how suggestive. You don't play for chicken feed, do you? I'll bet there's a lot of money in it. I'd guess.... maybe a quarter-million."

"You're a bright chick, Peel. Bright enough to see before I did that we have a common interest. What else can you tell me that I need to know?"

"I can tell you that I happen to be driving to Birmingham tomorrow. You might like a ride. It could be safer than the airport...."

I chuckled. She was a spirited little number. "Peel, you've got yourself a hitchhiker." Twilight was framing her red hair at the window. The floral-patterned tricot shift she wore did nothing to hide her spectacular figure. Suddenly I was aware of those green eyes like pale flame burning their way clear to my backbone. "We might make good allies for a while, Peel. The right combination of talents."

"Lunkhead!" she laughed. "What do you think has been happening?"

"The bandage around my chest is tight. Could you loosen it?" I shifted myself up onto one arm and made room for her to sit on the bed. How cool her hands as they slid beneath my shirt to adjust the bandage. How fragrant her hair. Our alliance was sealed.

**T**

HE road from Atlanta to Birmingham is still not all Interstate. Perhaps the two cities and their states can't agree on where and how to meet. There's a section of twisty country highway, old style. Peel enjoyed that stretch, pushing her MG to its limits. With my usual stoic outlook on death I never flinched. The wind whipped our hair into tangles. It was a pleasure to hit the superhighway once more and cruise smoothly towards Alabama's Magic City.

We stopped for lunch at Shoney's Big Boy and I took the opportunity to peruse the phone book for Meade Firesign's office address. He had a suite in K Tower. That sounded suspiciously like more Knaves property. The web was beginning to emerge and so I had to be more careful than ever to detect vibrations of the spider. We decided that Peel would wait in the car. If in two hours I hadn't returned, she'd call the police and Meyer. I was confident there'd be no need.

Firesign's office had the subdued plushness of quiet affluence. He surprised me with his faded denims and red tank top, love beads, and natural shag cut. His eyes twinkled above his mustache. "Come in, Mr. McAlan. I understand you represent Guy Lillian in this affair. Sit down. Don't be afraid of us hippie lawyers, we don't bite." He motioned me to a slung leather chair. I sat down.

"Unless I misunderstand my assignment, Mr. Fire-



sign, I'm to arrange for the return of some properties which rightfully belong to my client. Naturally my client appreciates your client's responsible action in initiating the lawful return of stolen property. I know we can dispose of the formalities quickly."

"Certainly you understand the spirit of the transaction, MR. McAlan. Return is a word both charged with delightful anticipation and fraught with conditions. My client, alas, incurred certain expenses which he discharged in the best of faith before discovered to his chagrin that the items which he had acquired were the legal holdings of your client. Shall we say that he now offers your client the same bargain which he obtained. Plus handling charges, of course."

"Which comes to what total?"

"Ten grand. The market value is of course much higher. Should your client accept the proffered bargain an exchange of cash -- nothing larger than a fifty -- for the twelve paintings would be arranged. To the mutual satisfaction of both parties, of course."

"Hold on! There were fifteen paintings in the lot. My client is intensely interested in obtaining all fifteen. Recovery of a partial set would not be satisfactory."

Firesign stood up and leaned against the ceiling-high bookcase behind his desk. He picked up a skull and tossed it casually from hand to hand. "The lot was presented to me as twelve paintings. I'm certain my client obtained no more than that. It is an interesting point, however. You see, my client was under the impression that he was purchasing a complete grouping. I should inform him otherwise."

"I need to speak with my client as well. Shall we talk again tomorrow?"

"No. Perhaps next Monday is best. My client is not so easy... to contact." Firesign replaced the skull and came around his desk. Clearly he was ending the audience. "A pleasure, Mr. McAlan. Next Monday at two, then?" He shook hands with a firm grip and aimed me at the door. Gracefully I departed.

Peel was elated. "Somebody held out! Oh, goody! He's going to Hank or maybe one of the other Knaves. All we have to do is follow him there. Hutch, you better be tough in the clutch."

"Peel, sweetheart, how are we going to follow him if he gets on a plane and flies away like a bird on the wing? Can we be sure he's staying in this area. I doubt it if he wants till Monday."

She was crestfallen. "Hutch, what can we do? No telling where he's going."

I grinned. "Just wait awhile and we'll see how good you are as an actress. I'm betting he'll have his secretary make airline reservations. Let's go have a drink and let an hour pass. I could use a stiff shot of Jack Daniels Old #7."

Ninety minutes later Peel dashed out of a phone booth in the Wander Inn and threw her pretty arms around my neck. "It worked!" she exulted. "I just told her I was the airline checking to see if Mr. Firesign's reservation was First Class or Tourist and she confirmed it all. Mr. Firesign always goes First Class. He's booked on the 7:55 flight to Los Angeles tomorrow morning. American."

"Good work, Peel. Now do your act again as a secretary and book me into Los Angeles on the red-eye tonight. I'll be waiting for Mr. Firesign."



21 (33)  
"Book you!? Book us, you mean! I'm not letting you get to the paintings before I do. We've got equal interest, Mister."

"Chickadee, you have really got spirit, but the going gets rough from here. It's no place for a girl. You go back to Atlanta and wait. I'll get in touch when it all breaks."

"Bullshit! I bailed your ass out of the deep-fat fryer in Atlanta and I'm not quitting now. We're going together or we're both going separately. Put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

Now

how could I argue with that?

When Firesign's flight landed at Ellay International at 11:07 AM local time Peel and I were situated strategically. She, in a cheap blonde wig, was inside the terminal. I was lounging at the wheel of a rental car in the passenger disembarkation zone of the roadway. Stalling the rent-a-fuzz would be a problem, so I had not even parked until five minutes after the plane landed.

I spotted Peel come through the exit. She nodded my way. Firesign had indeed been on the flight. In a few minutes he breezed out himself and hailed a taxi. Peel hopped in our Toranado and the shadowing began. Firesign headed straight for the Marina del Rey area, exiting his taxi at the main lobby of the Marina Royale Hotel. I pulled into the parking lot of the restaurant across the street. Lunch hour was near and the noon crowd was filling up the lot. We were well hidden.

The bellhop had just vanished into the hotel with Firesign's bags and Peel was theorizing as to our next action when I noticed a couple of hippies on a motorbike cruise into the hotel driveway. The clanging bell of recognition rang and it took me painful seconds to make the association. These were the happy flower children I'd seen in the waiting room at Knaves Publications in Atlanta. It was simply too much to believe that their appearance here in Southern California was by accident. There had to be a third force at work.

"But, Hutch, he could get out the back way. Don't you think at least one of us should stake out the lobby?" Peel was concerned about losing our quarry after so long a chase.

"Cool it, sweet. See those two hippies going into the hotel. Do you recognize them? I've seen the pair before -- in Atlanta."

Peel scrambled in her handbag and pulled out a pair of glasses. She stared. "They're familiar. Oh, yeah! I'm seen them at conventions. That's Speed and Teri Carlberg. They run a secret organization called PLEASE. Some people say it means Professional League of Ace Sabotage Experts, or maybe there's an Erudite in there some place. Supposed to be tops in industrial espionage. If you saw them in Atlanta..."

"I was thinking the same thing. C'mon. Let's get in there! Cool heads." We abandoned the car and jaywalked to the hotel. When we got to the lobby there was no sign of either the Carlbergs or Firesign. The wisdom of trying to get Firesign's room number and charging up was debateable. I swept keen eyes about the lobby area. I couldn't imagine that the Carlbergs had followed Meade so quickly. Then I saw the notice of the day's events. "Frigate Room, 11:30 AM, Registration for the American Pornographers Assoc. Convention."

I steered Peel into the bar, "The Cockle Shell", and we ordered tall coolers. I asked her if she knew of the American Pornographers Association Convention. She didn't, but she assured me that all good



SFPAnS indulge in apac. Meade was a good SFPAn. It began to make a smatter of sense. Meade was here to meet somebody at the Convention. The Carlbergs were probably registering this minute. Their purpose was probably the same as ours. All very solid probabilities. The question was how to tap into the action. It was a very fortuitous event that Peel had insisted on coming. She could infiltrate the action. I would be as obvious as Lester Maddox in Watts. We made our plans.

Exploratory probe number one: I waited in the bar while Peel went to the Frigate Room to register under an assumed name and a fictitious local address. Her blonde wig was coming in handy. I sipped my cooler and pondered this new development. The Carlbergs might be after the paintings alone or as the key to the Brinks robbery. Whichever, they were an impediment to my plans for Firesign. All I wanted was to quietly observe who Meade's contact was, then shift my attention to him. With a third force I could see the thing turning into a Peter Sellers comedy. The Carlbergs would have to be decoyed away.

Peel was back in under thirty minutes, fuming. The convention was closed to the general public. The man at the registration desk had considered making an exception for her if she'd come up to his room and let him examine her credentials. She told him the excitement might give him cardiac arrest. So she wasn't registered at the convention but had gotten a look at the attendees. The Carlbergs were indeed there, probably on forged papers, and so was Joe Celko. The big item of interest was that Meade Firesign had been talking to Cuyler Warnell Brooks, who had been mentioned to me before.

