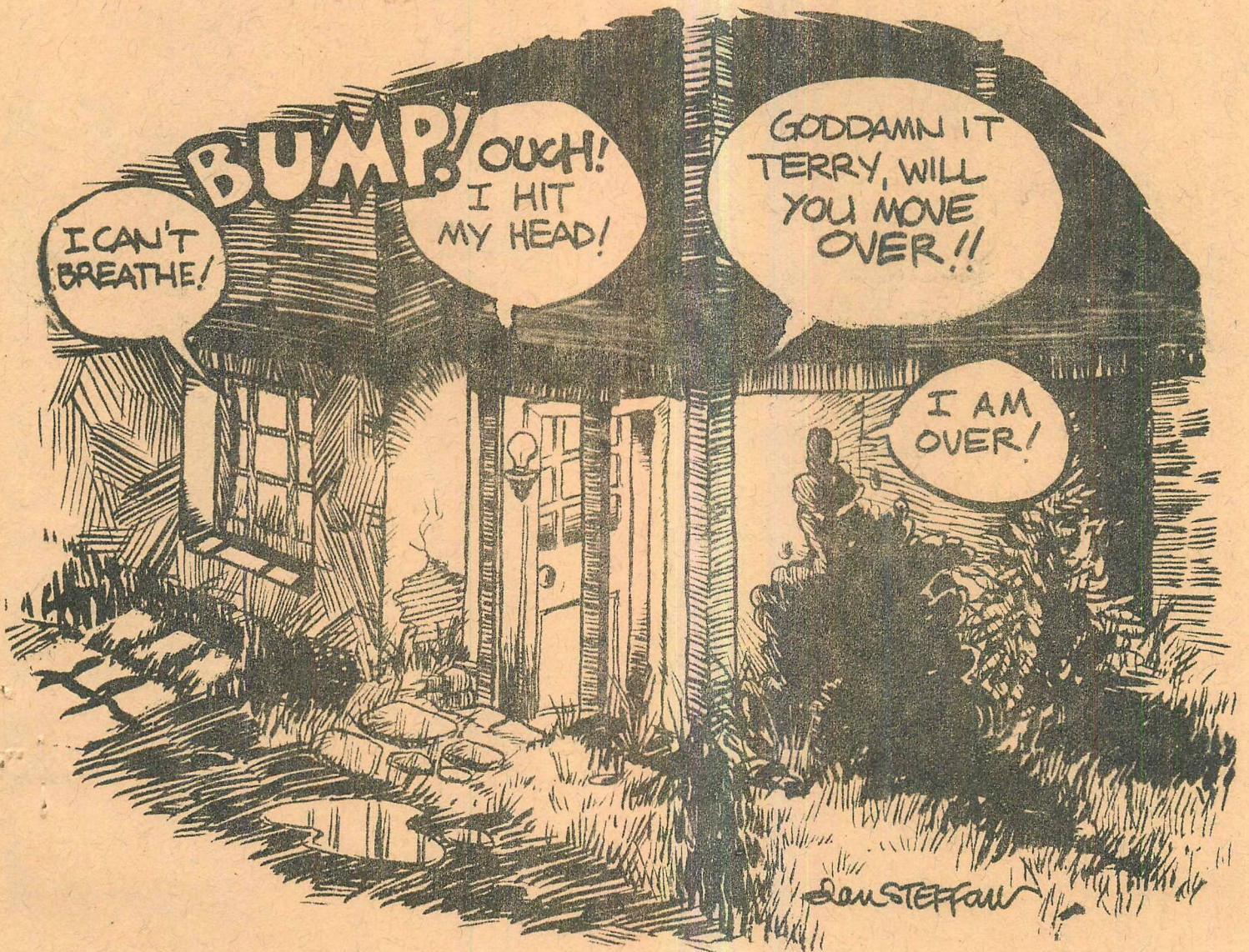


mata



[RIIING! RIIING! RIIING!]

Uh...oh...wha...uh, Who could be calling me at this ungodly hour of... of...what time is it anyway? Ah, 9:15. Nine fifteen in the A M on my Tuesday off. Someone had better have died or else I'll -- "Hello, Symbionese Liberation Marching Band: we play all the hits."

[bzzzzz]

"Hold on, hold on, that's me. I was just answering the phone that way for a joke."

[bzzz]

"Yeah, I know it isn't much of a joke but for 9:15 in the early morning I thought it was pretty good. This is the original Terry Hughes on this end of the telephone. Now whom do I have the unparalleled honor of talking with while my eyes are still tightly closed?"

[bzzzzzzz]

"The FBI. Ha, ha. Yes, of course, that's what I get for trying to pull your leg." [bzzzzz] "Oh! You really are with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Uh, listen, man, are you sure you want to talk to Terry Hughes? I mean there are lots of other names in the telephone book and I'm sure several of them must be awake by now." [bzzzzzzz] "Uh-huh, you only want to speak with me. So let me get this straight: I'm really Terry Hughes, you're really with the FBI, and it's really 9:18 in the morning. Just what do you want to talk to me for?"

[bzzzzz] "A postcard?" [bzzzzzzzzzzz] "Oh, that postcard. Yes, it's true there was a postcard which said: 'Ford must die! Love, Lynette' but I can assure you that it was all a joke."

[bzzzzz] "Yes, I do seem rather full of jokes this morning, don't I? You see, FBI person, a friend sent that postcard thinking it would be a good gag. We chuckled over it when it arrived. Actually, you see, it was sent to my brother Craig and not to me." [bzzzzz] "Ah, you are aware of who it was addressed to, but you have reason to believe that Craig is just a fake name for me. Come on, man! Craig is real and he is my brother. If I was going to dream up an alter ego, why would I choose a name as unmelodic as Craig? He is my brother and he does exist. He's not here at the moment or else I'd let you speak with him to remove any doubts you may have."

