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LEN'S DEN

It has been more than a year since the previous issue of this fanzine, and I only wish I had the time and energy to catch up on mailing comments. As some of you know, 1979 was a very bad year for June and me what with job problems, car troubles and a multi-car collision on the freeway that June survived thanks to lap-and-shoulder belt and headrest (though the car had no such equivalent protection and was totaled). We did wind up with a new car, and June started a new job last March which she likes and which we hope will be permanent.

I do want to comment to a couple of fellow-faps re their comments on "The Old Fannish Trail".

Art Widner - It was written in November, 1977 and, as far as I know, was sung at only one convention (LosCon, same year). Glad you like it.

Jack Speer - Tony Boucher was our Parliamentarian (as well as our Toastmaster) at the 1958 Worldcon. The WSFS hassle was coming to a head then, and we were afraid that if all of it was brought up at the business meeting, it would ruin the convention. Just dealing (or trying to deal) with the participants on both sides of the feud spoiled the convention for the committee. Our unofficial attitude was "a curse on both your houses". The committee met in the consuite the night before the business meeting and the tension was so great that we began to wrangle among ourselves as to how to handle the matter. Technically, even legally, the WSFS business in question should not be discussed at the meeting but rather should be handled by a meeting of the WSFS, Inc. Board of Directors. But, of course, it was the directors who were fighting with each other, and we knew that both sides would, once they got the floor, turn the business meeting into a shambles. Tony was sitting in a corner, and he raised his voice just enough for us to hear over our own arguing: "Children! Children--have you considered the power of the Chair?" Then he went on to explain that the Chair could declare it a business meeting strictly for the voting for the next consite, and other matters pertaining to the convention itself. After all, WSFS was not incorporated in the State of California (only in New York State) and all the other arguments could be ruled out of order before anyone had a chance to bring them up. We did exactly that. I dubbed it "Boucher's Rule" which scans better than "Boucher's Suggestion", and it did become a Rule when declared by the Chair. Fortunately the majority of fans attending the business meeting were sick and tired of the hassle and cheered when the announcement was made. It made a fannish heroine of my ex-wife, Anna, who, along with the rest of the committee, breathed a sigh of relief when we realized the reaction from the floor was highly in favor of the Chair's ruling.

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It occurs to me that filksongs such as TOFT (covering decades of fan history and legend) should be published in annotated versions for the benefit of new fans who are interested in fan history, as well as for us older types whose memories sometimes fail them.

- ljm

PARTIAL RECALL

The FAN Life of Len Moffatt

EDITOR'S NOTE: As it has been six years since an installment of this memoir has appeared in FAPA, it might be well to give the current readership some idea of What Has Gone Before.

SYNOPSIS: Part One - The Making of a Fan (1923-1939)

Leonard James Moffatt was born in Phoenix, Arizona on November 20, 1923. After his father's death, his family (mother, sister and four-year-old Len) returned to Chewton, PA, a very small village in the western part of the state. He received his grade-school education (first through eighth grade) in Chewton, and was given a strong Protestant upbringing. During those Depression years his main form of entertainment was reading. His mother's uncle, John, had a houseful of books, and he grew up reading Jonathan Swift, H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, Edgar Allan Poe, etc., as well as many non-sf books. He discovered AMAZING STORIES in 1939, and through it fanzine fandom (LeZombie, Fanfare, Spaceways, VOH, etc.). He also made an attempt to start an s-f fanclub in Chewton. It failed after only one meeting.

(Part One appeared in MOONSHINE No. 43, May 1972.)

SYNOPSIS: Part Two - Early Crifanac (1939-1943)

The family moved to Ellwood City (four miles from Chewton; about 40 miles NW of Pittsburgh) where he received his high-school education. Here, he started a somewhat more successful club, The Western Pennsylvania Science Fictioneers, a chapter of SUPER SCIENCE STORIES Science Fictioneers. The first members were high-school friends, but a real actifan, V Elaine "Doc" Dunmire of Charleroi, contacted the WPSF and offered to join and make one of his fanzines the club organ. Meanwhile, Len had plans for a fanzine that failed before the first issue, and had "published" one-copy (hand-lettered and illo'd) Chainzines. He also wrote letters for VOH and pieces for LeZombie, Spaceways and Fanfare. He was still active in church work, but reading s-f and fantasy, and communicating with fellow fans became more and more of primary interest.