My intuitive assessment was that Brooks was either Firesign's contact or the Carlberg's employer. I'd been betting on Celko as the pornography fence for the Knaves, but maybe they had more than one. On the other hand Brooks was reputed to have quite a collection and might be planning to add to it by hook or crook. We'd have to wait on more definite developments. I was going to get into that convention.

The bulletin board told us that the evening festivities consisted of the opening ceremonies at 7:00 in the Galleon Room, followed by a speech on "The New Wave in Pornography", to be capped with selected movies. I was willing to bet that there'd be frequent trips to the bar and that badge checking would soon cease. Sooner or later I'd get a shot at Brooks. Peel could change to her brunette wig and keep an eye on Firesign. We'd take our chances with Speed Carlberg and his moll.

We took a room at the hotel to give us a local base of operations. A call to the desk in true jovial drunken conventioneer style got us the room numbers of both Firesign and Brooks. The Carlbergs weren't registered. During the opening ceremonies I initiated exploratory probe number two: search the rooms of the principles. I carry master keys for most of the lock systems in America. The Marina Royale used one, so it was an easy task to call Brooks' room, get no answer, and go right up and in. He had neatly unpacked into the drawers and closet of the room. I went over the place smoothly, careful to disturb nothing, yet checking into all the places people hide things in hotel rooms. There was nothing pertaining to the Wirth paintings. Beside the phone was a note pad -- blank. I lifted the top sheet and scrutinized it. The faint impressions spelled out a message: "Ten -- Jack of Hearts". Somebody had called Brooks. Was it Firesign? What was the significance of two cards? One was a Knave. I felt a cold chill of excitement run up my spine. The trail was getting warm. I put the note paper in my pocket and left Brooks' room to try Firesign's.

I took the stairs up one level.



and padded through the lushly carpeted halls to Firesign's room. I put my ear to his door. From the inside came rustling sounds and the low tones of voices. Somebody was a jump ahead of me. I pounded on the door and bellowed. "Hey, Meade! Lemme in! It's Freddy!"

Dead silence from within. I pounded again. "Gawdamnit, Meade! Open up, it's me!! Awlright, I'll go get my key, you cute bastard!" I clumped away and took the elevator up one flight. That should clear them out fast. In the time it took me to catch another elevator down I figured they'd clear out via the stairs. I'd have liked to identify the Carlbergs as the culprits, but that would risk letting them see me. I wanted to be a stranger.

Playing the part to the hilt I again pounded on the door. "I'm back, Meade! Open up or I will!" Whereupon I turned the master-key in the lock and swung the door open, poised to attack or flee if necessary. The room was in wild disarray. The contents of drawers had been dumped on the floor. Papers had been scattered. On the bed was Meade Firesign, trussed up tighter than a Christmas turkey. He foamed at the gag. "Hmmpff! MMMM! Hpmffff!" His eyes were burning a circle of fire onto my face. I laughed -- I just couldn't help it.

"Hold on, old man; I'll get you free." I untied his bonds, gag last. From the marks on his wrists he hadn't been tied long. He was mad as hell, nevertheless. "So what brings you to the West Coast after me? I'm real curious about that, Meade."

Sputter. Choke. "What are you doing in my room?? If this is some cheap attempt to steal those paintings I'll have your hide flayed in court! Explain yourself this instant! It better be good."

"Cool off, Firesign. It wasn't me who trussed you up so pretty. It was me who rescued you. Think about that. Now answer my question -- I came here yesterday. Check my ticket stubs. How come you fly across a continent and pick the very place I'm at? It couldn't be that you're cutting in on my action, could it? That would make me unhappy, Firesign. I'm not a very nice man when I'm unhappy. Why don't you calm yourself and chat?"

The logic impinged. He ignored me as he massaged his wrists and took careful steps around the room. I poured myself a Jack Daniels from his bottle. Poured one for him too. He took the drink with a wan smile. "McAlan, innocent or guilty, you are glib as hell. Let's assume that you had nothing to do with the recent assault. We still have the question of your illegal entry into my room. Care to comment on that?"

"Now you can't really complain about that. Besides, I knocked first. We're both here -- accept it. We'd better be thinking about who's trying to screw around with our private plans. Our cute little friends aren't likely to just blush and go away. We want the same thing to happen. Let's pool information and make sure it does."

"McAlan, what on earth makes you think I'd confide in you. You've got your business; I've got mine. I'll see you on Monday in Birmingham. Until then, good day and good luck.... Oh, McAlan one word of advice. The forces in this area are quite powerful. Any-one thrusting their nose into places it doesn't belong might be taken as an enemy. That could be most unfortunate. Don't let it happen to you, McAlan.. I do want to see you Monday. Good night."

I sensed that little time was left. One last shot. "How about the Ten-Jack of Hearts, Meade?"

He looked at me with hesitancy, as if confused as to



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my level of meaning. Then his face cleared. "You can eat anywhere you want. Drink anywhere you want. Just don't expect me to join you. Now good night, McAlan."

I stepped into the hall. He closed the door and threw the bolt. It was curious how quickly he'd rebounded. The incident hadn't upset him deeply, as if he expected protection. Then I recalled Meyer's account of the Knaves' involvement in Marina del Rey. That scared me.

**P**

E E L rolled over and grinned up at me as I stood there with the phone book held aloft. "McAlan, you're a terribly fatuous cat. Really, such conceit."

"To be proud of a clever piece of deduction? Nonsense! Tonight at ten we shall be dining at this jazzy costal restaurant, the Jack of Hearts, observing what goes on here in swing city by the sea. Perhaps we'll even recognize some of the patrons."

"Who do you think Cuyler Warnell Brooks is meeting there?"

"I doubt if it's Meade. He knows about the place, but he wasn't concerned that I knew too. In fact he seemed amused. I think Brooks has a rendezvous with somebody high up, one of the power figures in this little game. The Jack of Hearts -- I'll give odds that the Knaves own the place."

Driving down Admiralty Way, past the many restaurants and night clubs that line the waterfront, we discussed our plan. I'd called for reservations, but they didn't take any. We'd decided to check on the bar layout. If we were lucky, that might be the place to sit. It was quarter past nine. With any kind of a wait, we'd be seated in the dining area around ten. I figured the odds were good unless Brooks was taken to a private room. But we'd face that hurdle if it appeared.

The Jack of Hearts was a big comfortable-looking wooden building, with hefty beams of the kind so popular in the Marina area. The front door had a stained window depicting the Jack of Hearts. Inside the card theme was continued. I put us on the list under the name Hutchinson; no sense in using McAlan. We wandered into the bar and saw that our problem was solved. It was a two-level place. On the upper level the bar ran out over the main dining room as two long galleries. We found a nice table for two that had a view of the main entrance. I ordered us two Polynesian concoctions and we settled to wait.

At ten of ten Brooks came in the front door, peered about in the semidarkness, and announced himself at the desk. He was soon greeted by a man in a shirt so bright and shiny that it must have its own battery pack. A smiling man, casual and at ease, who exuded confident command. The captain led him and Brooks to a booth within our eyeshot. I nudged Peel and we moved along the gallery to an ideal position.

"That's Lee Jacobs," she whispered. "One of the Knaves. You were right about them being here."

Drinks had magically appeared for Jacobs and Brooks. The waiter took their order and vanished. The conversation appeared to be small talk. Whatever Jacobs had to say he was going to take his time. Well, we could wait. Just then our name was called. "Let's ignore it," I told Peel. "We'll not get another spy station so well placed." The page came again and our waitress came over to check on Mr. Hutchinson. I told her we'd changed our mind about dinner but bring another round of drinks.



Steak and lobster arrived for Brooks and a big salad for Jacobs. Two bottles of wine, a red and a white, were put on the table. Over dinner the conversation got a bit more serious. Lee Jacobs would make a point and Brooks would spend a long time explaining. I could almost hear the question -- where are the other three paintings? Brooks was protesting his innocence. At great length he was explaining how he only had twelve paintings. Jacobs wasn't buying it.

Peel kicked me in the shin. "Look, Hutch!" I followed her gaze. A big man in a black and red flannel shirt was pacing across the floor smooth as a cat. Huge shoulder muscles bulged as he walked. Grey streaked his black hair. "That's Hank!"

Jacobs saw him coming and grinned. Brooks continued to expostulate until a huge hand closed on his shoulder. He winced. To the observer it might have been three friends meeting. Jacobs explained the situation briefly to Hank. Brooks stammered. Hank leaned over and stared Brooks in the eyes. He said something in a low tone, then straightened and laughed in hearty booming tones. Brooks was ashen pale. Whatever Hank had said held deadly meaning to him.

The tableau was almost over. Hank took out a coin and flipped it while Brooks nodded his head vigorously. Hank caught the coin and casually bent it in two between his thumb and forefinger. It was an electrifying exhibition of strength. Even I couldn't do that. He dropped the coin in front of Brooks and turned to go.

For an instant his head turned upward and scanned the gallery. For an eternal shard of a second my eyes locked with his and I saw down twin grey tunnels into the depths of a soul of incredible arrogant strength. Dante had been there before me.