"Hold it -- what was that 'ah-ha!' of yours supposed to mean? Contrary to popular opinion, my brother Craig is not a joke. He is a real person who leaves dirty dishes and sacks of garbage in his wake."

"What's that?" [bzzzz] "Oh, since he's not here you will talk to me. I take it you still don't believe in my brother's existence. I bet you were the kind of kid who made the tooth fairy sign a receipt before you gave her a bicuspid. Oh skip it, I was just mumbling."

[bzzzzzz] "No, it is not common for me to receive notes threatening the President's life but I do tend to get humorous mail and that's what this obviously was. Afterall, it was on the back of a picture postcard of Arthur Lane and Penny Singleton. Oh, you thought that was a rather clever ruse. What makes you so certain that it was not a gag?"

[bzzzzz] "Well, I might argue the point about President Ford not being a laughing matter, but I assure you it was all just a harmless bit of kidding. Why can't you just accept that and forget the whole matter?"

[bzzzzz] "What do you mean 'because I am a known member of an underground organization'? Listen, dude, I told you I answered the phone that way as a goofy stunt. What underground organization do you think I belong to anyway?" [bzzzz]

"FANDOM! You are calling science fiction fandom an underground organization? That's the most absurd thi--" [bzzzz] "Well...yes, I am a member of fandom, not that there are any real membership lists or anything." [Bzzzz] "What about the National Fantasy Fan Federation you say. I've often asked the same thing myself: What about the NFFF? Sure, sure, they have membership lists, but -- listen closely -- my name is not on their rolls. I've never been a member of that group. I am, however, a member of fandom but I would never describe it as an underground organization. Some fans may live in basements but fandom holds its conventions quite publicly." [bzzzz] "As you say, the Communist Party does the same, but so do the Democrats and Republicans...in fact just about every group except for the FBI holds public conventions."

[bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz]

"Oh, you have a large file on science fiction fandom and have maintained one ever since the 1950's. Listen, fandom is just a goddamned hobby -- it's not a subversive organization. Fandom is made up of people of both sexes, all ages, with a wide range of professions and an equally wide range of personal income. The only thing, for the most part, that all these diverse people have in common is an interest in science fiction. So they get to know one another, develop friendships and hold cons so they can get together to discuss science fiction or to discuss everything else but sf. Okay, I know it does sound a bit hokey, but that is the way it really is. I am not making all this up. Conventions are just social gatherings on a large scale. You don't even know what fandom is and yet you call it all a subversive front. You're hopeless."

[Bzzzzzzzz]

"Yes, I do send mail to and receive mail from people all over the world. Most of the time that mail is connected with fandom since I do produce a fanzi--er, amateur magazine." [bzzzz] "Well, no, it is not about sf but...." [bzzzzz] "No, no, no, it is not a propaganda ragsheet. It goes to people who happen to be or have been sf fans. The fanzine just contains humorous pieces." [bzzzzz] "No, it is not written in code."

Those expressions are just slang terms used within fandom. Each has its own meaning. For example a trufan might be someone like me while a fugghead would mean you." [bzzzz] "No, no, you don't have to belong to the FBI to be a fugghead, although it sure helps." [bzzzz] "Sorry, ignore it. I was just joking once again. You don't seem to grasp that concept very well."

[bzzzzzz]

"Trus, MOTA is the title of my publication. As for what exactly it means, well, that's not so easy to answer. I just like the word. Yes, I know it is a Mexican slang term for marijuana. It is also atom spelled backwards and the name of the flying disc man from Mars and it could even stand for the Magazine of Tedious Articles. Just accept it as the title; don't try to interpret it or decode it. You'll just be wasting your time."

[bzzzzzz] "No, I didn't think you would understand or enjoy my fanzine since it uses so many jokes. It's okay though: I don't like your tv show either." [bzzzzzz] "I am referring to the television show called The F.B.I. which I think is a bomb." [bzzzzzz] "No, no! I did not threaten to bomb you; I was talking about television." [bzzzz] "Wait! I am not going to bomb a tv station either. You keep jumping to wild conclusions. I was just saying that I loathe the FBI television series." [bzzzzz] "I don't care whether you won the Efran Zimbalist, Jr., look-alike contest or not. I still don't like that tv show."

"All I want is for you to leave me alone and forget this whole matter. That card was just a joke I tell you."

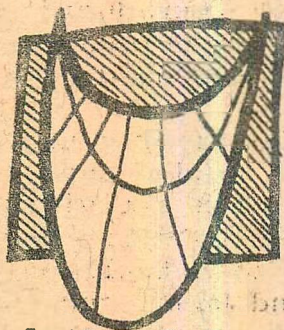
[bzzzzzzzz]

"What? What do you mean so is this phonecall? Hello, hello..." [click]

The bastard hung up on me. I wonder if that really was the FBI. Probably wasn't -- maybe it was the CIA...

Could have been the NFFF membership drive.

+ Terry Hughes +

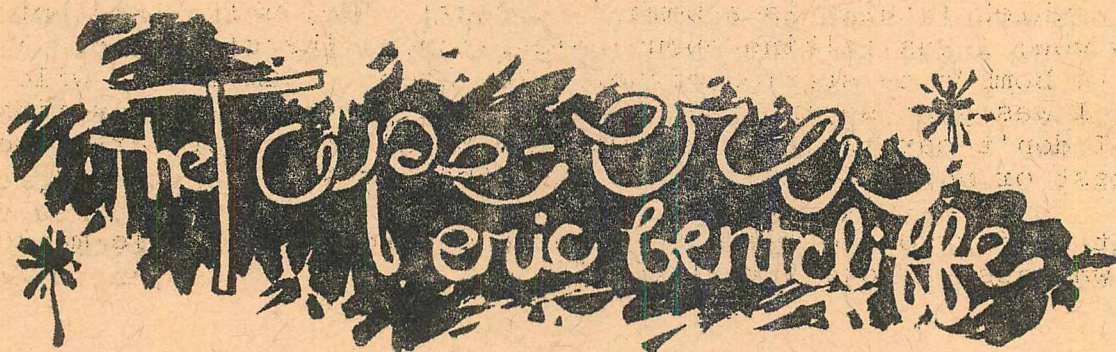


OUR EDITOR,
GOD'S GIFT TO
IDIOTCY !