(The above section of Part Two appeared in MOONSHINE No. 45, November 1974.)

PART TWO - Early Crifanac (1939-1943)

((CONTINUED))

Doc Dunmire soon became my Best Friend. Lefty and Nick were still Good Friends but, needless to say, I had much more in com on with Doc. Thanks to him, the WPSF increased in numbers. Irving Seible and Bruce Gair were young fans who lived in Doc's neighborhood and soon joined, as did Basil and Margaret Vells, of Springsboro, PA. Later he brought in two Pittsburgh fans, Jack Gilbert and Dave Elder. Elder had the distinction of being the only WPSF member who had ever attended a LASFS meeting. I don't recall whether this had been on a visit to IA or whether he had lived there for a while. Gilbert was a militant atheist and he and I used to have some interesting arguments.

It was Lefty, however, who found us another female member. He happened to see a letter of hers in Weird Tales which printed her Ellwood City address. As Director of the WPSF it fell to me to call on her and invite her to join our club. I did not do this without

some trepidation as I had no idea from her letter in WT whether she was young, middle-aged or old; married or single; no idea at all what kind of reception I would receive.

Peggy turned out to be a short, sweet, redheaded Irish girl, a teenager in high school. All of us were high school graduates, except for Irving and Bruce, and it took a little talking to convince her that she was not too young for our group. I assured her that age made no difference in fandom, and that a couple of our members were high school boys not much older than herself.

She, and her mother, seemed to balk a little when they learned that she would be the only girl in the club. I hastened to advise them that meetings were held either at my home, with my mother present, or at Doc's home in Charleroi, with his parents present. Otherwise, we kept in touch through a chain-letter system as well as by regular letters and postcards. That information, coupled with my "nice boy" appearance and my naive, straightforward approach, apparently convinced them that the WPSF wasn't a club designed to lead young ladies astray. After she joined, we had at least one meeting at her place with Doc, Irving, Lefty, Nick, Peggy and myself in attendance.

Later I met Peggy's girl friend, Betty Jo (nicknamed Bejay), who wasn't interested in joining a science-fiction club, though she was interested in acting and writing, and came from a large and talented family. After entering the service, I corresponded with both the girls, and Bejay and I are exchanging letters to this day. Our friendship developed more from corresponding than from personal contact, but during those early days, Peggy was the one who interested me the most. Of course, I couldn't date her then as she wasn't quite old enough (according to the morals of that day and age) to date anybody, let alone someone older than herself. Had she been older the fact that she was a Catholic wouldn't have stopped me--at least she wasn't an atheist!

Meanwhile, back in the mundane world, there was a war on. I had graduated from high school in the Spring of 1941. On December 7, 1941, Lefty (who was visiting me that Sunday) and I walked to a local grocery to buy some bread. Both of us were working at the local steel tubing mill. We heard the news of Pearl Harbor on the store's radio, and, walking home, Lefty said that he would have to go into the service but that I wouldn't, as he was big and husky whereas I was still on the puny side. I didn't argue the point and had anyone else said the same thing I would have been both hurt and angry. As it turned out, I did join the Navy and Lefty was turned down by all the services.

The WPSF round-robin or "chain-letter" stumbled along, and the club itself was not growing as fast as I would have liked. Our initial problem was geographic separation. Attendance at meetings ranged from five to ten persons, depending on such things as transportation, wartime gas shortages, jobs, school and the draft board.

According to Fancy I, the WPSF was an organization "scraped together by Len Moffatt", and that it held a conference in Pittsburgh (in the summer of '42) "but nobody at all showed up". Neither statement is actually true. True, I started the club and it gained a fairly healthy membership for that time in fandom and for the type of club it was. Our enjoyment per capita was as great as that of any other fan club, regardless of size or location. (Apparently there was, or had been, an s-f club in Pittsburgh that had fallen apart. Outside of the WSPF, probably the most active and largest fan club in the state was in Philadelphia.)