"--will do it now. He won't dare buck Hank." Peel was talking. I put myself back on the proper wavelength. "That probably means Firesign will have all fifteen paintings on Monday. Listen! Now that we know it's Brooks who has them we could hijack the bunch in Newport News. The Knaves will think Brooks is holding out."

"I can see I'm gonna have trouble with you. That's no solution to the bigger problem. They plan to let my client have his paintings back cheap enough just to take the heat off. Think -- why are they worried?"

She looked at me with irritation. "They're not worried at all. You take yourself too seriously. Besides --" she smiled "-- if you want this other thing, why can't I have the paintings? Share and share alike."

Downstairs coffee was being served to Jacobs and Brooks. "Peel, I've made an agreement. The art belongs rightfully to my client. I'll share with you in the other. OK? Fair is fair."

"Suppose I prove those paintings belong to me. I can prove it, Hutch."

"Then it would be another story. Look. Firesign is joining Brooks." Below at the booth Meade was sliding in beside Lee Jacobs. He and Brooks began a brief discussion. The details were being taken care of. Whatever happened now I knew the contact. Here at the Jack of Hearts were the Knaves themselves. "Let's go, Peel."

"What you have in mind? Shouldn't we follow C.W. Brooks?"

"No need. It's all happened already. I need to think about how to crack the Knaves. That's not going to be an easy thing....."



"What do you want?" Downstairs Meade and Cuyler Warnell were leaving together. Lee relaxed in the booth as the waiter brought him a snifter probably containing Napoleon cognac.

"A contact. I'd like to get close to the Knaves somehow. The paintings are nailed down, yeah, but the other isn't."

Peel grinned. "Oh, that's easy! Come on!" She led the way downstairs, stopping in the ladies room to shed her dark wig and brush out her auburn hair, red as flame.

With a bouncy walk she led a reluctant me straight up to Lee Jacobs. "Lee!! Honey chile, I just knew it was you! My, you're looking good. I thought Los Angeles was such a big city I'd never run into anybody I knew. How are you?"

With a big smile of recognition on his face Lee slid out of his booth and embraced her. "Peel C'ruthers! You hug as sweet as ever!" He kissed her with a little peck on the lips. "Been since the '71 DeepSouthCon, hasn't it. Lady, you just get prettier. What brings you to Ellay? Come on, you and your friend join me. I'm Lee Jacobs," he said to me, extending a handshake.

"Hutch McAlan. Peel's a bit impetuous. Hope we're not disturbing you."

"Not at all. Not at all. Sit down." He waved for a waiter and presto! one appeared. Discipline was good. I wondered if Hank handled the malingerers. "How about some tidbits? There's wine here. But name your poison."

"Oh yes, we're hungry!" pealed Peel. "Sounds good. Wine's fine."

snacks. Some steak-o-bobs. A cool bottle of Gewurztraminier." "Emile, bring us a selection of

Peel did most of the talking for a while. The food came and I devoured it like a starving wolf, but a starving wolf with manners. I'd not felt comfortable in discussions about old mutual acquaintances of two other people. The tales were interesting and improbable, however. Suddenly Peel involved me. "Are you still playing Hearts, Lee? Hutch is a marvelous Hearts player. He's the best I've ever seen."

am." What the hell she was up to I didn't know, but I'd go along. "I am? I mean, I

looked at me appraisingly. "You enjoy a good hard game of Hearts, do you, Hutch?" Lee

"Well, yes. I've played before, if you know what I mean. You're an enthusiast yourself, Lee?"

"Oh, yes." He waved for coffee. "Hutch, you look like a competitor. Tomorrow night I'm having a little Hearts game at my place. Two tables. One of the gentlemen I invited is going to be otherwise engaged. Will you fill his place? The stakes are a modest dollar a point."

I thought it over, for this could be a trap. I was wondering about Peel -- how easily she'd found this entry. It might be a gala McAlan shoot they were planning. Well, Meyer didn't call me dumb for nothing. "Sounds splendid, Lee. I'll need directions, of course."

"Of course." We squared it all away. Lee had a place up in the Hollywood Hills. I folded the map he drew on a napkin and tucked it in my pocket. We chatted awhile longer, until the place was obviously beginning to close down, then Peel and I split. Lee was very friendly. I liked him quite a bit. The whole thing was taking on an unreal air, like a picnic by the sea. I had to try hard to remember it



was a very deadly business. The thought of Hank's eyes brought me back to reality. We parted most cordially at the door, with that beautiful stained glass staring at me. All the way back to the Marina Royale I kept a sharp eye on the rear view mirror.

Peel was delighted. She said that all the Knaves played Hearts like crazy. Hank would probably be there tomorrow night. It would be like old times. I was a ship caught in the grip of this temporal storm. The last thing I remembered that night was Peel laughing like the wind.....

**L**

A U R E L Canyon Boulevard winds up the hillside like a snake. I took the curves easily, driving like a tourist. The branch onto Torquemada Drive was hard to spot, but Lee's map had prepared me. I glanced back to make sure that Peel was following with the Toranado, then went on. Today was relatively smog free and the blue sky was absolutely beautiful. Before long I had my bearings and spotted a side street winding off. We were close to Lee's place. I parked the Gremlin off where the road widened and the shoulder yielded nicely to a cluster of low trees.

Peel pulled up alongside as I locked the Gremlin, careful to put the .357 Magnum out of sight under the seat. I got in and smiled. "Now we've got a safety valve. If things blow at Jacobs' party we can leave by the rear exit." I didn't tell her about the gun. She'd never be able to fire it accurately.

We enjoyed the drive back to the Marina area. I took Sunset across to the Pacific Coast Highway, remembering my last visit to Ellay, some three years ago. Not much had changed. We ate lunch on the pier in Santa Monica. A little seafood place I knew. Peel's conversation was lively, filled with speculation about the composition of the two tables that would be playing tonight. I drank in the names and descriptions. Whatever Peel knew about their style of play I adsorbed. It was going to be a rough and tumble evening. My rusty knowledge of Hearts was in need of whatever bolstering it could get.

We spent the afternoon playing through practice deals to acquaint me with the particular set of rules the Knaves played. As the afternoon wore on what started as fun became repetitive work. Peel grew tired of it rapidly. I took the cards and practiced my second dealing. She talked. "Why is this Hearts game so important? Didn't you just want a contact with the Knaves?"

"Not just any contact," I replied. Riffle riffle. Deal deal. "I want to get to them so deeply that things are revealed. Y'know?"

"No. What things are you after?"

"Just a clue to the other."

"Come on, Hutch. Tell me about this other you keep mentioning. Share and share alike. You said it."

I laughed. "Peel, don't you know how the paintings were lost? In a Brinks robbery that also saw \$250,000 walk away. That's the other. Of course I don't it's lying around in pristine cash. The Knaves have used it to build their empire. But it's found money and I intend to take something of equal value out of their hide. Something they can't run to the authorities about. That's the way it works. I salvage things."

"Hutch, you damn fool. Don't mess around with Hank. The paintings you can take. They won't mind about the paintings. Please don't make Hank mad. I don't want to see you dead....."



"Don't worry about Hank. I'm not dumb. They'll never know what happened. Count on me, baby. I'm a pro."

She was quiet from then on. I was busy practicing. Before long I felt the old skill juices flowing. Control was surging back. The fine points of Hearts, a game I hadn't played in years, perked up in my memory. I began to feel pretty good. Now it was important to reassure Peel, before she said her prayers for my poor departed soul and switched sides in the big game. I riffled the cards and amazed her with a few card tricks, demonstrating my mastery of the media. Then, riding on the elevation of her mood, I talked. "I'm awful fond of this scarred old hide of mine, Peel. I'm not going to put it up for the taking on any bet that doesn't favor me pretty heavily on the odds. I've been in the big game for a lot of years -- more than you'd guess. I've met some tough people -- tougher than the Knaves. I'm still alive. Now, knowing how much I love life, are you with me in this? Take a chance on this carousel horse and go for the gold ring, not just the brass?"

At eight o'clock that night we were pulling up the driveway of the Jacobs estate and stopping at the Spanish style gate. Peel was beside me. The gatekeeper asked my name and passed us on through without comment. From what I could see a chain-link fence surrounded the place. We parked on the circle and strolled to the front door. Lee Jacobs greeted us in person and ushered us into the spreading modern house he inhabited.

In the big living room, with conversation pits and huge fireplace burning real wood, were gathered about a dozen folk. Lee explained that it was early yet. The first table could be launched now that I'd arrived. We went on thru the living room, pausing for introductions to names I didn't catch, and entered a small luxurious card room. There were two octagonal tables separated by a lounge area with a bar. Soft jazz came over the speakers. I'd have sworn it was Earl Bostich.

My table formed under the able direction of Lee J (as he was called). Chuck was a slim dark man with a serious look to him. A dark-haired lady, Dian, was with him and she kept urging Lee to get another table and let her play. He suggested as an alternative the "LASFS-poker" game that would be forming later in the main room.

