

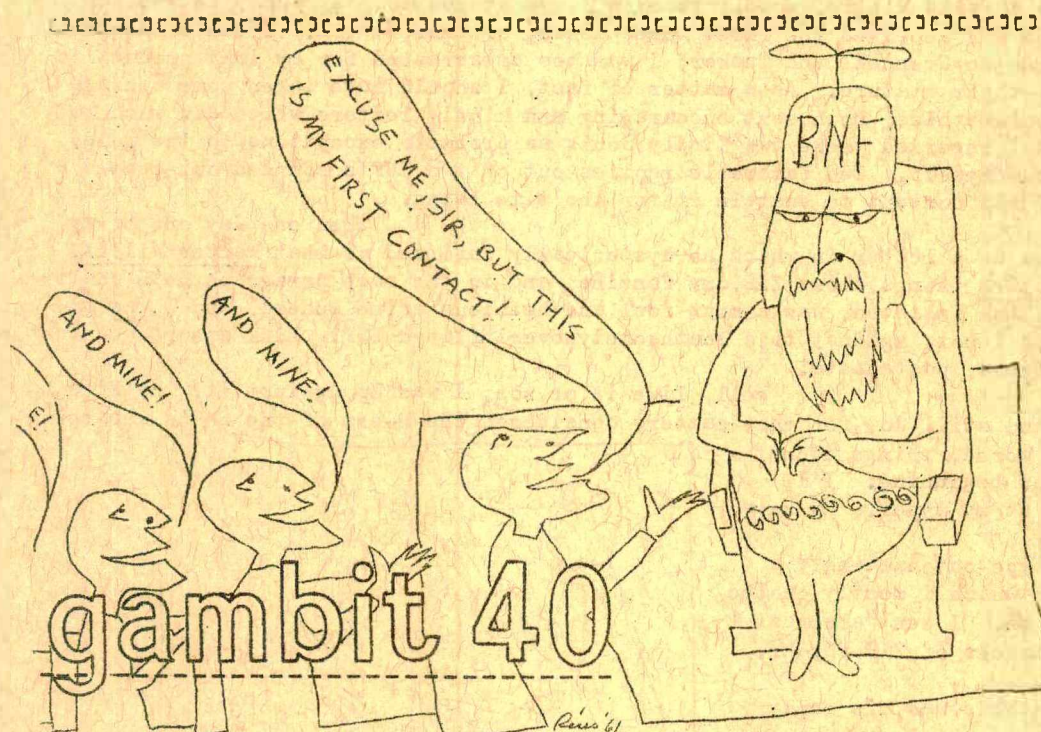
is edited and mostly written by FAPA's prodigal son, Ted White, 107 Christopher St., New York 14, N.Y., and is published for the February 1961 mlg.

As I type this (February 3rd), VOID 23 has been mailed out for about a week. In one or two more weeks, it will begin hitting fandom's mailboxes.

VOID 23 is pretty unusual, in that it is a Walt Willis Appreciation Issue, and is entirely devoted to material by or about Willis. (This includes "The Ten Year Hitch," Walt's own very fine reminiscent article.) (A few copies left at 25¢ apiece--plug.)

The following material in micro-elite is reprinted from that issue of VOID: my editorial, and the Shaws' "Opened Letter." It is being published here in order to give wider distribution to the idea broached. If you've received VOID, fine. If you haven't, read on.

I claim no activity credit for the material in micro-elite; I've got an article in LIGHTHOUSE, and I'll try to supply at least two pages of pica in this zine--my only requirement. --ted white



FIRST CONTACT: Every neo goes through his first contacts with the fearsome BNF's who rule his world with a certain amount of trepidation. His usual feelings are most likely that those world-weary giants whom he worships from afar will either ignore him altogether, or merely deign simply to wither him with a Blast of Scorn.

All of this actually means that the BNF carries a great deal of unwanted responsibility along with his High Honors. In fact, the Higher the Honors, the greater that responsibility. For even though the BNF may disclaim it with "I'm just another fan, and as human as any neo," or say something of that sort

(you know which sort I mean), he simply is not. The BNF has it within his power to actually demolish a timid neo. His veriest off-the-cuff-of-chance remarks are weighed closely by the neos to whom they are addressed (whether by intent or if-the-shoe-fits circumstance), and are directly acted upon. BNF-dom has a kind of built-in leverage which automatically lends weight to any BNF's words. Because of all this, the real measure of a BNF's greatness may be found in the way in which he measures up to his position.