Our conference was called the "Kenkon" because it was held in Kennywood Park in Pittsburgh, an amusement park where one could also bring picnic baskets. We invited fans from the northeastern states, and had it announced in Fantasy Fiction Field. Art Widner (of Massachusetts) and Russ Chauvenet (of Virginia) had some hopes of making it, but they didn't, so it turned out to be an average-sized WPSF meeting. And I didn't make it because I had to work overtime that weekend and I was too honest and sincere a lad to report off "sick".

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Fancy I lists another error: It states that "Black Diamond Publications" was my publishing house name or trademark. Not so. Doc Dummire created BDP for his fanzines, Stellar Tales and The Ghoul. The name is derived from Pennsylvania's fame as a coal ("black diamond") producer, and of course from his own initials. I probably continued the use of the name when I published the second issue of Stellar Tales, after Doc had gone into the Army.

Doc had published one issue of Stellar Tales before joining the WPSF. With its second issue, it became the WPSF Official Organ. When he joined the Army, he turned ST over to me, along with his hectograph pan and all the material for that second issue, much of which was already typed or drawn on master. The mailing list was around 100, as I recall, and getting 100 reasonably readable copies using hecto was a most difficult job indeed.

Doc turned the material for The Ghoul over to Jack Gilbert who, as far as I know, never did anything with it.

I was really proud of that second issue of ST, though all I did was the repro, collating, stapling and mailing, and had nothing to do with the contents--which included an article by Nelson S. Bond, and stories by James Blish, Basil Wells and Lew Martin.

Russ Chauvenet had suggested that I join FAPA (which apparently had little or no waiting list in those days), and I did, in 1942. Using Doc's hectograph, I think I published three issues of MOONSHINE before going into the Navy.

I not only developed "hectographer's hands", but "hectographer's room". Somehow I managed, during the messy process, to touch up various parts of my den/bedroom, as well as myself and my clothes, with purple splotches. My mother was not especially happy with this aspect of my hobby, but she bore it all with a patience that passed understanding.

While I was in the service, she kept up my subs to favorite zines, kept them neatly filed, and saved everything for me. My sister helped by typing out excerpts from fanzines and FAPAZines and sending them to me. She usually picked out the humorous stuff, and was especially fond of Walt Liebscher's zaniness.

I also wanted to be a writer and, after discovering science-fiction, tried my hand at writing it--or my version of it... One of my earliest stories was called "The Man Who Was A Bear" (the brain-swap bit). Another was "Beer & The 4th Dimension". I'd never tasted beer, so my knowledge of both it and the 4th dimension was equally inadequate. It was supposed to be a funny and satirical s-f tale. I submitted it to Mazing and still half-believe that they might have accepted it had they not been "overstocked" with stories at the time. At least, that was the reason written on the rejection slip. Oh yes, I did one called "The Giant Amoeba" (it failed to split, you see, and kept on growing and growing...) and another called "Zombie Water" which I thought would be suitable for Weird Tales. It wasn't, and eventually wound up in the FFFF Manuscript Bureau, where, years later, it was picked up by a new fan publisher who was kind enough to let me know he had it and would I like to see it before he published it. I most certainly did, as it had been nearly 20 years since I wrote the thing. I read it and nearly fell out of my chair laughing at the unintended humor. It read like a burlesque of a weird tale, though at the time I wrote it I was dead serious. Thank Foo-foo it was never published.

I also wrote "poems" and song lyrics. My story writing was influenced by the pulps, and my song-writing was influenced by Tin Pan Alley. You can't hardly get an education like that no more...

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Actually, my interest in music in those days ranged from Dance of the Hours (as performed by Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops) to the popular swing music of the day (Goodman, Miller, the Dorseys, etc.). Although most of my reading was devoted to the s-f, fantasy and weird pulps, I did find time to enjoy detective fiction, and my interest in history continued to develop. The latter interest also led me to reading and enjoying historical novels such as those written by Kenneth Roberts. My favorite magazine was Astounding, although I found much to enjoy in Famous Fantastic Mysteries, Fantastic Novels, Super Science, Astonishing and Weird Tales, and later became a steady reader of Startling Stories and Thrilling Wonder Stories.