Ed Cox was a tall thin intense fellow whose main concern seemed to be assuring himself that an adequate supply of Coors had been laid in. Lee revealed the small refrigerator hidden in the lounge setup and displayed at least three cases cooling. That seemed to satisfy Ed, so he seated himself at the table and cracked his knuckles. I sat down too.

Dave Hulan was a tall distinguished fellow, cool and unruffled as he kissed his Marcia and sat to complete the foursome. She stood behind him, tall and comely, as he shuffled the cards Lee had provided and proposed a cut for deal. Ed won and the game began. We would play until midnight. The two best scores would join the two best of the second table for a play-off session, stakes to be determined at game time. I settled in to serious play.

The infighting was of high level. Nobody at the table was a chump. We slowly loosened up from our initial conservative stances. Chuck had tried early to run on a fair hand and Dave had overtaken a critical trick to gain the lead and shift to Chuck's void suit. The cost was twenty-one points and Chuck was laboring to overcome the blow. I had taken no chances and was doing well enough. My eyes were on the other table, which was as yet empty. If my expectations were met all the Knaves might be there. My mind raced over the other candidates Peel had mentioned. I was sure



that Brooks was the missing player, sent scurrying after the other three paintings. Firesign was in town but he carried no great reputation as a Hearts player. I thought my chances were good to see the four Knaves assembled. (24) 29

It was about time, so I gently dealt myself a few top hearts and shot the moon. It cushioned me nicely and I slid into second place in the first game with only two points more than Dave Hulan. Our second game started immediately, everybody eager. The other table was still empty. It was quite a fray. I'd make sure I got the Queen with enough backers on my deal and used it to put down the competition. When it was all over I was winner by nine points, leading Chuck-the-serious. Poor Ed Cox had been cursed with more than his share of disasters and was far in arrears. We broke for drinks.

I wandered back into the main room in search of Lee Jacobs. He was mingling with the crowd, which had doubled in size since I arrived. No mistaking it was a lively group. I caught Lee as he circled by the bar for another can of Coors. "Hey, Lee! When is this mythical second table going to materialize? I'm doing so well so far that I can't wait for the real action."

"Oh, pretty soon. We're only missing one. Come on, I'll introduce you to the competitors."

We strolled over to a cluster of people where a chap wearing a suit obviously bought on Carnaby Street was discoursing on the best spots to eat in London. Lee introduced him as Billy Pettit, the Jack of Clubs. His wife was a charming lady named Rosemary, who actually did hail from England. Billy had surveyed more than eating places while in London. We exchanged pleasantries, then Lee led me away. "So Billy is the Jack of Clubs. That must mean that your restaurant, the Jack of Hearts...."

"Is named after me. Yes, I'm the Jack of Hearts. I think the Jack of Spades is around here somewhere. Yes, there. In the center of that gaggle of femmefans."

As we approached I heard a deep baritone interlaced with numerous soft giggling voices. "Oh, Hank," squealed one, "please let me have a gray hair from your chest to put in a locket!" Lee chuckled as he pushed his way through. The crowd parted and I saw Hank sprawled on a sofa, looking almost benign in this admiring environment. I wasn't fooled. This was the man who would chop me in catfood, or so Don Markstein had promised. This was the man who could threaten Cuyler Warnell Brooks with some dread fate and laugh afterwards.

"Hank!" shouted Lee. "Come meet our latest Hearts phenomenon, Hutch McAlan. Hutch is tearing up the little table. I expect we'll see him later at the big table. Hutch, shake hands with Hank Reinhardt, the Jack of Spades."

Hank's grip was firm, but he didn't try to crush my hand. He didn't need to. We said hello with stock phrases and I watched his eyes for any hint of recognition. There was none. As far as I could tell Hutch McAlan was just another stranger to Hank. Wheels in my head were turning. If Hank's last name was Reinhardt and Lee called him the Jack of Spades that meant he was one of the Knaves themselves, not just hired muscle. It made me all the more wary.

"There's Lon and Kathy," said Lee. "The big table is complete." Up near the door, on the high portion of the multilevel room, were standing the latest players in this act. She was a stunning blonde wearing wine slacks and a tight-fitting silk top. He was a big man with gold wire glasses and penetrating blue eyes that made me uneasy, even across the room. Lee waved and they came to meet



us. We met at the bar. Lee had two Coors open for them. "Hutch, this is Kathy Atkins, the Comptroller for Knaves enterprises on the West Coast. The ugly one beside her is Lon Atkins, the Jack of Diamonds." They were quite polite. Lon's handshake was like Hank's, firm grip and hidden power behind it. Kathy made no effort to either flaunt or hide her intelligence. I noticed the little gold tiger nestled in her decolletage and knew she'd never be able to hide her other assets.

Ed Cox

was urging the Hearts players to resume -- he wanted vengeance. I made an exit to the card room. Soon the four Knaves came in, laughing and kidding one another, and began serious play at the other table. They moved the cards rapidly -- skill born of long practice together. One eye I kept on their table to pick up the mannerisms of the players. The other eye I used to protect my leader's position at my table. Only once more did I deal myself shooting cards.

At quarter of twelve both tables adjourned to feast on the mountain of snack foods being served in the main room. In the score totaling that had come at adjournment I was in the lead. Close behind was Dave Hulan, resourcefully calculating in his play. Ed had pulled back even with Chuck, but both had lost in the struggle to ascend to the big table. The money was all right too.

I met Lee at the refreshment center, popping the top off another Coors. He and Lon had been clear winners at the big table. Billy was taking it calmly. "These are the hands of a born gambler," he said, holding up his mitts. One held a Coors. "Yeah, he means he knows how to lose," said Lee. Hank wasn't so stoic. I noticed that the bottle he was drinking from had the top bitten off. I guessed that Hank wasn't a good loser.

"No he isn't despite all the practice he's had." I was startled by Lon's comment. I hadn't noticed him come up. The mind reading act disturbed me. What else did he suspect?

"Hello,

Lon. I hear from Lee that we'll be facing each other later tonight. Being an old Florida boy I'm not too anxious to go up against the Jack of Diamonds. Maybe I'm superstitious but I recall the old song -- 'Jack of Diamonds, Jack of Diamonds, I know you of old. You have robbed my poor body of silver and of gold'. It's a bad omen, if you know what I mean."

"Oh, no." Lon bubbled with mirth. "I may be the Jack of Diamonds but I'm not magical, Hutch. I'll try your skill, that's all. The only thing I compete with is human powers. See you at the big table. You're not the kind to run." He faded into the crowd.

I caught up with Peel. "Spot anything interesting?" She thought it was a pretty typical fan party. Meade Firesign was here, but he was quite friendly. Apparently the Knaves were sure of getting all fifteen paintings. That was the answer to my meddling, they thought. This playing it cool suited me just fine. It would give me a freer hand if the opposition was relaxed and certain of their position. By the time they knew different I'd be long gone.

In about ten minutes the Hearts game got under steam again. The four players were Lee, Dave, Lon and me. As we cut for deal Lee suggested that as we were all winners the stakes be raised to something more sporting. We settled on \$5 a point. That seemed sporting enough for the moment.

Play went rapidly. I played my cards conservatively and fell a little behind. Every time I dealt those damned blue eyes of Atkins were on my hands. There was no point in testing my skill as a mechanic yet -- not unless it was the only way.



I was just glad this was Hearts and not poker. I'd have hated to be betting into Lon. The game took a sudden turn when Lee almost shot the moon -- 25 points. Dave and Lon assured him that Hank would be proud. Two hands later Lon did shoot the moon, choosing to add to our scores and put Lee over. "Got you, Lee!" he chortled. I surmised a private competition between the two. As the score was being totaled by Hulan in came Firesign. He nodded and told Lon that there was a phone call for him. Atkins excused himself.

Hank came in, cradling an axe like a baby. The tension was still visible in his jaws. He tapped the axe and it sang sweet and deadly. "Where's Atkins? Is he losing?"

"He had a phone call," replied Lee. "He won the first game. Why Hank, are you still smarting?"

"One of these years he's going to lose a game," snarled Hank. He shook the axe and an unholy light burned in his eyes. I spotted a possible split here and filed the information for future use. Hank enjoyed being beaten about like a bass enjoys the treble hook. About this time Lon returned and apologized to the table. He was being called away for important business reasons. Kathy and he departed with regrets. Lon suggested that Hank take his seat and assume his score. "Hank needs a handicap," he explained. That was more than all right with the table -- blood gleamed in our eyes at the thought of Hank.

With Atkins and his curious gaze gone I feel more able to open up my style. As Hank raved and ranted on the first deal, shaking his axe before leaving it on the floor, I dealt myself the small miracle and ran 'em. As play unfolded I found Hank to be a habitual optimist and almost-moon shot artist. His style left a fine parking place for high cards. Within a single game span he had turned things around. Lee was best, Dave second, and me a narrow third. In the third game I exerted influence to pick up the second slot, Lee having a bad baaad hand and letting Dave into first. By now the gap had widened so far that there were three winners and one loser. Fine as this was, my plans called for Lee to fall also. I concentrated my talents on him.