That's why, at any rate, the First Contact is so important. Say Ferdy Neofugg has just published the first issue of his fanzine, TOILET PAPER, and he sends it to Joe Bnfiaan, and Joe tells him candidly that TOILET PAPER is the most appropriately titled fanzine he has ever received, and that he found it rewardingly useful. Now it is fairly likely that Ferdy, if only with hindsight, will become aware somewhere along the line that TOILET PAPER was not a likely Hugo winner for the year. But still he resents hearing this from Joe, who is actually his idol, and from whom he maybe expected a multitude of helpful hints and all that. "After all," Ferdy laborously pecks out in his next letter to his

close friend, Rudy Neophaaan, "the whole reason TP isn't the best fanzine going is that the BNF's, like Joe, won't even send me anything. It's all their fault!"

And thus we leave Ferdy Neofugg, slowly sinking, wailing deeply, into the mire of true fuggheadism. Enough of him.

The point I think I was trying to make was that the BNF has Responsibilities--responsibilities towards these First Contacts, and then, inevitably, towards all the Following Contacts, which unhappily are usually Touches, sometimes even the First.

On the other hand (which we musn't overlook--at this point I'm ambidextrous), there are Rewards. I mean, if Joe Bnfaaan does respond with kindness, and takes up the mantle of Mentor to the neofen, these fen are most likely going to remember him in later years with considerable kindness and a firmly established (if the BNF does not quickly uproot it) case of hero worship. (Sometimes hero worship can be as annoying to the BNF as its reverse. The hero-worshippers are inclined to take unkindly to the notion that their Hero is both human and fallible. In fact, one neofan is known to have actually banned all mention of a certain BNF in his fanzine when he heard that his idol once admitted to writing letters to Sarge Saturn in 1941.) But that's a Reward for you...never perfect, a gift horse with soggy teeth. You might as well hop onto its back anyway.

I don't know what any of this has to do with the proper topic of this piece, unless it forms a sort of preface to the telling of My First Contact With Walter A. Willis. (Walter A. Willis, as a matter of fact, is the proper topic for this issue. Maybe I'll get to him yet.) Anyway, this, Walter Alexander Willis, is YOUR life!

The year: 1954. The place: Fandom.

I had been publishing a fanzine for something less than a year and had somehow managed to put out six successively improving issues (you should have seen what I had to improve on!) of ZIP, The Fanzine that Moved Right Along. (It started out in a rather brief--that's a flattering word, actually--format. I chose to scale no large mountains in my neodom.)

I had sent no copies to Walt Willis, mostly because I was scared to. In fact, it was for this very reason that almost no BNF received the first three issues or thereabouts. I can't imagine how I slipped up and sent copies to Grennell and Tucker; I was too embarrassed for my inky product to think of sending it to fans of their stature. As a matter of fact, I should have taken some courage from the reactions of those two worthies; both sent encouraging and kindly letters which did much to cheer my struggling soul. But I regarded these two Kindly Souls as probable exceptions to the rule, and I didn't want to over-extend myself. Two favorable replies out of two BNF's sounded out seemed a remarkably good average, and I was content to sustain it for the time being.

Then one day one of my subscribers, Warren Link, sent me a letter in which he hysterically informed me that Walter Willis, None Other, had said some terrible things about ZIP, my fanzine, and in the same paragraph he'd admit to never seeing a copy! This, Link insisted, was a most foul and heinous crime indeed, and I was going to Take Up The Cudgels, was I not, against this loathsomely overinflated BNF? Link assured me that he was rushing to my/ZIP's defense, postehaste!