Although I was 18 years old on November 20, 1941, I didn't enter the military service until May of 1943. Even then I was uncertain of being accepted, because I was underweight and not exactly an impressive physical specimen. I got some exercise by playing baseball, swinging from a tree limb that was located a few feet above the porch of our upstairs apartment, and doing various kinds of pratfalls when I entertained family or friends with my early clown routines. But, like most fans, I spent more hours reading, writing or drawing.

As the sole support of my widowed mother, and as a time-and-production clerk in a steel mill, my draft board kept me on the deferred list longer than I would have liked. Although I was as sad about leaving home as the next person, I was not exactly unhappy when they finally did call me for a physical exam. I passed it with flying colors and was given my choice of services, which was the Navy. As I've told my friends over the years, I joined the Navy so I wouldn't have to walk (and because going to sea seemed like a Great Adventure at any time, war or peace) and wound up in the Marines where I did as much walking as any other infantryman. The only time I went to sea was on troopships, a most unglamorous way to travel.

I took my boot training at the U.S. Naval Station at Sampson, NY, and, after a short furlough, went to Portsmouth, VA, for Hospital Corps School. During a boot-camp interview, we were asked to list our choices of schools. My first choice was Radio School, thinking it would be fun to be a ship's radio operator and have everybody call me "Sparks". Actually, I asked about something in the writing line, on the chance that I might become a war correspondent, but the officer informed me it was out of the question, as I had no professional experience as a writer or newspaperman. So I put down Radio School as first choice, and could think of nothing else--other than getting aboard ship and going to sea. He suggested that, because of my background, I should list Hospital Corps School, that I should make a good medic. I had no interest in a medical career of any kind, but I put it down to fill in the blank, as my second choice. I think we got a third choice, too, but I don't remember what I put down for that. If anything.

As it turned out, they were in great need of hospital corpsmen, and most of the lads in our graduating class went to Portsmouth regardless of what their first choice had been. After graduating from HCS I was sent to the Naval Hospital at Jacksonville, FL for "ward indoctrination duty". I had horrible visions of having to be a male nurse, toting bedpans, etc. As it turned out, I carried only one bedpan during my entire tour of duty with the Navy and Marines.

It was fairly easy duty, with the WAVE corpsmen doing most of the work, and Jacksonville, FL was a pleasant enough liberty town. I also got to see the Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus while I was there, never having been able to afford to go to it when it toured our part of Pennsylvania.

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Once again we were given our choices--further schooling or sea duty. I put down Sea Duty as first choice, and got it, but in a way I didn't expect. It seems that the Sea Duty included serving with the FMF (Fleet Marine Force) and I, with a goodly number of others, was shipped to Camp Lejeune, NC for training with the Marines. It was called "Medical Field Service School" and was like a combination of Hospital Corps School and boot camp--except that Marine boots is a bit tougher than Navy boots. We were training with boot Marines who, never having been overseas, delighted in referring to us as chancre mechanics, pecker checkers, bedpan commandos, etc. However, the sergeants and corporals who trained us were veterans of overseas combat and they treated us fairly--not that they were any easier on us, but they knew how valuable we would be if we ever learned how to keep pace. We learned.

To this day I can tell (without looking for hashmarks or ribbons) whether a Marine has seen combat or not, simply by telling him that I was a "Doc" during WWII. If he makes with the wiseass remarks I know he hasn't been long out of boots, and certainly has never seen combat. If he offers to buy me a drink and treats me like a good buddy, I know he's been there.

Liberty in Jacksonville, NC (the closest town to the Marine base) was lousy. The Slop Chutes and the BAMS on base provided more interest than anything or anyone in that grubby town. We knew that when we finished there we would be shipped to the West Coast to go overseas, but no leaves to go home were given. At the end of our training, while we were waiting to be shipped out, we were given 72-hour passes and told not to leave the state. Most of us did, making trips as far away as Maine and Illinois. I caught a train to DC and from there to Pittsburgh, so had a few hours at home before catching trains back to North Carolina, getting back nearly in the nick of time. Not that it would have mattered, as some of the lads were late but the man on duty signed them in as though they had arrived before the deadline. Good job, too, as the punishment for going over the hill was 30 days piss and punk and we'd seen it given to more than one trainee, even to those who had overstayed a one-night liberty.