"Many years ago a great space-ship manned by Neo-fen and carrying a group of Big Name Fans to a Galactic Convention crashed on an obscure planet. The drive could not be repaired. The sub-space radio was smashed.* They were lost. With true fannish courage they tried to build their life anew on this savage world. Bravely they struggled with the hostile environment to preserve their fannish way of life. But the odds were too great. As time went on the carefully hoarded stocks of duplicating ink became exhausted. The duplicators themselves rusted and fell to pieces. The old fannish traditions began to die out. The files of sacred Fanzines decayed and were forgotten. Intermarriage took place with the brutish natives. After many thousands of years the great fannish culture had disappeared. But no! Not completely. Preserved in the genes and chromosomes the fannish mind lives on, and every now and then comes to the surface in the form of a viable mutation...."

(WaW. "The Alien Arrives")

Pt. 17 in THE GOLDEN AGUE OF BRITISH FANDOM



Communication, of course, is what fandom is all about, and over the years since pre-history and Rotsler's first carefully inscribed rocks, fans have been busy thinking of different ways of doing it. Communicating, that is.

That inventiveness that has always typified the varying fannish modes used does appear to have flagged somewhat in recent years; no one yet, for instance, has managed to subvert a communications satellite into giving forth with a TAFF slogan. However, one of the mediums which proved most suitable to fannish perversion in the 50's was the tape-recorder. The early usage of this was simply as a more personal substitute for the fan-letter. I don't know who first introduced the sound-message into Fandom; I do know that even before the tape-recorder became a commercially viable proposition, the wire-recorder was used by a few fen.

The most prolific period of the taper's use was in the 1950's when tape-correspondence became almost a fandom unto itself for awhile, but mainly it was an adjunct of other fannish activities. I can recall taping with fen such as Dean Grennell, Bill Rotsler, Boyd Raeburn, Harry Warner and Walt Willis. It was pleasant to actually talk to fans you were never likely to meet such as Bill and Dean, and the facilities of the tape-

*So, probably, were most of the BNF's.

recorder allowed you to compensate for Walt's brogue and get all his puns in their majesty!

The reason for tape-correspondence catching on so swiftly with fans was one that wasn't truly revealed to me until some years later. When I became British TAFF delegate to the Pittcon, in fact. After the convention in that fair pastoral city, Bob Pavlat was kind enough to drive me around the midwestern states and one of our hosts was Dean Grennell, and I'd been exchanging tapes for some time with both Bob and Dean. We sat around, talking in Dean's basement den and something seemed strange (and I'm not talking about Dean's eye-patch and the black cloak he insisted on wearing for the occasion!); I couldn't quite put my finger on it and it wasn't until much later that it came to me: There was no time-lag! We'd talked before on tape; and we'd asked each other questions, posed one another difficult puns, but we'd gotten used to waiting a couple of months for a reaction. To be suddenly hearing an instantaneous reply was like the Big Scene out of George O. Smith's VENUS EQUILATERAL! This was obviously why s-f fans took more readily to tape-response than more mundane people -- they were conditioned through reading innumerable science-fiction stories in which messages took light-years and eons and like that and found this a quite natural media.

Whilst most of this tape-response was on a one-to-one basis, there were also the "round-robin" tapes which circulated from time to time. I can recall one in which Bill, Dean and (I think) Doc Barrett were involved in a very erudite and learned discussion on The Cat-Houses of Their Youth....and their first experience therein. Such tapes, of course, were always labelled as "educational material" on the custom's stickers.

But fans being what they are, the tape-recorder's usage wasn't just confined to exchanging valuable information and experiences such as this. And I must admit that it was British Fandom who were to blame for taking the whole thing one step further and producing fannish tape-plays. Tape Operas, or Taperas, as they came to be termed.



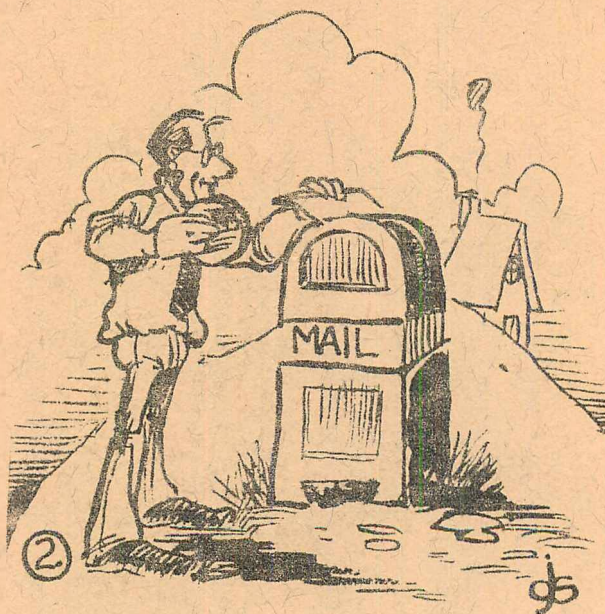
The first of these, "The Alein Arrives", was scripted by Walt Willis and recorded by the Liverpool Group for the 1954 Manchester Convention. I'm unsure that the media-mesmerized fans of today would sit still whilst a box of electronical gizmos held the stage, but we did for it was a new innovation. Naturally, it was a humorous play; Walt had written a fine script and LiG had done an excellent job of recording it -- the theme being the imminent arrival of members of the Galactic Fan Federation at that convention. I recall that it contained one of my favourite Willis-isms: "several mysterious craft, which experts identified as unidentified flying objects..."