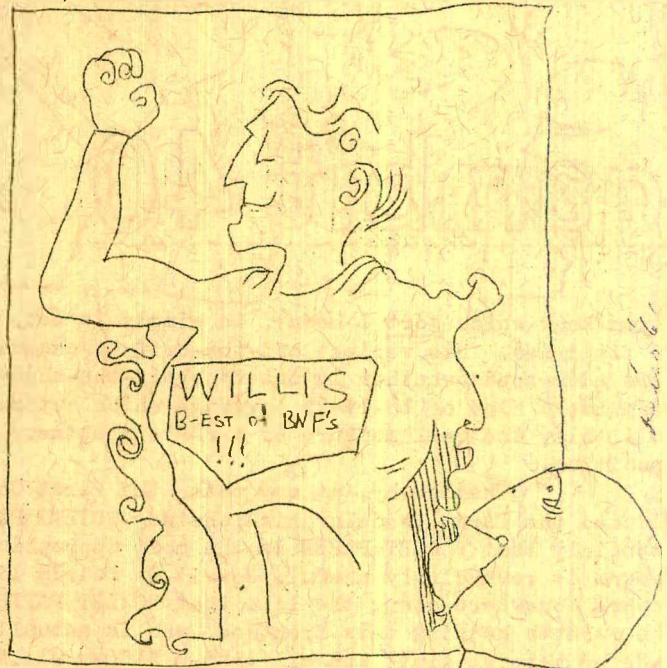
Well, like it or not, I was Up Against It. My First Contact with the fan I then (and still do, for that matter) considered the B-est of the BNF's was being forced upon me. And what was worse, things didn't look too good for an auspicious beginning. I'll have to admit it: I quavered at my typer. My keys shook.

Somehow I managed to type out haltingly a rather quietly toned letter in which I mostly quoted Link and asked what was going on. I sent along at the same time several recent issues of ZIP for Mr. Willis's first-hand appraisal.

This was his reply:

It looks as if our friend Link has been trying to be a bit mischievous. However tweaking the beards of us decrepit old fans is a recognized pastime in fandom, and I've no objection.

What happened is that as you probably know, Link has been running a column on Stateside fandoings for a minor British zine called SATELLITE [this was in 1954]. The first installment omitted all reference to the well known zines and reviewed minor ones as if they were the leaders of the field. It seemed to me misleading to the average British fan to pass this off as a representative survey and I commented



mildly as follows:

"Warren Link's column rather surprised me. I thot I was fairly well up in American fandom, yet I've never heard of him nor seen any of the fnz he reviews. I'm tempted to assume Link is still moving in a small circle of his own and that what you're getting is a review of a tiny segment of US fandom. No doubt the column will improve as he broadens out more. As it is, I'd hate to think of British subbers assuming that, say, ZIP (by all accounts a very inferior mag so far) is representative of what the US zines have to offer. The pro news is good though. I expect Link gets FANTASY TIMES..."

Re-read-
ing this, I realize I was unfair to ZIP and I apologize. However this was written six months ago or more, and based on still earlier reviews and mentions of ZIP, when it cannot have reached the standard it has with these copies you've sent me. I certainly wouldn't say that about it now, and I'll try to make amends in the next issue of SATELLITE. Link also takes me to task in the current issue, just received, for judging a fnz I hadn't seen--but I really was just passing on what I'd heard about it, not judging it myself. It was clear from what I said that I hadn't seen the mag. Anyway, I didn't imagine that SATELLITE would circulate among your potential subscribers or that what I said would affect ZIP adversely.

But after I've said all that I must still admit that I was in the wrong and I shouldn't have said what I did. Perhaps I was, subconsciously, slightly peeved that I hadn't been getting ZIP. I wasn't conscious of it, but it's hard to assess the reasons which lead one to do things, and even after seven years in fandom I can still make mistakes, when acting thoughtlessly. Anyway, I'll be happy to exchange HYPHEN with ZIP, or anything else you publish, and I'm sending you the current issue. Also a copy of The Enchanted Duplicator, for which I want no payment. I have a few back issues of HYPHEN...see list in the current issue...so let me know what you want.

And thanks for not flying off the handle about this.

I'm setting off tomorrow for the British Convention, and this letter is being written in time taken off from packing, so please excuse its incoherency and the fact that I haven't made any detailed comments about ZIP. I've just had time for a hurried run-through, but I liked what I saw very much. Special congratulations on the color work. Beautiful.