Meanwhile, Blaine (Doc) Dunmire was training with the Army, having gone into the service a year or so before I did. So the two most active fans in the WPSF were gone, and the club fell apart, never to revive.

PART THREE - FAFIA (1943-1946)

Camp Elliot (Linda Vista, CA, near San Diego) was a tent camp (six men to a tent) and much like the other tent camps I would be living in for the next couple of years (when the situation permitted such luxurious accommodations). We were there only a short time but I did manage to make one or two liberties in San Diego (including a visit to the famous Zoo, and, with a couple of buddies picking up a couple of girls in a movie theater). I also went over the hill again by taking a bus to Los Angeles to visit fans. Our weekend liberty passes were somewhat restricted. One could leave the camp Saturday a.m. but had to report back to camp that night (by 10 p.m., I think). Then one could get up the next morning and leave the camp for all day on the Sunday. So I came back very early one Saturday night and was up very early on Sunday to be among the first to leave camp. I had checked out Greyhound the day before, so I'd know when and where to catch the bus to LA.

I had one bad moment on the trip to LA. The bus was stopped and several cops and MPs got on and went up and down the aisle checking passengers. Someone thought they were looking for illegal aliens, but I noticed that the MPs were asking the servicemen for their passes.

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Since my pass showed not only the daily restriction but also the fact that I wasn't to leave the environs of San Diego (and I think we were halfway to LA at that point), I figured I had had it. I was sitting next to a lady old enough to be my mother, and we had been chatting during the trip. She had a son in the Army or somewhere, and I immediately began talking with her again on some general subject or other. The MPs passed me by with nary a glance, and presently left the bus. We were on our way again. Perhaps it was my innocent baby face, or perhaps they thought that the lady was my mother, but for whatever reason, I was able to breathe a sigh of relief.

In LA, I phoned the Slan Shack on Bixel Street, which was next door to the famous Bixel Street LASFS clubroom. Myrtle R. (Morojo) answered the phone and told me which streetcar to take to get to Bixel.

I remember taking a snapshot of the LASFS clubroom from across the street before crossing over to go up the steps of the Slan Shack, which was an old residential building converted to a rooming house. Most of the Slan Shack crew were originally from Michigan, although none of them were home that day. (Myrtle, of course, was a California fan, Forry Ackerman's girlfriend and co-editor of VOM, etc.) While I was waiting for Morojo to come to the door, a pleasant-looking young man, tall and thin with a short haircut, walked up the steps to join me. I told him who I was, and he said "I'm Jimmy Kepner".

So the only two fans I got to see that day were Morojo and Mike. Forry was pushing Esperanto hard in those days, and their nicknames were Esperanto versions of their real names. (He was Pojak.) We talked on a number of subjects, fannish and otherwise. Morojo told me that it was too bad I hadn't been there the night before, as everybody was home from work and Forry had come in from Fort MacArthur where he was stationed. (I think by then Forry was editing his camp's newspaper and writing fictional "news items" for it using the names of his fannish friends. We called it "the fanzine published by the Army".

Naturally we discussed my religious beliefs and I remember Jimmy telling Myrtle that I wasn't really such a bad guy, since my reasons for believing as I did were based on a willingness to get along with my fellow man and that, despite my letters in VOM, I wasn't really insisting that everyone else believe as I did.

Eventually, it was time for me to catch a streetcar to the bus station. They took the ride with me to the station so we could talk more (and possibly to be sure that this lad from the sticks of Pennsylvucky didn't get lost in the big city).

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I had a very brief stay at Pearl Harbor (another Marine tent camp), but did have a little time to tour Honolulu and environs. It was exciting to see Punch Bowl Hill (where lived the great Charlie Chan) but I was disappointed in the beach at Waikiki, which was a small strip of sand with coral in it. It had looked much more impressive in the movies.