But worse was yet to come.

*"BLOG's the stuff for work -- BLOG's the stuff for play,
BLOG's the stuff, when you feel rough, to drive your blues away,
You should take your BLOG several times a day,
Just get wise....stop your sighs....get your BLOG today."*

Yes, the Liverpool Group, recovering all too quickly from the laryngitis incurred in the recording of "The Alien Arrives", let loose on fandom at the following year's Kettering Convention "The March of Slime". Which, apart from being a hilarious 45-minute tape-play, went down in fannish history because of its introduction of BLOG into the fannish vernacular. The script (by Norman Shorrocks, John Owen, Stanley Nuttall, Don McKay and other Liverpool luminaries) was styled as an American-type radio coverage of a mythical convention. Complete with singing commercials for BLOG, as above.

"Folks, have you heard that BLOG gives you that deep sleep that psychologists say is so necessary -- cleans gramophone records -- is so kind to your silks and woollens -- weans babies safely -- kills rats, mice and badgers -- is the swift antidote for leprosy, croup, and beri-beri -- and on top of this is guaranteed to contain no pterodactyls, diplodoci or other noxious ingredients..."

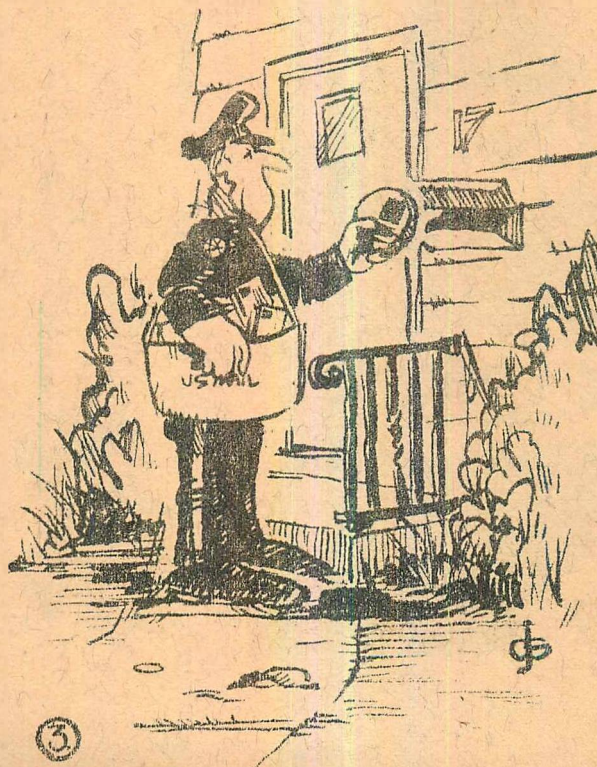


It was a highly inventive and well-recorded play, and helped to make that first Kettering Convention the fine fannish affair that it was. I still have it on tape and it gets played occasionally when fannish visitors, serious researchers into fan-archeology all, call in at Holmes Chapel. I also published the script in TRIODE at the time, and perhaps if Mike Gorra or some other interested party can be prevailed upon it may get reprinted one day. It still reads well.

And BLOG? Whilst the Tape-Opera was playing in the convention hall, the George Hotel barman happened to overhear some of the commercials and by the time a thirsty horde of fen poured out of the con-hall, a sign over the bar announced "BLOG SOLD HERE". He didn't have the true secret of the ingredients, of course, (closely guarded by generations of Shorlocks) but it was a nice touch.....and later, when local customers arrived and requested a glass of this new potion, it was interesting to hear him wriggle out of serving them.

British Fandom, of course, wanted more...of both BLOG and of Liverpool Group Taperas. Unable to resist the blandishments of the '56 convention committee, the lure of the floodlights, the "glitter of the stage", the entire Liverpool Group locked themselves into soundstage 3 (the Shorlock garage) and, making sortie only for vital supplies (Bollinger '43, Neirsteiner '39), stayed there for the next nine-months producing "Last And First Fen". Their champagne magnum opus.

"This influx of barbarian blood together with the fannish outlook brought about the inception of the typical riotous, fannish party as we know it today. Attila recognised this as a far superior method for the sacking of cities and, until his death, roamed the continent attempting to convert all men -- by fire and the sword, if necessary -- to the trufannish way of life. Thus he became known as Attila... The Fan!!!"