All the best,
Walt

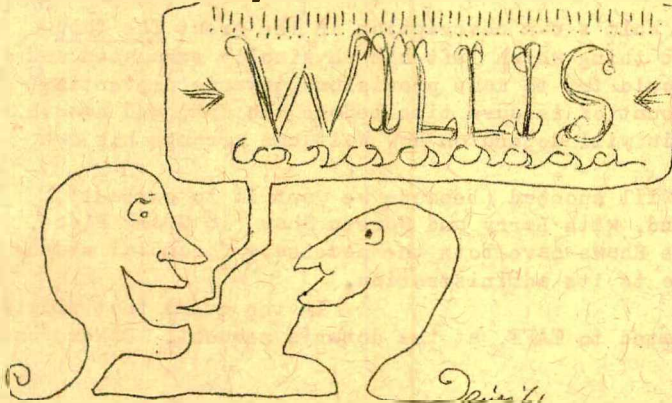
Looking back on this affair, I'm amazed at Willis's patience and humbleness in dealing with a fan (me) who was as yet unknown and totally undistinguished, and his likewise undistinguished (except for its color work) fanzine. (And--one other thing: it suddenly occurred to me when stencilling this that I never did see any of those SATELLITE's. Has anyone any of the pertinent issues they'd care to sell or loan?) But that First Contact has always seemed to me a rather typical example of the Willis kindness and thoughtfulness which I've since observed in all his activities and which I believe have always been ingrained in his personality. That letter stands as a model to every aspiring fan, Willis a model person in himself.

Walt has somehow managed to convey a gentle tone while nonetheless once in a while exhibiting or making use of a large stick, with which he is capable of fully and beautifully trouncing anyone who proves himself truly worthy of that particular honor. In this Walt is one of the few fans I can think of who is both outspoken and gentle and inoffensive. Perhaps it is his penchant for humor, and what BoSh labels further on thish as the Willis Creed which achieves this characteristic in him. Willis has taken stands which were far from universally popular, but with the exception of a few sore-heads of the sort one will always turn up, he's managed to retain all of fandom's respect in the process.

Any catelog of reasons for liking and admiring Walt Willis (and this is a far complete one) would be incomplete and useless without a mention of the Willis Generosity. The letter I quoted

gives a good example of this; a more recent one is his contribution to this special issue. Like his piece in V18 (which was written while he packed for a move which never occurred), "The Ten Year Hitch" was written under pressure. But Walt wrote it for us, simply because we asked for something. What it was we actually got (a damn-fine article, one of Walt's best in recent years) makes a good case for the Willis Talent. But that's yet another thing and if I were to go on like this, I could fill thish myself.

Actually, we tricked this article out of Walt. We told him that we wanted a piece about himself for part of a special section of the VAMPISH.



We took Bob Shaw into our confidence, and asked him to play along with the gag for Walt's benefit. This he did, and in addition he contributed a piece which was also written on borrowed time.

Naturally we couldn't tell Walt that we wanted his piece for an issue which was going to honor him. I mean, that would have spoiled things.

But anyway, Walt replied with his article, air-mail, so fast it took our breaths away, and apologized for its being first-draft and so late.

I think that's also typical of Walter Willis.

So, call it unarrested hero-worship or what you will, we all think a great deal of Walter Alexander Willis, and that is why this issue of VOID is dedicated to him. A repayment, if you will, for all of his many past kindnesses and generosity.

And...hullo, Walt. Are you surprised?

WHEN WE began plans for this special issue--back around last April, as a matter of fact--we hadn't thought of carrying things any further than simply dedicating this VOID to Walt.

Then in conversation with Les Gerber, I mentioned the idea of another Willis Fund. "You know, I was really sorry when Walt decided not to come in 1958," I said. "I've been thinking about that," said Les. "I think we ought to sound Walt out again. It's been a couple of years, GMCarr has had her comeuppance in the FANAC Fugghhead Poll, and...maybe now he'd reconsider."

"That would be great," I said. "I think I'll write him," said Les.

Walt replied that he was open to the idea, but that it would be best to ask again in 1961.

Well, right now, we--Greg Benford, Pete Graham, Les Gerber, the Fanoclasts of New York, most of the rest of NYC fandom, Sylvia and myself--are asking you, Walt Willis, to be the recipient of a special Fund to be gotten up specifically to bring you over here in 1962.

And, at the same time, we're asking all of you who are reading VOID to join with us in asking Walt to come over. (Your support can be monetary as well as vocal. See below.)