While at Pearl, I received a letter from Doc Lunnire's father containing the sad news that Doc had been aboard a troop carrier (in the European Theater) which had been sunk, and that Doc was among the many who did not survive. I had lost my best friend (in or out of fandom) and the fact that we were about to ship out to invade the Marianas did nothing to improve the way I felt.

I was attached to the Sixth Regiment of the Second Marine Division, and wound up on Saipan. If you want to know about island warfare in the Pacific in WWII, go read a history book. This was in the summer of 1944. If you want to know what it was really like, from my viewpoint, ask me sometime when I've had a couple of drinks, or am in the company of other vets who are telling "hoary old war stories" (as Rick Sneary calls 'em)...

However, this seems as good a place as any to give you some idea of what was happening to this young fan's way of thinking during those critical times. I still thought of myself as a Christian, but I was finding it more difficult to rationalize the realities of war (and life in general) with my personal philosophy. I reminded myself that Christ had indulged in some violence when he kicked the moneychangers out of the Temple, and like almost everyone in those days (in and out of fandom) I was very patriotic and sincerely believed that this was our second chance to Save The World For Democracy. I could not condone the racial prejudice and general nastiness of the Nazis, nor the desire for conquest by Japan's leaders.

I soon learned how to survive--i.e., that it was better to kill than be killed. (I understand that Army medics were not issued weapons but Navy hospital corpsmen on duty were issued carbines, and I damn soon learned how to use mine. I also understand that it was not unusual for Army medics to pick up a rifle or pistol before or during a battle for the simple reason that when you're not busy patching up the wounded you want as much firepower around you as possible, including some of your own.)

After the Marianas were "secured"--although none of those islands were really secure, in that the Japanese soldiers, as well as the Korean workers (who had labored in the cane fields on Saipan, for instance) were holed up in caves and ravines and came out at night to salvage (steal) food and other supplies. We were always going out on patrol to flush them out, right up to the end of the war.

Our outfit stayed on Saipan for occupation duty until April of 1945, when we shoved off to aid in the attack on Okinawa. Troopships again. The only good thing about going aboard a troopship was that we got better chow than we did on land.

As it turned out, I played pinochle during the battle of Okinawa, and had time to write some doggerel about our non-favorite food, Spam. Our ship would pull in closer to the shore during the day, waiting for word for us to disembark, and move out to sea at night when no such word came. Our greatest danger were the Kamikazes, several of which attacked us, though none succeeded. (I later learned that my brother-in-law was in the crew of a destroyer in that same battle. A Kamikaze attacked them, was shot down and crashed on the deck of his ship. They managed to put out the fire, and got the body of the dead pilot out of the plane. For reasons best known to the brass, they put the body in the ship's deep freeze along with the other meat.)

So we went back to Saipan for more occupation duty, and were there until the war ended.

While on Saipan, I received a letter from a young fan named Rick Sneary (forwarded to me by my mother). He wanted permission to reprint the Lew Martin story from the issue of STELLAR TALES I had published. Apparently Lew was in the service then too, but somehow I got his home address and his parents ultimately gave the permission to Rick. As I read Rick's letter I remember thinking to myself: "Geez, this kid will never get anywhere in fandom if he doesn't learn how to spell..." (This from a character who was still having problems with English as she is writ.)

Most of my letter-writing at that time was to family, friends and girlfriends. As I said earlier, my mother saw to it that I got a few fanzines, and during that last of the truly patriotic wars, FAPA members in the service retained their memberships whether they managed to publish for it or not. My mother was especially impressed with Bob Tucker, who advised her that it wasn't necessary to send money to keep me on his LeZombie mailing list as long as I was in the service; and Max Keasler (he lived in Georgia, I think) sent her a pretty brooch as a gift, perhaps impressed by her devotion to my craft, none of which she ever understood.

Also, during that period, she bought me one or two Arkham House books on the assumption that I would want them, when she saw the ads for same. Actually, never having been a great fan of HPLovecraft (though I liked one or two of his stories), I might not have purchased the books myself. I'm glad she did, as they proved to be quite valuable later.