Tall beautiful Marcia brought us Coors as the third game was beginning. Dave shot the moon on the next hand, solidifying his hold and discouraging Hank, who tried to take the key trick and had to be convinced that Hearts were not trump. Lee grumbled that it was the last time he'd try to teach Hank bridge. The very next hand my careful crimping of the cards paid off and I led into the blank Queen of Spades in Lee's hand. That pleased me.

When Peel wandered in from the main room, disheveled from the "fan" tradition of snogging, I had seized the lead. Hank was enormously far behind, but more important LeeJ was on the losing side of even. The diminution of sound from the main room persuaded me that the party was fading. So much the better. I used the distraction of Peel's appearance to deal myself another shooting hand. Might as well pad the lead.

Hours later dawn broke across the Santa Monica mountains. Lee announced, sorrowfully, that this was the last game. We ran the stakes to \$25 a point in honor. Hank was courageous indeed in his attempts to shoot the moon. If only he'd had some good cards he might have succeeded once. Dave did totals on the score and had Lee run a cross check. It balanced. I was big winner. Hank was big loser. Dave won a couple hundred and Lee lost in like amount. We all stood up, stretched, yawned, and wished for coffee. Peel was asleep on a couch in the living room. We strolled that way and Lee made the offer to pay off. "Come on with me



to the cash room," he said. "I'll cover Hank tonight. He can wash the dishes tomorrow morning."

We went down a short hall and turned into a book-lined room -- more a library than a treasury. An expanse of glass wall looked out over Los Angeles. A million lights twinkled in the haze, light and covering. Three typewriters were aligned on a vast desk with three chairs. Along one wall was a table with ditto machine and mimeograph. The room had a comfortable lived-in feel. Colorful spines of pulp and digest magazines occupied over half the shelf space. One ceiling height section of the room was given to brown thick envelopes that looked for the world like ordinary jiffy-pak mailing jackets. It was there that Lee led us.

I expected a wall safe, but Lee just took down one of the jet-paks. On the top in red magic marker someone had written "FAPA 103". Lee carried it to the desk and dumped out some of the contents. Bundles of money, wrapped with rubber bands. Lots of bundles. I was cool as a can of Coors. This was it -- the big prize. With a theatrical gesture Lee scooped up a couple of bundles and peeled off \$200 for Dave. It took a little longer to give me my \$3670. Hank glowered during the entire procedure.

"A little ingroup joke," said Lee. "FAPA 103 has had a very special significance to the Knaves and I was reluctant to give it up. Well, that settles accounts. Perhaps we'll see you again, Hutch, though I suspect that you'll be far away by Monday. I have a hunch you'll be as lucky in completing a business deal as you were at Hearts tonight."

"Yes, I do have an important engagement on Monday. As a matter of fact I'm leaving Los Angeles tomorrow afternoon as much as I hate to go. The city's been good to me. Now if I can figure out a safe way to wake up Peel we'll be leaving. My thanks to you for a fine evening. Dave, a pleasure. Hank, an experience meeting you. I've heard rumors. Good night."

**P**

E E I didn't like the plan. I explained about the fence. I explained about the danger. She still didn't want me to go alone. Why was terribly apparent.

"I don't trust you, Hutch!" She was charming when angry. "If you get your hands on that money what reason would you have to bother with the paintings? My paintings! Damn it! I'm keeping an eye on you."

"Calm down, cup cake. You'll be on the road with the car. You're my exit route -- don't think I'm planning on hiking away from that place. Besides, if I don't show up in Birmingham to get the paintings they'll know I'm the one. It's all got to go smoothly or it won't go at all. Think it through."

So she did. We napped that afternoon until 10 PM to be fresh for the night's operation. A light meal and we were on our way. At 3 AM Ellay was mostly quiet. Progress was rapid on the surface streets. I cut our lights as we approached the edge of the Jacobs estate and just drifted in. The chain link fence gleamed pale in the night. I had no doubts that it was wired for an alarm if not electrified. This was the first touchy step.

I located a clear approach and started my run. The vaulting pole felt limber and well balanced in my hands. Thank God for old skills. The slight shock as I planted the pole was translated immediately into jump, upward motion. Twist. Propell. Release and push away. Down in the athlete's



33 (25)  
tumble to strike the well-manicured green grass and roll. A shaky feeling from adrenalin pumping. Safe. There was no sound in the nite but the sound of nature. I rose in a crouch and walked back to the fence. Peel had retrieved the vaulting pole. She held it like I'd shown her and threw it cleanly over. Step one was a success.

I stowed the pole in a clump of flowering bushes and started for the house, taking my time and keeping eyes alert. There was always a possibility he might have dogs. I'd faced a Doberman once in Mexico, but I wasn't anxious to repeat the experience. I reached the house without incident and scouted the windows till I found the guest bathroom. As I'd suspected from last night the window was open a crack. I stretched and pushed it open all the way. No reaction.

It was a tight squeeze but I wiggled through and stepped from the john onto the floor. The house sounded asleep. In the dimness I made my way into the living room, through the hall, and entered the library. Against the far wall pale jet-paks stared at me enigmatically. Which was the FAPA 103?

I went to the place I remembered Lee fetching it from. On the third try I found those bright red letters. The envelope felt strangely empty. Rapidly I reached in and found only a single sheet of paper. In the faint light from the window I made out the words: "IOU \$250,000. Signed -- the Ex-Lone Virgin". Whoever the hell that was I knew what he meant. The Knaves had been screwed. I'd been screwed!

No room for panic. I folded the paper and put it in my hip pocket. From my jacket I took the strips of newspaper, currency size wrapped with rubber bands, and stuffed them into FAPA 103. It went back into place. Nothing looked out of place. Quickly I exited via the bath room window and pushed it nearly shut. I trotted back to the corner of the fence. As I arrived and was taking the pole from the flowers I heard a motorcycle kick into life. A beam of light stabbed down the road and the bike's engine wound up. As I started my run the motorcycle roared past. I vaulted the fence.

Crash. Bam. I was bruised but uninjured. Peel had the engine running. I dived and landed in the bucket seat. "Follow that bike!" I gasped. "It's the Carlbergs. They've got FAPA 103." She hit the accelerator but they had a good lead. As we twisted and swerved down Laurel Canyon we didn't gain an inch. When we reached Sunset they had lost some ground. The bike zipped through a red light and made a fantastic turn the next block up. Peel stopped for the light.

"Run it!  
For God's sake they're getting away!"

Peel looked at me like I was crazy. "It's red." She caught my agitation and floored it out. We soared through the light and bounced over the curb, losing speed as Peel shifted to braking. The Carlbergs were gone. I moaned. Peel looked at me with sorrowful eyes. "Did I do wrong, Hutch?"

I took the wheel and we cruised the area, but there was no trace of the motorbike. Nothing left to do but return to the Marina. Dawn was breaking through as we arrived. I was tired but my mind had been working. It was early even back in St. Pete but Meyer was going to get a call. If I woke him up so much the better. A mean mood can be hard on your friends.

Meyer claimed to have been up for an hour and run on the beach. Yeah, sure. I gave him the info I had on the Carlbergs and their organization PLEASE. Peel had very little to tell. The whole operation was kept as



secret as possible. The few hints that had slipped out were all she knew. It was a tough assignment to hand Meyer, especially with only the weekend left to work. I told Meyer I'd call him again Monday morning from Birmingham. Whatever else happened here in Los Angeles I was planning to be at Meade Firesign's office Monday afternoon. Those paintings were still pivotal in this whole mess. I felt that I was overlooking some small clue, small tiny correlation, that would make sense out of the puzzle. I had better than a day to scour Los Angeles for it and I was going to try.

Operation Search. Peel called the airlines but turned up no booking for Carlberg. I probed the porno convention without success. Nobody had seen the Carlbergs since that first night. Brooks had checked out yesterday. From his position it was good to be gone. I guessed there'd be no question of him yielding the other paintings. He had to appear cooperative. After a routine negotiation in Birmingham I presumed a trip to Newport News would be in order unless Meyer discovered something hot.

I spent the afternoon touring motorcycle rental places. No luck. I doubted if the Carlbergs had ridden the damn thing all the way from Atlanta but they sure hadn't rented it in Ellay. Tired and discouraged we made airline reservations and crashed. In the night I woke up from a nightmare. I dreamed that Hank was chasing me with a giant mincer. He kept yelling that his cat was hungry. His cat was named FAPA 103.

C

O A L from the steel mills was imbuing the air with a sulphur smell that faintly penetrated the plane as we circled the airport in Birmingham. I noticed it because it was different from the kind of pollution I'd gotten used to in Los Angeles. Every city has its own brand of slow death these days. Choose your poison.

Being hungry I chose brunch. We retrieved Peel's MG and drove to a pancake house on the outskirts of town. I worked my way through a giant stack of pancakes before calling Meyer. He was cheerful but not terribly helpful. Yes, there was a rather mysterious organization called PLEASE. Rumor had that it was expert in espionage matters. It took only one client at a time, being a small elite group, and was currently on a case. End of briefing.

Disappointed but not surprised I reviewed my strategy for the Firesign encounter as Peel drove us downtown. No matter whether it was me or Carlberg that had the money, this was going to be a greatly dangerous office visit. I didn't know how aware the Knaves were of this third force in the game. I wasn't anxious for them to go after PLEASE, even if that put the heat on me. I wanted the Carlbergs for myself.