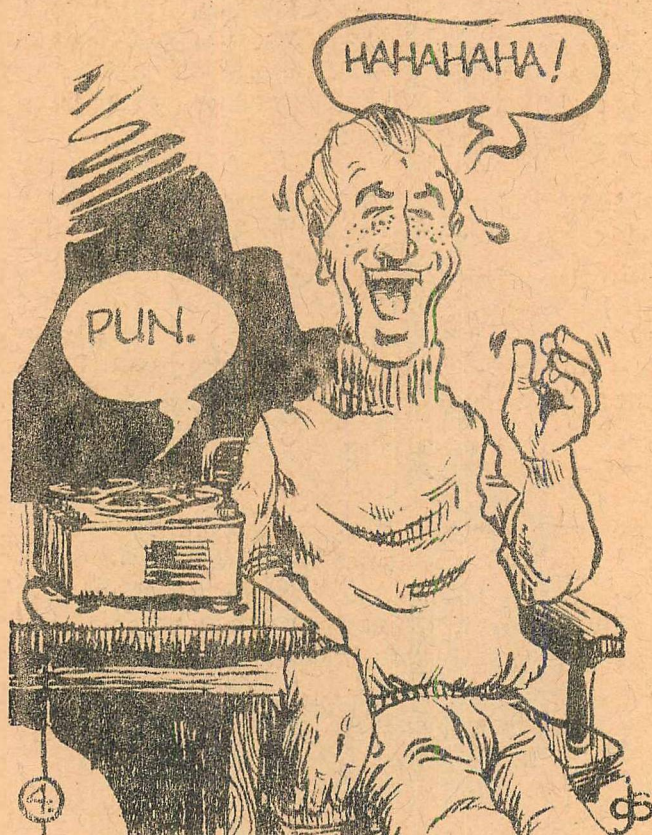


This told the story of fandom through the ages...from the early escapades of Mark Fanthony at the Rubicon; the adventures of Attila the Fan; Robin Shorrock and the Fair Maid Marriott, Willis Scarlet, Friar Tubb; Christofan Columbus; the Fannish Inquisition....up onto the present day, and beyond. The final stanza being a take-off on "Things to Come". It's impossible, without reprinting the whole script, or preferably taking you all back in time to when it was first heard, to give a reasonable idea of how good these tape-plays were. They were certainly, outside the best fanzines of the period, the ultimate of sheer fannishness. Many of the allusions are now, of course, highly irrelevant to fandom and esoteric to boot ... but it's interesting that when Sam Long paid me a visit recently and I played "The Last And First Fen" for him, he hooted like an owl.

This wasn't quite the end of the Tape-Era -- both the Liverpool and Cheltenham Groups produced brief celebratory tapes when I left the country (under the auspices of TAFF) -- but it was its "finest half-hour". Tape-correspondence between fen continued for some time after the end of the Fifties, but little else was to appear in this idiom. The Liverpool Group by now had discovered the talking-picture and were involved in re-makes of almost everything Hollywood had made a hash out of. They were kept pretty busy!

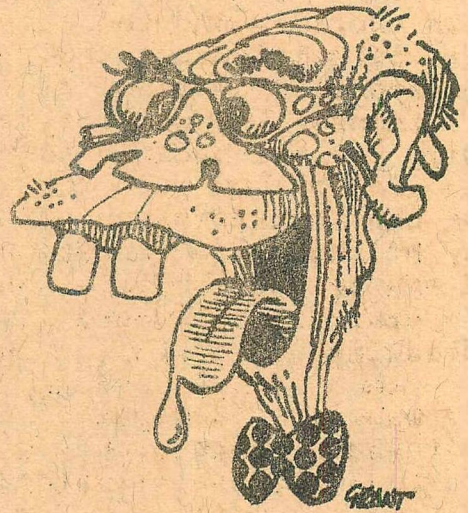
But that's another story.

+ Eric Bentcliffe +



THE PURSUIT OF SLEAZINESS

by PAUL DI FILIPPO



What are the depths to which humor can sink and still be classified as humor? This was a question I approached with no little trepidation. It seemed to me that many of the greatest minds in history had occupied themselves with this problem, mainly by adding their own tedious jests to the dregs of humor. Aristotle's occasional attempts at humor, for instance, had all the grace of a gravid elephant. Poe's solemnity caused his humorous pieces to die in one's arms. And then of course there is the grim record left behind by all American presidents. Election to the Presidency apparently carries with it the obligation to be funny, which strains the poor officeholder to the limits of endurance. Most Presidential humor (especially that of William Henry Harrison) ranks among the worst the human race has to offer.

Now if a host of intellectual giants had been unable to definitely pin humor to the mat, no matter how resolutely they tried and disregarding their occasional successes, what made me think I had the talent to do it? Actually, I was far from sure that I possessed the requisite capabilities, but I would never know if I could do it until I tried. I decided to use the technique mentioned above, which had been sanctified by centuries. Namely, definition through example.

I started out small.

First, I tried creating rotten cartoon captions. (Rotten! These captions were so decayed as to have become one with the humorous humus.) I forbore from illustrating them, since I knew that the quality for which I was searching--the quality that would cause stifled retches and soul-rending groans--did not arise from clumsiness and amateurism (and as an artist I had plenty of these), but from talent gone astray. I was determined to infuse in my examples of rotten humor a sense of perverted genius.

But, as I say, first I tried captions.

A Female Palm-reader, holding the prosthetic hook of a Man dressed in bloody, tattered pirate clothes, with a parrot on his shoulder, a sword on his hip, and pieces of eight spilling from his pockets, says: You will go on a long sea voyage.

There it was, my first piece of elemental scum. It had some touch of what I wanted (can you see it?), but not quite enough.

I gave it another go.

The cartoon panel is divided horizontally in half. The upper half is the surface of the sea, protruding from which is the understructure of the traditional Desert Island, a tangled mass of rocks and roots. The lower half of the panel is an underwater view, showing the surface of the Island, obligatory palm tree waving, curious fish watching. On the Island is a damaged U-boat, its Captain (a crazy stock-model German) and his Mate. The Mate says: Don't you think this is carrying devotion to the service a little too far, sir?

Ah, here I had a work of almost archetypical dreckiness. The situation was a primordial one in humor, as were the characters. The words were appropriately bland. Yet somehow I knew it was not the best (worst) I could do. Perhaps it was the medium I was working in.

I decided to turn to the 2-line joke.

The 2-liner is in itself so hackneyed and slimy that I felt sure of success. Here, I thought, I would end my quest for the absolutely nauseous lees of humor. Alas, it was not to be, although I came close.

Art Dealer: My God! What do you want?

Stick-up Man: Your Monet or your life.

This was a fine beginning, a delightful omen. That melodramatic exclamation point thrilled me. The maggoty vileness of the pun was sheer brilliance. But I still felt that I had not reached the ultimate horror.

Playboy: How was your date last night? Did you put it to her?

Naive Young Man: No, do you think I should have proposed on the first date?