For those who like the idea of such things, there are a couple of special points in favor of such a Fund, aside from the obvious and basic one that all of us want to see Walt again, if not for the first time. And those are:

1. The year 1962, which will be the best target date for the Fund, marks the 10th Anniversary of the success of the first WAW With The Crew in '52 Fund, which directly inspired TAFF. (Needless to say, this Fund won't be in competition with TAFF.)
2. It looks like better than even chances are for Chicago being the host city of the 1962 Convention. Chicago, of course, was the site of the 1952 Con.

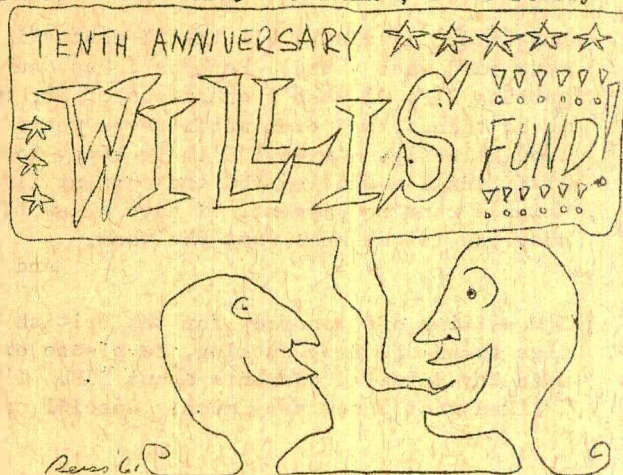
This kind of cements things up into a beautifully timed 10th Anniversary WAW With The Crew in '62 movement. I don't see how anyone can resist.

There are several considerations, however: Walt said in 1958 that if he ever came over again he wanted to bring his wife, Madeleine, along. I should imagine that this still holds true. This means we must plan for a larger Fund, and begin work on it as soon as possible.

Also, we all know (if only from reading Walt's own description in the great The Harp Stateside) that Walt's first American Con was a hectic thing which left him physically exhausted and much of which he was forced to miss. This time we should try to make provisions towards preventing this whenever possible. Part of this means a fair amount of leisure time before the Con, and smooth travel accommodations. Naturally, a good degree of this will depend on how Walt can arrange his own vacation plans.

Because we're dead certain this Fund will succeed (because we want it to so badly), we've set up a provisional committee to handle the Fund, with Larry and Noreen Shaw (16 Grant Place, Grant City, Staten Island 6, N.Y.) as Treasurers. The Shaws have both the necessary financial standing and experience to handle the Fund properly and see to its administration.

In the event that Willis cannot make it, all donations will be returned or donated to TAFF, at the donor's request. Other funds raised will be donated to TAFF.



As for the rest of us, we have no real official standing, you might say, but we'll all be trying as hard as possible to insure the success of the 10th Anniversary WAW With The Crew Fund!

Join us?

--Ted White

AN OPENED LETTER TO WALT WILLIS

Dear Walt,

We think we know one thing you're thinking at this point. You're thinking: "But I've already been to the United States. It wouldn't be fair for me to go again, and perhaps deprive someone who hasn't been offered a chance."

But you're wrong. You have never been to the United States as it exists today--which is, after all, the one we propose to bring you to.

True, you have been to a United States. But how different! Ten years ago, this was a land of pioneers and new frontiers (shut up, Metcalf!). It was a brawling, lusty, primitive place, full of wide-eyed wonder and wide-mouthed pugnaciousness. Fan feuded with fan, local groups actually locked in open battle over the choice of con-sites, some magazines had ragged edges, and only our general agreement that Campbell was slipping gave us any unity at all.

Alas, all entropy! Radioactivity decays, pages flutter from calendars in a million B movies, and Time luecleaves flip. In short, civilization has set in. And of course, all recognized science-fictional prophets have known and shown the inherent evils of progress.

The most cursory examination of the scene today proves their propheteering. U.S. fandom has gone from Huck Finn to Huxley in one decade. Consider:

TYRANNY! Everyone knows that Bjo rules the West, though few suspect the true extent of her power (they will...when "The Musquite Kid" wins an Academy Award). But who would dare guess that Leslie Gerber occupies a similar throne in the East? And who would even risk speculating on the identity of the hidden chess-player? You, Silverberg?

CONFORMITY! Ron Ellick has joined the N3F. Harry Warner has attended a Philcon. And even Sam Moskowitz, upon whom so many of us pinned our last flickering hopes, shows signs of having caught up with the year 1931 (although there are those who claim he has actually been replaced)....