One of the girls I swapped letters with was a lass named Bessie who lived in West Virginia. She was a friend of Doc's (though not a fan) and Doc had put us in touch with each other. Through her, I enrolled in a correspondence course in Journalism, provided by her University. After studying each lesson, one was supposed to answer the quiz and write a short article or essay. Once, bored with writing essays, I wrote a short s-f story and sent it along. My instructor was quite pleased with it, and said that if I wished, I could continue to write fantasy fiction instead of essays. It seemed that he was a fan of HPLovecraft and asked me if I had ever heard of this writer.

My reading, then (whenever it was possible to do so) was anything I could get my hands on. Armed Services Editions...the original Pocketbooks (usually battered and lucky to be in one piece by the time they got to us)...anything. But all of my s-f mags and fanzines were kept at home for perusing after the war, as I didn't want to risk losing them overseas.

That's enough about my time on Saipan. This is not my complete autobiography, you know, just the fan portion--though of course there was and is quite a bit of overlap between my fan life and my mundane life. Fandom was, and is, a hobby to me, but a very important part of my way of life.

After the war ended, we were sent to Nagasaki for occupation duty. As we came into the harbor, I became even more grateful that we had not had to attack southern Japan, which would have been our next operation had it not been for the A-bombs.

We had expected to see a city in shambles, and we did. I have never seen so much devastation at one place any other time in my life. The civilian population was delighted to see us, and we had trouble only with the ex-soldiers; though Nagasaki's efficient and oftentimes cruel police force kept them pretty well in line, working in close cooperation with our own Military Police. (I had long since learned to respect the Japanese soldier who I felt was my opposite number, but on the Wrong Side, of course. They truly believed their religion, which accounts for their suicidal attacks. To die and join their honorable ancestors was the greatest and most important thing in their philosophy. In they were "hopped up" during battle, I think it was due more to their religion rather than drugs.)

One chap I met in Nagasaki was Sai Ichi Katoh San. Katoh (pronounced kah-toe, not kay-toe as some of the GIs pronounced it, no doubt influenced by the early Green Hornet radio shows) was office manager of the Mitsubishi Warehouse near the buildings we were using for barracks at the time. He and his office crew came to work every day, properly dressed (the men in British-style business suits and the women in formal pajamas, though there wasn't a thing for them to do but sit and talk). Katoh knew several languages and

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was certainly more fluent in English than we were in Japanese. He also spoke German, French...and Esperanto. But he had never heard of Forry Ackerman. Not too unusual, as Katoh was not into science-fiction.

My stay in Nagasaki and environs was short, as I had put in the required 18 months overseas time and had also accumulated enough points to obtain my honorable discharge.

On the troopship back to the States we had some pretty rough seas, and I remember that the man in the bunk above me, the man in the bunk below me, and the man in the bunk directly opposite mine were all deathly ill from seasickness all the way home. Even then I didn't get sick, perhaps because I had found it necessary to develop a strong stomach in order to be effective as a medic. I like to think that I was cut out to be a sailor, and would have been had not Fate conspired to make me a footslogger with the Gyrenes. But I have no regrets, having survived the war, and having grown up in a hurry. The war and my crifanac were having a strong influence on my personal philosophy.

We disembarked at Port Hueneme, California, and were shipped by troop train (almost as bad as troopships) to Sampson, New York, where I had taken my first boots. There, they tried to get us to re-enlist, but most of us found the propaganda film featuring Robert Benchley quite laughable--and not just because Benchley himself was a very funny man. We hadn't really been home yet, and that's where we wanted to go.

I suppose if I had stayed in the Navy I would be retired by now, as a Chief Pharmacist's Mate or maybe even a Warrant Officer, but the military life was not for me. All things considered, I might have found myself doing a lot of brig time, as I hate the regimentation (which I assume is even stricter during peacetime), doing everything by the numbers. I might have been lucky enough to get a soft berth and have plenty of time as a career man for fandom, writing, etc., but there was no guarantee that I would. Considering my luck up to then (such as winding up with the Marines instead of duty on a regular Navy ship as I had wanted) I wasn't willing to risk the gamble.

