

PHILOSOPHICAL GAS

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The numbering of this um journal has gone sadly haywire, and it's all Leigh Edmonds's fault. On 15th December I sat down to start the next issue, and typed No.18 on the masthead because I knew Leigh had put No.11 incorrectly on the ANZAPA list last mailing. However he had mistaken 14 for 11, not 17, so I've missed three issues and here's one of them.

FAPA 141 arrived, naturally, the day after I had a postcard from Gregg and answered it immediately, including in my reply the advice that FAPA 141 had not yet arrived. It also arrived the same day (I think) as Mr Nixon announced his Peace With Honour in Vietnam, and it rained like it was out of fashion and there was a sheet of iron missing from the verandah so the dunny flooded, and I was not in the best mood when I started reading the mailing. I'm still not. Bear with me.

I think I might be getting old or something. The only thing I've read in FAPA 141 (and I haven't read the lot yet) which I found at all congenial was Gregg's Rambling Fap. Now this might simply mean that I need something congenial rather than provocative or scintillating or whatever, but it alarms me. Tonight I have been reading REG, and - Ghod forgive me, Dick! - I was utterly crapped off with it. A few days ago I read most of Terry Carr's Fanthology 64, and was mostly bored. Two, maybe three, items I would love to have published; the rest was just good better-than-average fanzine stuff. Was that really the best of 1964? Have fanzines improved since then? Or am I just getting old?

I haven't read John Berry yet, mainly because it looks as though he's writing about his travels again, and I'm not in the mood for travel stories. I haven't read Milt Stevens either, because it looks like a long worldcon report, and I'm not in the mood for long worldcon reports.

I haven't read Sam Moskowitz, mainly because SaM didn't write anything. Maybe all these years I've missed the point about belonging to an apa. Maybe the done thing is to publish eight pages every now and then, written, typed and duplicated by someone else. Thank Ghod for Rick Sneary and Tom Collins: if it wasn't for Tom I would have had easily the most pages in the mailing - almost enough for ten years - and I would have been awfully embarrassed. Tom's stuff is just great, what I read of it, but not exactly my line, and in any case he sent me a copy a couple of months back.

Paul Wyszkowski, where are you? (How does it feel to be missed?)

A few folk have asked me questions, and since you should also have PGs 14 and 18 in this mailing, I will try to answer those questions and stop carrying on like an elderly disenchanted fart.

Harry Warner: Yes, it is possible to find out when surface mail to North America closes. From Sydney there are usually two or three mails each month, to New York and Los Angeles and/or San Francisco. I don't know whether these are the same ships that carry mail from Melbourne, but I suspect so. If you think that's primitive, it works the other way, too. Unless fanzines are airmailed from the USA, they tend to arrive all at once. When I was working in the bookshop, back in 59-60, we used to tell customers that books from America would take 8-12 weeks getting here, and as far as I know that is still the case.

(Tell me, Harry: You publish 96 pages in FAPA every year, and so, more or less, do quite a few other members. Is this really the Done Thing?)

Dick Gels: Don't know why it is, Dick, but the less I enjoy REG the more I enjoy the other things you write - such as your (like mine, infrequent) letters and your comments on FAPA. I am almost as insatiably curious about my "ill-fated marriage" as you seem to be. When I've worked it out I'll let you know. The only thing I can say with some certainty is that my fanac didn't cause the breakdown. Anything would have served as an excuse - stamp-collecting, church-going, studying for a degree - anything that kept me away from her. Does that partly answer the question?

Earl & Jan Evers: (Same subject.) Yes, I agree with you. If it wasn't funny I wouldn't have written about it. I'm better off out of that marriage, yes, but I miss marriage.

Hank Luttrell: (Same subject.) Hi, Hank. Lovely job you had done on those A75 badges, and I'm sorry I haven't written to thank you. You should be hearing all kinds of scandalous reports about Lesleigh's trip through these parts, and I just wish some of them were true. It's just our exaggerated way of saying we sure did love Lesleigh. Sue Smith recently published the first issue of "Girls' Own Fanzine", mainly devoted to the subject, "Would you marry a fan?" I could be wrong, but the consensus seemed to be negative. You marry a person, and if he/she happens to be a fan, you cope. Nice talking about it anyway.

Roy Tackett: (Same subject.) If Harry consigns me to a footnote I'll have his balls. I have already gaffed - for several weeks in 1969 - and, if memory serves, we have already Howdied - back about 1967 - but we ain't shook, and I look forward to doing just that in 1975 with a little luck.

Mr Justice Speer: (Same subject, among others.) No, I think I'm wrong in calling you "Mr Justice", Jack; your position probably corresponds roughly to that of a stipendiary magistrate in Australia. Sounds good, though. ::: "Migrant" is not obscene, except when herd. ::: Gawd, yer an ignorant lot there in Americky! "Plimsoll line" and "Hansard" are defined in most English dictionaries, and I sort of got the impression you had a few lying around. The former is the line painted on a ship, above which the water may not go when the ship is loaded; the latter is (a) the record of parliamentary debates in most countries of the Commonwealth, and (b) the Parliamentary Reporting Staff which produces that record. ::: Yes, proofreading is frustrating. ::: Our divorce laws are in the process of being liberalized - soon enough, I am pleased to say, to allow my divorce to go through more quickly than Diane and I expected. Under the old law you could apply for divorce on the grounds of adultery after six months, desertion two years and separation five years (oh, insanity immediately). So Diane and I waited out our two years before she took out the petition against me. On any grounds, whether defended or not, a discretionary statement was required (look it up in Blackstone). When the law is finally changed (courtesy Lionel Murphy, our new Attorney-General), the only ground for divorce will be irretrievable breakdown of the marriage. For the moment, undefended cases are now heard in chambers rather than in full court, which speeds up the process and makes it less expensive, and that is how Diane and I stand to gain. Also, discretionary statements are no longer required in undefended cases. ::: Barry Humphries is infinitely funnier than me, but he's a professional. ::: The Blind P is the sixth mark used to indicate footnotes, when superior numbers are not used. No, it isn't the paragraph symbol. It looks like this: ¶ and it is used after the asterisk, dagger, double dagger, section mark and parallel. ::: The poems were meant to be contrasted, and meant to appear equally valid. I am very pleased that you noticed that and commented on it. ::: I don't know anything about Chinese. I quoted one of the standard translations of Lao-Tze. ::: US\$1.00 is now worth approximately A\$0.80. Figures quoted in Scythrop take into account cost of living and (in the case of A\$4 = US\$2.50) other factors. ::: "Swag" also means a lot; "orientated" and "preventative" aren't used in newspapers, but I use them; a "hostel" isn't exactly a boarding house. ::: Australia is mostly dry. It's easy to forget that the area of Australia is around 90% of the area of the USA. You know, it's bigger than Texas, it really is. ::: Wish I could go on commenting, but the stencil tells me it's time to quit. Thanks for all your remarks, Jack.

And a Merry Christmas and Custard to all.