BRAIN-WASHING! Seattle in '61? Of course, no one ever said there was anything wrong with Seattle. But then, who ever heard of Seattle before 1960? And why can't we remember more about that Pittcon business session, Sprague?

CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION! Bill Donaho drives a Cadillac. Fans sneer at zines if they have less than 100 pages. New York fandom has left its underground retreats and now holds meetings in a penthouse. AndyYoung eats in fancy expensive restaurants, Walter Breen flies, Rick Sneary is learning to spell, and Forry Ackerman--we swear it's true, Walt--has drunk Ginger Ale in public!

But we can't go on. It sounds unbelievable, even to us. You'll just have to come and see it for yourself, Walt--see it and record it, so that all the world will know. It isn't so much that you need U.S. fandom, you see. U.S. fandom needs you.

Beseechingly,
Larry and Noreen Shaw

PS: Campbell is still slipping, by the way. There is still hope...

So that's the pitch. You'll be hearing more about the TENTH ANNIVERSARY WILLIS FUND in the months to come, and I hope you'll be supporting it.

I READ MY FAPA MAILINGS, BUT... I misplace them. And somehow this keeps me from my typically witty comments on them. You know how it is... However, I do recall a couple of items I wanted to comment on, so I'll try to make it with reference only to memory. Bear with me...

BOYD RAEURN: No, the "conreport" on Newport in the last NULL-F was not the unexpurgated report; it was the revised report. The version you read in JAZZ GUIDE was exactly as I originally wrote it (first draft, too). When I decided to use it in NULL-F, I rewrote it on stencil--in some places cleaning up the writing, and in some places

adding fannish allusions and other more personal details. (Hmmm. Come to think of it, one cut was made in JAZZ GUIDE--my comments on my inability to get the press-pass.) Latest word has it that there will be no festival at Newport this year. I wonder if my ROGUE article had anything to do with that.

RON ELLIK: A couple of mailings ago, you let loose another of your typically clever little blasts at me for something I'd written in VOID. You did a rather lousy job of reporting it, so I'd like to quote it for you: "The Inchmery Breakup has occasioned considerable soul-searching. And it has resulted in a few changes of attitude on my part. My position is a pretty simple one: fandom is a fun-and-games sort of thing, a glorified stage, filled with play-acting and wildly false values. As such it offers much to the fen in it unless they come to confuse fannish "realities" with mundane reality. Kent Moomaw confused the two; he came to regard fandom as the reality, and his frustration in fandom brought about his doom. Last fall FAPA members wondered that, when we were literally starving, we chose to use ten dollars of FAPA's money (borrowed only, and from a treasury with hundreds in surplus) for food. The reality of starvation made no sense to these fandom-oriented members. They were farther out of touch than we were." I believe you said something about how I was still "sobbing" over the situation. Try reading that passage again, friend. And may you never face a similar situation where reality bumps headlong into the charming fantasy world we know, love, and call "fandom."

Actually I have no desire to revive the original fracas; one hell of a lot has happened since November 1959, and I feel like an entirely different person--which essentially I am.

PHYLLIS ECONOMOU: I struck below the belt, and I apologize--I was reacting to items I remembered from That Period when I wasn't my most rational self. I'm glad our gettogether at the Pittcon cleared everything up.

HARRY WARNER: Get well soon, Harry Warner!

LARRY SHAW: Many, many thanks for your moral support in ICE AGE--and all the other kinds of support you've provided for us since we first met you, and particularly since we came to New York. Friends, this man Larry Shaw has the warmest heart, is the softest touch, and is such an all-round nice guy that I feel perpetually indebted to him. He made a lot of my helping him move--but he neglected to mention that he helped us bring furniture over here from the Ellingtons, when they moved out, and that he's many times over repaid any favors I've done for him. A wonderful person, Larry Shaw. (And you too, Noreen.)

BOB TUCKER: I saw Frqnk Robinson in Chicago shortly after Christmas, while quickly passing through, and I'll be writing for ROGUE fairly regularly. The next piece will be "New Sounds in Saxes." After that I shall try to do a couple of non-jazz pieces.

And that seems to be about all that I remember wanting to say. No doubt the very moment the last staple has been affixed in the last copy of this zine, I'll think of more, but whathell, whathell, as archie might very well say. -ted white

QWERTYUIOPress, what else?