Here, for the first (but not the last) time, I ventured into the realm of "dirty" humor. Humor involving sex seems to bring out the worst in nearly everyone. The hoariest (no pun intended) lines are thrown out and accepted with no sense of shame at their decrepitude. Obscene quips and situations that were old when Chaucer used them are still employed daily. The mother-lode of risqué laughs has been mined-out so long ago that almost all "dirty" humor qualifies as examples of the worst.

Therefore, not wanting to deal overmuch with shop-worn ideas, I moved on to "sick" humor.

Biology Professor: Why do corpses stiffen?

Med Student: It's simply de rigueur.

Admittedly, this did not really plumb the depths of grossness, but I believed that cripple-humor, like sexual humor, had been over-worked. I decided to end my foray into the chestnut-filled territory of the 2-liner with a bilingual pun, surely one of the most contrived, sterile, factitious examples of humor.

Teacher: Johnny, on the exam you mentioned that Julius Caesar always wore a plaid waistcoat. What gave you this idea?

Johnny: Because he wrote The Calico Belly.

(I stole that one from James Joyce, but since he didn't conceive of it as a joke, I feel no remorse or guilt.)

Suppose, I suggested to myself, you venture next into the domain of limericks. I considered my advice to be good.

THE MONOBLOC

An orgy in a point's interior,
Says Qwfwq, has no superior;
One simple pass
Will skewer each lass,
And end in the starter's
posterior.

This limerick (inspired, as you will no doubt have guessed, by an episode in Calvino's Cosmicomics) combined a scatological event with abstruse scientific and mathematical theories, an amalgam that should have been a surefire dud (yes, I am aware of the oxymoron). And even then, of course, the limerick form itself is so rigid and limited as to militate against humor. Much to my dismay, however, I saw beyond my limerick's crudity and obnoxiousness to an underlying inventiveness and wit. This would never do. The main quality I was striving for was the sense of bad overpowering good, the triumph of evil over virtue, of entropy over vain human endeavors. For this



is the significance behind all failed humor. I had fallen in my search. I was truly disheartened. I turned listlessly to the anecdote.

Once there was a priest, a rabbi, and a shaggy dog in a pink Cadillac in Ireland during WW II. As they drove along one day, a flying saucer landed and the Pope emerged with an alien who claimed to know everyone in the world, but could only speak by sign language. The alien immediately produced a huge machine, which he set in motion. Out popped a baby elephant in tennis shoes. "That's funny," the priest said--

A burst of agony struck me. It was no use, no use! I would never manage to disclose the bug-ridden underside of the rock of humor. I was about to end the torture when a ray of hope revealed itself.

Perhaps my failure lay in the fact that I was trying to be too brief. If brevity was the soul of wit, then what I wanted, in order to achieve non-wit, was something ponderous and weighty that oppressed the soul and intellect. In other words, a long, supposedly humorous article. I began.

What are the depths to which humor can sink and still be classified as humor?--

+ Paul Di Filippo +

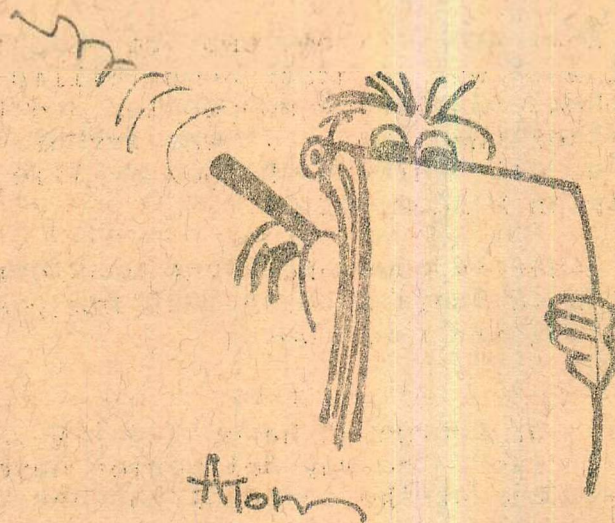
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COA: John D. Berry, basement, 1000 15th Ave. E., Seattle, WA 98112

I miss John Berry's presense here in Virginia. He used to quote me frequently, even using my one-liners as interlineations in his various fanzines. Now my witticisms are as short-lived as a puff of hot air, not to draw any comparisons, mind you. The words burble forth but no one jots them down or commits them to memory for later use. In fact things have reached the point where friends and neighbors no longer even listen, much less chuckle. Verily these are sad times upon us. Just today I said to Colleen Brown that she should make note of all my splendid jokes and when she has a sufficient number she could fill a fanzine with nothing but them. Do you know what she said in reply? Do you? Nothing! She did not say a single word; she just made a choking sound and looked at me as if I was crazy.

It's going to be much harder to become legendary if people keep ignoring me.

BACK ISSUES:: If you failed to receive an issue of MOTA (several have already told me they did not get #13) or if the copy you have is quite battered, let me know that you'd like another copy. I have copies of MOTA #7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13. I also have a few copies of MOTA 6 with Grant Canfield's fabulous "White Dot Habit". Write and let me know.



TOM PERRY
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Locks Heath,
Soton, Hants
United Kingdom

["The Exorcists of IF"] allowed me to indulge in venial sin of Nostalgia what with the green paper, ATom illos, and the sacred names of Willis, White, Shaw, Harris, et al. (To be truly authentic you would have had to stencil the article using a Vari-Typer with a typeface that got 20 characters to the inch, and left no margins at the edges of

the pages -- "much the best place for margins," quoth Willis -- and no space around the illos, but there are limits, eh, Terry?) It's been over twenty years since the winter day in 1954 when I walked home from school for lunch and found two copies of HYPHEN had come in the mail. They were like the first contact from another world -- and in fact it was a different world: the middle west of America was still pretty much as Sinclair Lewis described it in his early novels, or perhaps even a little worse since that was the heyday of Joe McCarthy. It was wonderful to find in those snot-green pages messages from intelligent beings who lived in a world where politics and sex and religion were not untouchable or deadly dull subjects.