Peel dropped me two blocks from K Tower. She drove off to a wait at the Public Library. Again I'd given myself two hours. If I hadn't shown by then Peel would call Meyer and let him try Firesign's office by long-distance before alerting the local gendarmes. I didn't figure it would be necessary. Any trouble shouldn't occur in the office of a prominent local lawyer. It would be Hank, later. I had my plans for shaking a tail, however.

I took the express elevator to Meade Firesign's suite and strolled in looking relaxed. I act pretty well when necessary. The blonde secretary sent me right in. Meade was doing an imitation of Hamlet with Yorick's poor skull. He put it back on the shelf when he saw me and sat behind his desk. He didn't ask me to sit. I did anyway. After all, I was the honored guest.



"McAlan, you perplex me."

"Lil ole me?? I'm so very flattered. What the hell are you talking about?"

"Tell me you weren't in Newport News. I'd like to believe it."

"Lovely city, I'm sure. Never been there. I like Williamsburg, myself. Quaint. Colonial. I just get off on American history."

"McAlan, one of these days you're going to wisecrack yourself into an early grave. There was an attempted burglary yesterday at my client's business in Newport News. Nothing was taken. From the pattern I suspect that the Wirth paintings were the target. Fortunately they were en route to Birmingham at that time. At such a bargain price, McAlan, I can't see why you would try it. You did leave Los Angeles in a hurry, however. Very strange. Even stranger to find you there in the first place."

"What a paranoid twist you have, Fire-sign. How could I know where you had the paintings stashed? By the way, I trust there are fifteen of the beauties on the way, not twelve. Otherwise forget it."

"Fifteen." He got up and walked to the window. In the short pause I evaluated the bombshell. So the Carlbergs were out for a clean sweep. That meant that they knew all about the Brinks robbery and were flying on the same course as I. A warm feeling grew in my heart. The nice people would be coming to me. If they wanted the paintings they'd enter the tiger's lair. Of course, based on our previous mutual encounters, they probably thought of me as a pussycat. So let them be surprised.

"If it's fifteen," I announced, "Then let's do business. I can have the money available quickly. How about the paintings?"

"I'm not so hasty anymore," grinned Meade, "and neither is my client. The attempted burglary has disturbed us. It's time for a stronger show of faith. Our clients themselves will negotiate the final exchange. This means an additional thousand dollars of expense. Under the circumstances a very modest increment. Each man may bring a friend to the meeting. I assume that'll be you. As for myself, alas, business calls me elsewhere. A fellow named Hank Reinhardt will be taking my place. I think you met him in Los Angeles. Really a good old boy. Now the meeting will be a two part thing. On Wednesday be at the Atlanta Airport. Tickets will be waiting for you at the desk of American Airlines. Exactly at noon there will be a page for Mr. McAlan. The call will be to tell you what name the tickets are under. When you arrive in the city of destination you will be paged again. Then it's up to you to name a place for the rendezvous."

"I accept the mission. Will you self-destruct in thirty seconds?"

"Highly unlikely. I have another appointment soon. Good day, Mr. McAlan. Remember, the Atlanta airport at noon on Wednesday."

"Sure. Sure." I left at the same strolling pace I'd entered. My mind was going round at nuclear speeds. Check off the points -- the Carlbergs weren't suspected; they would chase the paintings; Hank was involved (Shudder); Brooks and Lillian would be there for the exchange. It didn't add up too fabulously. If Lillian got his hands on the paintings it would be hard for me to use them as bait. On the other hand Hank's presence might mean that we were never meant to get through the deal. Maybe we were going to be catfood. I discarded all the theories and walked to the library.



I walked into the main section of town and went rapidly through a department store -- up the escalator, down the elevator, out a side door. I repeated the same maneuver at a second department store. I streaked up for two blocks, cut through an alley, and looked back. Nobody was following. OK, I'd try the library.

Peel was in the big room on the west side, reading science fiction. I explained the situation. I'd let Meyer arrange for Guy Lillian to be in Atlanta. Peel and I might as well drive there now. We'd lost our control over the situation and had to wait for things to come our way again. It was no reason to be discouraged. The wheel would come round once more. As Peel blitzed the road to Atlanta I thought deep thoughts. The key was there and I was missing it.....

**A**S Meyer came off the plane from St. Pete, carrying his familiar snakeskin attache case, he was smiling that infectuous Meyer smile. He paused to say goodbye to a little girl and her grandmother he'd made friends with on the flight. When he reached me I slapped him on the back and introduced him to Peel. The warm Meyer G. Brown charm captivated her immediately. Three old friends, we walked down to the baggage pick-up chatting about absolute inconsequentials. No one would have guessed that our trio would soon be faced with a test of strength and cunning against the forces of fear and terror.

Meyer rented a car and I rode with him to Peel's apartment. We'd never have all three fit into the MG. I was with Meyer to give directions, but it gave us a chance to talk privately. Meyer was interested in the details I hadn't been able to give him over the phone. The full story of the Los Angeles excursion unfolded. He soaked up the facts and speculations. I saw him mulling them deep in his mind, absorbed by the puzzle.

At Peel's place we had tuna sandwiches and beer. The strategy planning began almost immediately. "Looks like the Knaves have decided to eliminate the threat," I said. "Getting Lillian and me isolated with Hank is a bold-faced move. I suspect we're scheduled to be catfood. The question is what to do about it."

"Think you could take this Hank character, Hutch?" asked Meyer.

"I'm tough, but not that tough. Our play has got to be outsmarting them. That airport business is designed to cut us off from any support. To spike that Peel has made reservations, in many different names, on every flight leaving Atlanta between noon and 7:10 Wednesday night. Not that I thought there'd be much delay between the call at noon and the departing flight. I just didn't want to get caught on a delay play."

"Clever. Peel and I will be on the same plane. Are you planning to let Guy Lillian in on the situation?"

"No. I want him to be acting natural. Besides, he might call the whole thing off. He'll be arriving tomorrow at 10:50 from New York. He needed today to get the cash together." We kept on trying to shape strategy. I'd noticed there was a 12:20 flight to Los Angeles and was betting on it to be the one. Meyer agreed. Selection of a place was a toughie. Whatever we decided to do had to apply wherever we might wind up. After two hours we had a plan we felt confident in. Meyer proposed that we forget the pressures for the evening and go out for steaks and wine. This fine suggestion was seconded by all.



The next morning as I prepared myself for the confrontation another ramification of the airline trip hit home. I put my trusty .357 Magnum away. The metal detectors at the airport would effectively strip any armament off me. Clever devils, the Knaves.

Our caravan departed. I led the way driving Meyer's rental machine. It would be good form to arrive alone for the benefit of any observer. Peel and Meyer followed in the MG. We parked close by each other but I got out and went on to the terminal without a nod. Peel had on her brunette wig and Meyer his floral "tourist" shirt. Adequate disguises. Inside the terminal I walked slowly to the gate Guy would arrive at. The others camped in the bar.

Guy Lillian was nervous. He cradled his brief case close to him like a suckling child. He was dressed in an ice cream tropical suit, Ray Bradbury style. We shook hands in a quarter second and he was off talking. "Have they contacted you yet? How are you, Hutch. Is the purchase secure? I'd hate to lose them again. I have a cashiers check for you if this comes through. Are you up on NPP heroes? Oh, never mind. Where do we go next?"

I calmed him down and guided him along the infinite walkway to the bar. We found seats at the bar. Meyer and Peel were at a table near the door. After a beer Guy was on an even keel again. He dedicated his conversation to the Wirth paintings and our chances of really making a recovery. It was heavy on his mind. I glanced over at Peel, who was stirring her Bloody Mary with a stick of celery, and bet I knew a way to give Mr. Guy H. Lillian III a heart attack on the spot.

The page came: "Mr. Guy Lillian please report to the American Airlines desk." We were off and running. My stride was probably two feet longer than Guy's but he made me trot to keep up. At the desk he identified himself and was handed the phone but quick me intercepted. I had told him that I should do the talking. "Mr. Lillian?" came a voice to my hello. "Yeah," I said.

"Wait forty-five minutes. I'll call you again." Click. Whoever it was hung up. I thought I placed the voice. Not Firesign. Not Reinhardt. The dulcet tones of Jerry Page, Knaves hotshot in Atlanta. Lillian was beside himself with impatience. I steered him back to the bar for a wait and signaled Meyer as we came in. The stall possibility had been considered beforehand.

Punctually in the allotted time came a second page for Guy Lillian. I took the phone and mumbled hello. "Lillian? Listen, go to the Delta counter and ask for tickets under the name Arnold Katz. Got that?"

"Yeah. Arnold Katz."

"Right. Go to your destination and wait in the airline terminal for another page. Heheheh. Another page -- there's only one!" Click. My friend the humorist had hung up. I explained the situation to Lillian and we trekked to the Delta terminal. The switch didn't surprise me. At the Delta counter tickets for Arnold Katz and party were for New Orleans on the 1:05 flight. We had to hurry. I feigned dismay and told Lillian I'd left something in the bar. He was to go ahead and board. I sprinted to Meyer and Peel.