So, I came home to Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, in December of 1945. It was cold. No doubt my blood had thinned (though it was reasonably cold in Nagasaki when I left there) and when I went out on double dates with my friend Lefty I had to bundle up in overcoat and muffler to keep warm, whereas in previous times I had worn only a jacket. No one, from grade school on, wore a hat lest they be marked as a sissy.

I dated Peggy, and felt that I was becoming quite serious about her. But she wanted to eventually move to New York City to become a Writer--after all, the publishers were there. I had decided I wanted to move West--either Arizona or California.

I wasn't working then, for though my job at the steel mill was waiting for me, it would not be available until the strike that had closed the plant down was settled. I was drawing my 52-20 and had a small nest egg thanks to sending money home when I was overseas (and thanks to my mother's economy).

I finally made the firm decision to move to the Los Angeles area. My sister and brother-in-law had friends out here who would arrange to get an apartment for my mother and me. Lefty decided that, while he was temporarily out of work (due to the same strike) he and his mother might as well come along with us. He had discovered that one could drive a used car to California for one of the local dealers. You paid \$50.00 earnest money and delivered the car to a dealer in San Diego. All the trip cost you was the gas and oil, as the \$50 was refunded upon safe delivery of the car.

It cost us a bit more than that, as we had a slight accident before we got out of the State of Pennsylvania. All in all, it was a miserable trip. We elected to take the southern route to avoid as much winter weather as possible. This was in February, 1946. But we ran into snow as far south as Georgia, and it was cold almost all the rest of the trip, including driving across the broad part of Texas. We didn't get warm until we reached Phoenix.

Lefty did all the driving, which I considered some kind of a marathon feat. I didn't have a license then, and had had very little driving experience before I went into the Navy, and none while I was in it. I forget how many days the trip took; it seemed much longer than it probably was. We were supposed to go directly to San Diego to deliver the car, but detoured by way of Los Angeles, or, rather, Bell Gardens, which is a suburb of LA. We left Lefty's mother with our friends, went on to San Diego, got our \$50 back after they test-drove the car around the block, and took a bus back to Bell Gardens.

Lefty and his mother stayed about a week, but decided not to settle out here. He felt that Florida would be better. However, they are still living in Pennsylvania, and I assume he is still working at the steel mill.

After moving into our apartment (which was quite small for two adults but, considering the housing shortage, we were better off than most), I went out to find a job. I registered at the local employment office and, among my qualifications, listed Writer. Later, I noticed that, on my card, they had me listed as a copywriter, which isn't exactly what I had in mind. But I didn't have them correct it, as I felt I could write ads and jingles as well, if not better, than some of the stuff being printed in that line.

Meanwhile, I think I had published one issue of MCONSHINE for FAPA (while I was still in Pennsylvania) as something to show my good intent to remain in FAPA. I was also pounding the typer, working on my story writing. I wrote a short novel entitled "The Dancer Runs Away", which was supposed to be a realistic Western. (The Dancer was the name of a horse, in case you were wondering.) It was rejected by more than one western mag, including one whose editor or reader went to the trouble to note on the rejection slip that they did not use "pseudo-realism". I was highly insulted, because I didn't think there was anything "pseudo" about my realism!

Naturally I thought of writing a war novel, and had actually written a couple of short pieces while I was overseas, but I never got around to it, and in the meantime all sorts of WWII stories were being published. Someday I may write my novel about the corpsmen and the Marines in WWII. Someday I may write a novel based on the life of my Uncle John. Someday...

I didn't take time out to contact the fans in LA until March or later. Looking for a job and other problems kept me occupied. My mother became ill and had to be in the hospital for a while. Peggy wrote that I should forget about trying to get her to join me in California--for one thing, her mother (a good Catholic) wouldn't condone her marrying a Protestant.

Finally, I got a job at the Armstrong Cork Factory in South Gate, which is just across the river from Bell Gardens. (I didn't know then, or didn't remember that the Rick Sneary who wrote to me when I was on Saipan lived in South Gate, or I might have tried to contact him, since he was all that close.)

But my affiliation was soon to end--beginning with my second visit to the Slan Shack, where I was to meet Al Ashley, Dale Hart, Jack Wiedenbeck, Walt Liebscher, Abby Lu Ashley, and, for the second time, Morojo.

(To be continued)