And it was good to know that somewhere there existed adults who believed that space travel was a possibility. Some of the well-meaning adults around me had tried to deter me from wasting my time on science-fiction by explaining that rockets would never work in space because there was (all together now) NOTHING TO PUSH AGAINST OUT THERE. In return for their kindness they got only resentful mumbles about Newton's laws of motion. The nothing-to-push-against argument was quite common once; during the 1920's the New York Times had lent it respectability by citing it as one of the reasons the government should turn down Goddard's proposals for rocket research. I haven't heard it for years now. Can't think why, can you?

HYPHEN also sent me off on other paths that tended to explode the mid-western view of life. For instance there was an article by Bloch that discussed mainstream writers (it was entitled "Cause to Read Joyce"), which sent me off to libraries and university bookstores after their books, which in turn led to further chain reactions.

Some years ago a British semi-pro fan took umbrage at a fanzine review and demanded to know just what was so great about Willis anyway, since at most his writings reached only 500 or so people, and this fan's own garbage-y SF books did better than that. It was rather like boasting that a bog is wider than a well. HYPHEN changed my life, and I have always been grateful to Irish Fandom for it.

Nostalgia aside, White's piece is also excellent considered as a subtle commentary on the situation in Ireland these last few years. In that sense it is truly a beautiful if tragic work.

MIKE GLICKSOHN
141 High Park Ave.
Toronto, Ontario M6P 2S3
Canada

Of course, I haven't got MOTA 13 yet. In fact, the way deliveries have been since the strike ended, I may never get a copy, and hence will interrupt my previously complete run, plunging myself into the depths of remorse and frustration, from whence I

shall renounce fanac in a fit of bitterness over the iniquities of the postal service, taking up the training of silverfish instead and vanishing from the ken of fen as completely as Cosmic Claude. All because of MOTA 13 -- and they say thirteen's an unlucky number!

Howsoever, I was fortunate enough to stumble over a friend's copy (I do that quite a bit lately, but it's mostly caused by my efforts to avoid treading on those cute little elephants) and a pleasing little trip it was indeed! From the sublime front cover to the beautiful job of four-color mimeography on the back page (so good, in fact, I carefully removed it from the surrounding green desert and filed it away to provide financial security in my dotage) this is A Fine Issue indeed. And fast, fast, fast too! How nice it must be to be young and strong and in your prime....

It really does not surprise me (nothing does nowadays, not even the news that Bowers is attempting to learn to read through correspondence courses) that you've never before published MOTA 13 only 6 weeks after MOTA 12. And while I'd hate to cast a pall of gloom over your holiday season by spoiling your anticipation of bright moments to come, I feel it only polite to let you know you'll never do it again, unless, of course, you simply start publishing a never ending series of issues of MOTA numbered 12 and 13. While this might annoy future bibliophiles no end, it has its advantages. Think of the money you'd save on phone calls to Ted White asking him what the next number is supposed to be!

I'm going to be extremely hard put to express my admiration of the White piece properly because this is clearly one of the best written pieces of the year. Harry Warner wonders how many other 1975 fanzines will have a major piece from a star of the 50's and here we have a second MOTA that more than fills the bill. In years to come (possibly starting with 1976 if the various Fanthology plans ever get off the ground!) this piece is going to be a prime source for reprinting. It has everything, literally. Humour, superb quality writing, fanhistory, personal recollections, nostalgia, some serious thoughts on the quality of life and the benefits of the fannish mode of existence, and an ending best described as beautiful. One tends to remember best the fanzine material most recently enjoyed, but if 1975 had a better piece of fan-

writing, I can't recall it offhand. A few to equal it, but none better.

Ian Maule to the contrary, the remarkable of scoring with two oysters (a species notoriously lacking in any noticeable sex-appeal for humans) is something that's bound to merit a full page in Harry Warner's history of fandom in the 70's. That I hadn't mentioned it before is simply an example of my innate modesty. Anyone can be rated against at oyster, but to be rated by one requires exceptional qualities. Since Ian has brought it up, I can now reveal that I'm to be the foldout in the next issue of PLAYCLAM, the Mollusc's Monthly, an honour not offered to just any old chowderhead.

One of the reasons I like MOTA is that it manages to get a sizeable amount of response from English fans, something not too many other US zines achieve. Nowhere else, for example, could or has one find or found John Poof Piggot, ex-lumberjack and Famous Barbers School graduate revealing that the Servile Service is the same all over the world.

(And no where but in MOTA can one find innately modest fans candidly talking about their sexual relations with oysters while remaining completely clam...er, calm.)

HARRY WARNER, JR.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, MD 21740

The cover of this 13th MOTA is brilliant. It's one of those concepts so basic and simple that you'd expect every cartoonist to think of it early in his career. But I've never seen it used in any pro or fan surroundings before this. And if by chance great minds have run in similar channels and someone else somewhere has done a cartoon on the same basic idea, I'm willing to judge sight unseen that it wasn't carried out as brilliantly as this one.

I approached the James White contribution with the same emotion that I experience once in a long while, when I'm about to hear for the first time some previously unpublished composition by Liszt or Ravel or someone else which had languished in obscurity only in manuscript form through the decades. But such music is usually insignificant because the researchers wouldn't have left it untouched for so long if it had been up to snuff. The Exorcists of IF, on the other hand, is absolutely first rate, as true to the tradition of the style and spirit of the late 1950's and early 1960's as if James White had become immune from the changes that most of us undergo with the passing of time.

Curiously, I seem to remember a John Berry story written during the great era of Irish Fandom that was based on the same general idea, the activities of the ghosts of the bnfs around Belfast. If I remember correctly, I was impressed at the time by the way John obviously recognized Irish Fandom as something unique and important while he was in the very middle of it at its height. I think I also worried a little about the temptation which he might be posing to fate by writing of the ghosts of very much alive young men and women. Fortunately, I needn't have worried that something might happen like the death of a daughter soon after Mahler wrote his song cycle, Kindertotenlieder.