By the skin of our teeth we all made it on board. Guy and I were seated comfortably, exchanging idle theories about the best meeting place, when Peel and Meyer struggled down the aisle past us. So far, so good. New Orleans was only an easy trip away. I looked but didn't see my stewardess acquaintance -- the one with the skinny dipping parties.



② We didn't have to wait long after disembarking at New Orleans. The call came in less than five minutes after we sat down in the waiting room. Guy had yielded his ideas about rendezvous and was trusting in my judgment. I had a real zingeroo prepared.

"Mr. Lillian?" I knew the voice from somewhere but it wasn't Hank. I'd never heard Brooks speak. The voice nagged at me. It didn't like me.

"Sure. Sure. You the Mysterious Contact?"

"Of course. You're not dealing with amateurs!"

"Got your pencil handy?"

"You're not Lillian. You're McAlan."

"How very astute. We'll meet you in the bar at the Ignite Club in the Quarter. Eight PM. Have the paintings -- all fifteen."

"That raunchy flea bitten joint? Why you've got no--" Click. I hung up on him. That voice was so very familiar. Well, it would come to me. I didn't have to tell Guy. He'd been hanging over my shoulder the whole call. I did have to tell Meyer. Shaking Lillian off I dodged into the men's room. Meyer entered at the same time. Washing hands side by side I told him. On schedule so far. Tonight would tell the tale.

C

O V E R charge at the Ignite Club was a quarter. That may tell you something about the place. I'd been there a couple of years ago in connection with the Norbrick caper and had discovered a few interesting things about the place. Like there were rooms upstairs that could be rented by the half hour, no questions asked. Even so, I figured we'd make quite an impression on the management tonight.

Meyer and Peel had preceded us to establish their position in advance. I led Guy into the sleazy bar, its air filled with smoke and honky tonk jazz. On the center stage a stripper shaking her ass at the clientele was displaying the high style learned during her thirty years in the business. We found a rickety table and ordered beers from the waitress, her uniform cut down to her navel in front and up to her waist on the sides. Guy balanced his briefcase on his knees and peered around the place. We were here five minutes early, but he thought our contacts might have been even earlier.

About five after eight I saw Hank come in the door. With him was the owner of the voice that had puzzled me -- Don Markstein. Apparently Brooks wasn't Firesign's official "client". I knew it was all a Knaves operation anyway. Hank was wearing a bulky trenchcoat. I waved and they came over to the table. Lillian had his eye on the two suitcases Markstein was carrying.

"Sit down, fellows," I said. "This is my client, Guy Lillian. Guy, meet Hank Reinhardt and Don Markstein." The waitress appeared and I ordered a round of beers. My job was to keep us downstairs for a few minutes. I saw Meyer call John the proprietor over and arrange for a room upstairs. Meyer took Peel's hand and led her to the stairway. A typical occurrence at the Ignite Club. Nobody took notice.

"Well, fellows, here we are after lots of James Bond stuff. I assume you've brought all fifteen. Guy will want to examine them before we complete our transaction. How appropriate for you to be the courier, Don. But let's not digress. I'm concerned about that attempted burglary Meade described. Any clues?"



"No proof," replied Hank.

"Then you have an idea? I'd appreciate your theory. Those paintings are going to be our problem now."

"No ideas," said Hank, obviously reticent to voice his theories. I was sure that I knew why -- we were the suspects. The atmosphere was charged. Don was silent, an unusual condition. Guy agitated to get the show moving. I yielded to the pressure, having given Meyer enough set up time, and signaled John. He waddled over and asked about our needs.

"John, we need a place to have a private conversation. Hows about renting one of your upstairs pleasure domes for thirty minutes."

"All four of you? Well, each to his own tastes." John shrugged and assigned us number four. "Top of the stairs, second door on your right."

Up we went. Guy led the way, bounding up the stairs with his briefcase swinging from side to side. Don followed with the two suitcases. Then me, with Hank bringing up the rear. Hank clanked as he climbed. It was a relief to wait at the door until Hank entered the room, then close the flimsy slab of wood. The prickling at the base of my neck abated.

Guy set down his briefcase and asked Don to show him the paintings. Both suitcases were opened and the paintings were spread on the bed. Somehow appropriate. Guy was instantly into his examination, using a magnifying glass to examine the signature. His long sigh told me that these were indeed genuine Douglas Wirths. Once certain that he had scored, Guy seemed anxious to get the mere details out of the way and get the paintings to some private place where he could enjoy them more intimately. He and Don repacked the suitcases. They opened the briefcase and Don began to count the money.

The ammount was correct. Don suddenly crossed the room to Hank and I knew it was time for their move. Hank shed his trench coat like an uncomfortable skin and we were faced with the barbarian in his glory. Guy's jaw dropped. Hank wore chain mail. A maze of straps held an assortment of swords, axes, maces, knives, and a short javelin. He was a walking museum of the medieval. I dropped into a defensive crouch.

"What's going on?" quavered Lillian. "This is most unexpected. Take the money. Take my American Express card. Take my Spiro Agnew watch. Just leave me the paintings!"

"Get back and stay back, Guy. These characters mean to chop us."

"Name your death," snarled Hank. "Kinjou? Perhaps the morningstar. That's very fashionable these days." He drew a mace-and-chain from his belt.

"What diff--di-difference does it make?" spoke up Lillian. He had taken cover in the corner, protecting the suitcases. He'd fight to the death for those.

Hank sneared. "To a man of violence manner of death is very important. Any warrior worth salt has a favorite weapon. To die by the right sword is the final honor a fighting man can attain. I offer the choice to McAlan, not to you."

I saw a narrow chance. Meyer would be in action, but if I could handle Hank myself it would make things easier. "Not the morning star. Try that scimitar. And the dirk. A two-handed fate."

Hank reached to replace the mace and draw a sword. His left hand drew the dagger. Just as



he reached the hilts I shouted again. "No! The kinjou and the javelin are best!" Hank tried. He reached through the straps, his hands full of weaponry. "No! The broadsword!" He twisted again, trying to re-sheath and draw simultaneously. "No! The boot dagger and the axe!" He bent sideways reaching for his boot, looping more straps as he stooped. "Try the mace -- the plain one!" Hank tried to straighten up. To do it he had to pull more straps and belts tighter. His face was turning a nice shade of red.

"The saber! The Randall knife! No, make that the kinjou again! The epee! The morningstar! The axe! The mace! The broadsword! The Bowie! The scimitar! The toothpick! Hut!"

I was breathless but Hank was all tied up. So interlaced with the tight coils of his own scabbard belts and straps was Hank that he could hardly move. He growled deep in his throat, twitched the fingers on his right hand, and fell forward like a great pine being felled. Ka-THUD!! Right on his face.

Markstein threw his arms up oriental fashion and leaped forward with a scream. "Kaiiii-rate!" I smiled at the shoulder-high attacker and swung a fist around in a big overhand motion like winding up to pitch. It caught him squarely on top of the head. He went down in a tumble just as Meyer kicked open the door and ran in with a pistol in his hand.

"Jeezus, Hutch. You work fast." He came over to Hank and looked at the big knot. Meyer grinned. "Let's get the paintings and split. I suggest we leave the cash with these... gentlemen. They deserve something for their efforts."

Peel entered, smiling at the victory. "Are the paintings in the suitcases?" "Yes," said Lillian. "Finally I've recovered my precious Douglas Wirth originals. It's such a good feeling."

We tied Markstein with his belt, making two for that method. Lillian took one of the suitcases and I hefted the other. Meyer stuck the .38 Special into his holster and we were ready to go. A nice clean operation, or so it seemed until I heard the door slam. We whirled and stared down the long deadly barrels of two shotguns.

**T**

H E Carlbergs had arrived. Our hands slowly automatically rose into the air. At the insistence of two shotguns we backed against the wall, leaving the loot on the floor. Guy Lillian moved last, terribly reluctant to abandon his paintings. He remembered, however, the recent studies which showed it is difficult to appreciate erotic art when your carcass is full of shotgun pellets. Guy joined us at the wall.

Hank's eyes were baleful as Speed stepped across him to reach the loot. Both suitcases and the money were carried to the door. Now came the problem I dreaded the solution to. How to escape without allowing pursuit. The quick and dirty method wasn't very pleasant. With the scratchy jazz band bellowing rythmn downstairs the shotgun blasts would probably not be heard. Of course the people in the rooms would notice, but they might be too preoccupied to pursue.

"Lie down on the floor," said Speed. Thank god he was going with the higher risk, lower legal penalty method. It seemed a bit out of character for a top-notch pro to leave the opposition intact for the chase, but I wasn't going to argue the theory with him.



"Move!" Speed was impatient. Teri had tucked the briefcase with the cash under one arm. It made handling the shotgun tricky. I hoped nobody gave her a reason to jump. "Ok, that's fine. Shut your eyes. Nobody move for ten minutes after we leave. The first person coming out the door before that will catch a face full of shot!"