Of course, John couldn't have forseen the tragic circumstances which make James' little story so beautifully posed between comedy and pathos.

One point might be worth clarification. I know that ATom has caricatured the real people mentioned in the story, because I can catch the resemblance in the case of those whom I've seen in person. But I wonder about Oblique House. Is the title illustration a fairly accurate sketch of that famous structure, or is it also a caricature with just a minimum of actuality preserved?

I feel sort of guilty, reading this loc from Mike Gorra and knowing that he has suffered a drastic reduction in his fanac because of college. It took me only five minutes' time and a dollar to get virtually all the advantages of a college education. A year or two ago, West Virginia University's public television station at Morgantown became available in this area because a repeater transmitter was built in the state's Eastern Panhandle just across the Potomac from here. This was before Hagerstown acquired its own PBS station. I was delighted to get good reception suddenly, after struggling for years to watch the flickering pictures from public stations in Washington and in Hershey, Pa. The West Virginia station was offering a free program listing publication. I asked to be put on its mailing list and enclosed a buck because I don't pay taxes in West Virginia and feared I wouldn't be eligible for free copies. I received a nice letter which thanked me for my interest and promised to send me the periodical. The first thing I started to get was copies of the WVU magazine, a glossy publication which looks almost as good as Algol. Then came a questionnaire, with a cover letter which explained that the university liked to keep track of the whereabouts and activities of its more successful alumni. Pretty soon I was receiving various offers to become all sorts of different kinds of contributors and supporters and patrons of the college's athletic teams and scientific programs and building funds. By now, I'm pretty sure I can remember a few faces and episodes of my undergraduate days and I'm positively impatient, waiting for my next class reunion to come up. I'm half-tempted to ask for a transcript of my senior year grades, but I haven't done it for fear they'd be low enough to shake my self-esteem. I never did get any copies of that program guide, unfortunately.

(The heading illustration for this issue's lettercolumn is Arthur Thomson's revealing self-portrait, totally unretouched.

Congratulations on your cherished college memories, Harry. As you know, John Bangsund has formed his own school: the college of Ard-Nox. Of course, there are several of us who are alumni of good old Whatsamadda U.)

GRAHAM CHARNOCK
70 Ledbury Road
London W.11
United Kingdom

Thanks for sending MOTA, or MOTH as I was convinced it was called until my wife put me right. Pity, as I was going to make some kind of remark about it being a fanzine with balls. But Motaballs doesn't make much sense, does it.

MOTA is the kind of fanzine I like to see from the U.S. but see all too rarely. Short, relatively pithy, and about people rather than the state of the art. I thought there was something familiar about Bob Shaw's article. I think I walked out of the con hall about half way

down page seven. No reflection on Bob's talk, I must hasten to say, which I'm glad for this opportunity to catch up on (on which to catch up?). I just couldn't stand all those people looking at me and sniggering. It's like this. I had the unenviable task of introducing Bob with this talk at the 75 Eastercon. All the other committee members were in the bar, except for Malcolm Edwards who was under it. And Peter Roberts who was on top of it. I grabbed the microphone and blurted out your usual: "Hi folks, here we all are.....er...er...like to introduce someone who...er...no introduction....er...sure you all know him....he's the author of....well....he's written..." And at that point I froze. I just couldn't remember one goddamn thing he'd written. I mean, I knew, but nothing on Earth could have dredged the titles out of me. I continued: "Well...er...he's written an awful lot of books." The massed guffaws of the audience were no comfort. Bob, of course, is hardly the most prolific novelist and as he pointed out himself ten seconds later as soon as he got the microphone: "I'm glad he didn't say 'a lot of awful books'." So I left for the bar in disgrace about half way down page seven. Bob has since bought me a drink and politely not mentioned the incident, so I'm sure it's okay now. Just another of those silly things that haunt you at odd moments and which stick in your memory like your first orgasm or the first time you saw Peter Roberts do his Attacking Budgie dance.

(I also received letters and cards from: Jackie Franke, John Hall, Dave Romm, Grant Canfield, Sam Long, Geoffrey Mayer, Paul Di Filippo, David Emerson, Sheryl Birkhead, John Carl, Dave Rowe, Neil Ballantyne, Pete Presford, Gary Hubbard, Victoria Vayne, Curt Stubbs, Susan Palermo, Michael Carlson, Jim Meadows III, and John D. Berry. Thanks to you all!

Thanks also to everyone who sent Christmas cards; they were truly appreciated and put on proud display. I'm afraid MOTA 13 was all the Christmas card I could send out.)

I want to thank this issue's contributors for their fine work. In particular I want to thank Dan Steffan, whose artwork continues to be both brilliant and punctual.

Coming soon:

Bob Tucker on Australian Trains!
David Piper on Aerosol Cans!
Bob Shaw on Taxi Cabs!
Paul Di Filippo on Phobias!
Roy Rogers on Trigger!
and Terry Hughes on the brink.



 MOTA #14 February 1976 is sent
 to you
 from Terry Hughes, 866 N. Frederick St.
 Arlington, Virginia 22205, USA.
 This fanzine is put out on a
 schedule that is both frequent and
 irregular, not to mention highly
 confusing. However, each issue
 has a different number and date
 (Mike Glicksohn please note!) at
 absolutely no extra charge. It is
 available in exchange for humorous
 articles and artwork, both of
 which are Highly Encouraged. You
 may also receive copies for writing
 letters of comment. I generally
 trade with other fanzines on an
 all-for-all basis. Samples are
 available upon request or in
 exchange for a sincere kiss.

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This is your last issue _____

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