I heard the shotgun being shifted and the suitcases lifted. The door opened. A cry of surprise and the sounds of scuffling. I leaped to my feet and saw the reason. A mountain of muscle had both Carlbergs neatly in hand. The shotguns and suitcases were abandoned on the floor. The struggling Carlbergs were as helpless as babes in the powerful arms of Goergeous Goerge.

"Uhhh, I hope you're not mad at needing backup, Hank. It was Lon told me to be here," said the giant. Hank gnashed his gold teeth together.

I casually strolled over to a shotgun and leveled it at Goerge's middle. "Please join us. Don't forget to close the door behind you." It felt good to be in control again.

The threat dawned on Goerge. He raised his hands, dumping the Carlbergs on the floor in the process. "Get the shotgun, somebody!" I barked. "That doesn't mean you, Speed!" But he was too dazed to do much. Peel scooted over and retrieved the weapon. I herded Goerge and the Carlbergs in the near corner. I decided that leaving Speed and Teri in the hands of the Knaves would be adequate punishment once we made our exit. The thought pleased me and I voiced it to Meyer.

"True enough, Hutch," he replied, "but doesn't the sudden appearance of the Carlbergs bother you? They showed up in Los Angeles at the prono convention. They beat you out at Lee Jacobs' mansion. That's two coincidences -- stretching it. Then the attempted burglary in Newport News. How did they know that Brooks had the paintings. Finally there's the surprise tonight. The secrecy of our arrangements was impenetrable. You put it together."

"Meyer, you're implying that they had access to our plans. That means an informer. Only--"

"That's right, Hutch baby, they work for me." I felt the cold steel of Peel's shotgun in the small of my back. I heard the edge of steel in her sweet voice. The missing piece had fallen into place, but too late.

Speed got to his feet and secured the second shotgun from me. Again I took a stance against the wall, this time Goerge replaced Peel. "Why didn't you stick with me, Peel?"

"I'd already engaged PLEASE. Besides, you weren't going to give me the paintings, you were working for Lillian. I do thank you for the money -- a quarter-million is nice to help with expenses."

"It was fun along the way. Why don't you take the paintings, pay everybody's expenses, split the rest, and be friends. We can still have fun."

She laughed liltingly. "No dice, McAlan. In the end you're a loser."

"I took Hank. You thought nobody alive could take Hank barehanded." In truth her comment had stung. I was proud of myself, for the most part. My only flaw was too much trust.

"Maybe Hank used to be tough, but I watched you confuse an old man who's going slow. No big deal, McAlan."

"OLD MAN!!!" Hank was turning purple. "SLOW!!!! I'll show you who's slow!" His eyes bugged and every muscle swelled. Peel took a step back in alarm. The



great muscles of Hank's arms expanded and burst the straps, sending pieces of leather flying like shrapnel about the room. Peel shrieked and fired the shotgun into the ceiling as she fell backwards. Hank bounded to his feet and ripped the gun from Speed's hands. He bent the barrel double. Bedlam erupted as everybody attacked everybody else with anything that came to hand.

Teri was bashing Coerge across the back of the head with a mace. Meyer & Speed were clashing blades. Peel had been knocked flat by the recoil of the shotgun. Markstein had freed himself in time to tackle Lillian at the door, trying to escape with the paintings. Hank ran about knocking people cold. I caught him with a shotgun butt, smash on top of the skull. It didn't bother him. It cracked him across the throat with the length of the javelin. He coughed. I thrust a dagger at his gut. The point broke on chain mail. We closed in hand-to-hand combat.

It was a knockdown battle. He floored with a roundhouse blow but I kicked him as I went down. It gave me a chance to bash him with a mace five times. I could see he was slowing, but still he came on. Hank's big hands got a strangle hold on my throat. We fell together, me clobbering him with the mace and praying that he gave out before my oxygen did.

No one else in the room was conscious. We were the last two. My vision turned red, then black. In reflex my arm continued to hit him but I was fading fast. The last thing I remember hearing as I lost consciousness was the sound of the door opening yet again.....

**F**

R E S H clean sheets felt so good to my battered body. I was alive. The brace on my neck and the antiseptic feel made me suspect a hospital. I opened my eyes and discovered that I was in a ward. Other beds stood on both sides. The place looked private rather than public. It had the air of expense that better hospitals, the places that cater to the rich, seem to exude.

I painfully pulled myself higher in the bed and looked about. On my right was Meyer, asleep and in traction. To my left was Hank. At least I thought it was Hank. The head was bandaged so much I couldn't be sure. There was Peel, and both Carlbergs, and Guy Lillian. Big Goerge was in a cast -- who had gotten to his arm? Markstein's head was bandaged. The whole cast of buffoons was here, mending in this crazy hospital.

Out the windows was blue sky with that hazy tint that Los Angeles is famous for. As that disturbing fact was sinking into my skull Meyer awakened. "Hey, Hutch. You finally came around. I was worried about you."

"I'm OK, Meyer. Banged up, bruised, but I'll live. What going on here? The last thing I remember is Hank trying to help me fit into shirts with a smaller neck size."

"Things are straightened out now, Hutch. Hank is in the bed beside you recovering from the damage you perpetrated on his skull with a Polish fly swatter."

"I saw him. Give me the details, Meyer. This last development is just too much to take. Where are we, the Knaves' private hospital?"

At that moment the door at the far end of the ward opened and my last question was answered. In came the Jacks of Diamonds, Hearts, and Clubs. They smiled when they saw that I was



with the world again. The committee came my way. There were smiles and nods for Meyer too. He seemed to be on friendly terms with the bunch. What a reversal.

"Feeling alright, Hutch?" asked Lee. "As well as could be expected," I said. "Your buddy boy Hank plays rough." He grinned. "So do you. Take a look at Hank's skull. We'd always thot it was the hardest substance on earth."

"So what happens now? You here to finish the job? I warn you, Lee baby, I die hard."

"Noooo. Noooo. You don't understand." They were all laughing. Damn his eyes, so was Meyer. "Let me explain it," said Lon. He was highly amused and those damned eyes of his were zapping right through me. I shifted my body into position for an attack if necessary. I felt the residuals of my strength returning.

"Hutch, I've been a long time fan of yours. I've read all your books. Fabulous stuff. When you finally clashed with the Knaves I knew it was going to be a hell of a fight and I wasn't betting on either side. I knew Hank could handle any violence, but stealth is a talent of yours also. I wanted to watch you operate. Let me say it was a lesson. You're to be congratulated."

"Thanks. The great professor McAlan gives a seminar." I was confused by this turn. What was he angling for?

"A seminar indeed. When it was all over we learned a lot. The race ended in a dead heat. That impressed me so much, Hutch, that I took a step that excites me. Shake hands and welcome on board."

We shook but I didn't know why. The faintest light was dawning and I didn't like the ramifications.

"Yes, Hutch, after adventures too numerous to recount against the rest of the world you're getting the really big break. What a suspense character you are! The best going today. I've made the move, Hutch. The purchase was signed today."

"Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes! I've bought the rights to the character of Hutch McAlan and all subsidiary character previously appearing in Hutch McAlan stories. From now on you'll be appearing exclusively in SFPA fan fiction serials. Congratulations!"

I turned my face to the pillow. For the first time in my life I cried. Bitter tears.....

T H E  
E N D



# THE FINAL WORD

The final word is "goodbye". Mel 81 is at its end; I hope you enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed putting it together.

Before I say the final word, though, there are a few things to be said first. This Mel is the largest, and I hope the best, that I've ever put together. And that's as it should be, considering the occasion. But while the zine bears my name, and while the production labor is all mine, there are others involved, deeply, in this paper entity I've called Melikaphkhaz 81.

The contributors spring first to mind. The incredible Hank cover by Joe Staton bridges the past and the present with a deft style and humor that makes my SFPA soul sing. And Ron Juge's opening illo brings another former member into the zine with artistic excellence and dry but hearty ingroup humor. While Alan Hutchinson's bacover, although a reprint, shows that current SFPAns have a bit of drawing talent as well.

Then Dave Locke's mindbending last-second effort to make an appearance warms the heart with chuckles and wordsmithy appreciation. And I've got to be delighted that Dawn's writing drought was broken long enough for her to produce a column, giving the Atkins clan two contributors to SFPA's Hundredth. And, of course, we can't forget Professor Neofan, whose erudite and well-researched articles are always an education in themselves.

All the former DEs who contributed to the Symposium are blessed indeed for the time and thought they put into their participation. I was honored to be asked to moderate such a panel. Highest mention must go to Alan's art which framed the Symposium. He provided an invaluable assist to the flavor and authenticity of the horseplay.

To all these wonderful people, I owe a great measure of thanks. Thankful thanks. Delighted thanks. They are champions.

The other people involved are all the SFPAns: past, present and waitlist. They are the reason there even is a Melikaphkhaz 81. The thanks due here can't even be measured. Eighty-six consecutive SFPA appearances for me now, and the reason for that string is the membership of SFPA. Mel 81 is for those people, wherever they may be. A token, but mine own.

And now it's time to say... "Goodbye".



# LON ATKINS' COMICS

AND  
STORIES  
10¢

FEBRUARY  
1949  
Vol. 9 No. 5



Alan Hutchinson '75  
AFTER  
WALT KELLY