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POOR RICHARD'S ALMANAC
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(New Series)

FAPA Mailing
#...100
(New Series)

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NOW I've heard of Writer's Block before, but I've always considered it in the same light as one usually considers traffic accidents -- it's something that happens to the other fellow. But I've never faced a piece of paper -- or a stencil -- with as much trepidation as the one that faces me at this moment. I have seven pages, plus this one, before me and not a damned thing to say.

Well, only one thing.
Help.

*

QUESTION: "Why is the Ruling Ring like a School Notebook?"
ANSWER: "I don't know, why is the Ruling Ring like a School Notebook?"

*

Ahahahaha!

*

ACTUALLY, the Ruling Ring is like a School Notebook because they are both a Three-Ring Binder. But it was funnier the other way. The silly pun came into my mind about three weeks ago, when I was reading THE LORD OF THE RINGS for the seventh or eighth time, and I just haven't been able to shake it. I've told it to everyone in New York fandom. Some people -- like Lee Hoffman and Ted White and Dave Van Arnam -- I've told it to maybe two or three times. Now that the thing is down in black and blue I'll have some peace. And them too.

Maybe.

There's another, ulterior reason for using it here, of course, and that's for the reason mentioned above -- I have this deadline, but the eggplant on my face. For the first time in nine years (which isn't so many) of writing for fanzines -- and that includes the few years Boyd Raeburn characterized my writing as the beginning of the "fleeb! fleeb!" school -- I have nothing to say.

Not a damned thing.

Nothing, as I've said.

*

I AM indebted to Mr. Robert Leman, fellow FAPAN, respected editor of THE VINIGER WORM, and various other American Journals too difficult to spell, for the use of his asterisk.

Were it not for the use of Mr. Leman's asterisk -- borrowed in these pages, mind you, without so much as a by-your-leave -- the layout of this publication would be less excellent than it is. In actuality, it is well nigh onto non-exis-

tance as it is. Hardly there at all.

One might even say it has very, very little.

Almost none, as I've pointed out.

*

HOLD ON there, Norme Clarke. And you too, Boyd Raeburn. And Terry Carr, Bill Rotsler, Harry Warner. And Bill Evans, Bob Pavlat, Elmer Perdue.

Hold on, all of you.

Hold on there, Pete Graham and/or Walt Willis. Hold on there Calvin W. "Biff" Demmon and Andy Main.

I just might say something interested yet. You never can tell. You might be surprised.

And you, Bob Tucker, and you, F.M. Busby. Ted Johnstone. Bruce Pelz. Lee Hoffman. Don't despair.

I know I don't.

Any minute now, I expect to be grasped by a throttled-fingered Inspiration. While gasping & choking, deathless prose may suddenly come flowing through this typewriter. I fully expect to see precious gems of wit popping out of my head and onto the stencil like outraged arrows. And if you despair, if you give me up, if you stop reading, if you throw this fanzine aside, then you may have missed me in my finest hour. Hang on, people! Something's coming, and you -- nor I -- don't want to miss it.

Only not just yet, I guess.

fleebl. fleebl.

*

IT OCCURED to me, as I wrote the above section, that I was actually setting my sights pretty high. People like Norme Clarke, Boyd Raeburn, Terry Carr, Bill Rotsler, Harry Warner, etc., etc., are impressed by content -- which this fanzine just doesn't seem to have, so far, and which it isn't going to have unless I get my teeth into a Subject. There are a number of other people who are impressed by appearance, but this fanzine doesn't have that, either; these stencils are cheap, I have no artwork (unless I decide to draw a *shudder* cover myself), and my adaption of the Leman layout is only passible; while these stencils will be run off on QWERTYUIOPress, they'll be run off by yours truly, and the typewriter skips.

If I could be sure that no one was bothering to read this, I could fill up the rest of the pages with meaningless words thrown together in paragraph-like patterns. But no matter how low the content and how miserable the layout, every FAPAN is assured of at least one reader.

How many misspellings have I made so far, Jack?

*

EVERY once in a while -- not often -- I stop to muse about how

I used to tell all the Sordid Details of my Private Life in the pages of this fanzine. I was a very moody kid, prone to an almost morbid sense of cynicism: I think I hated myself because

after a number of years as the "school intellect" I gave up, conformed, and joined a teen-age gang to keep from getting picked on. I never admitted that at the time, of course, but a number of things that I wrote in that period might make more sense if read in the light of this bit of information.

Anyway, that was in the days of my SAPS membership -- my first one. Since that time, I've kept pretty silent about Things That Have Been Happening to me.

I dunno.

I think this may have been partly because, when I was a member of SAPS the first time, I hit something like ten mailings in a row (not that that is such a great record, mind you, but it's better than I've done in FAPA) and I could somewhat logically feel that PRA could act as a record journal of my doings. I kept up the practice of writing a journal when PRA started making less than quarterly appearances -- which was the case two mailings after I became a member of FAPA -- but I kept it private. I have 34 handscribbled pages that tell of the first two years I spent in the Air Force. These remembrances will, I keep telling myself, be completed one of these days, pared down, and perhaps published.

At any rate, the practice of publishing the occurrences of my mundane existence has not been kept even in private lately. I've been out of the Air Force for four years; I have six years to ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ catch up on, and I don't feel quite prepared to go into all of it in any sort of detail right now.

On the other hand, I am one hell of a procrastinator, as witness the fact that as I type these stencils I'm 12 days away from the FAPA deadline, and more for my benefit than yours, I think I will capsulize a bit of it in a few brief paragraphs.

We take it from my arrival in New York, in the latter part of 1962:

The Air Force had desposited me with \$460 and a "Godspeed" at McGuire AFB, New Jersey, just two months and fifteen days after the day I was intended to tip my nose and slowly ride away. I truddled my way on up to much-dreamed-about NYC. Got a room at the Y. Went out and got lost (and drunk) in NYC.

My first mistake among many was to go looking for an apartment before I went looking for a job. Two weeks of searching and a good \$250 poorer, I found an apartment I liked. Liked? I joyed over it. One HUGE room with a studio couch, a private entrance and a kitchenette, below a duplex apartment, in a beautiful Brooklyn neighborhood near stores and transportation, for only \$60 a month.

They didn't want me.

I had the money, but no job.

I tried a few other, less satisfactory, places. The story was the same. Cursing myself for being all kinds of a fool, I went out and got my first job in New York. I became, overnight, "supervisor" of the Dial Press mailroom, which means: I was the only one in the mailroom. My name was "Hey, boy." It paid \$65 a week.

I moved out of the Y and into a room that was slightly larger -- 4x10, and most of that space taken up by a bed and a dresser -- and which cost me \$8 a week.

I learned a lot about money management in those first few weeks. The Air Force had been bad for me in that respect; you've always got a place to stay and food to eat, no matter how broke you might be. I managed, one weekend, to last on a can of beans, a small loaf of rye bread, and a jar of honey. I could have eaten better, if I'd stopped smoking, but I didn't.

For \$65 a week I mailed packages of solicited and unsolicited mss. back to authors and agents, and review copies of books with labels I'd run off on their address-o-graph; printed photocopies of Important Documents; delivered and picked up office mail; ran errands and filed artwork & proofs; kept the "permanant Library" of Dial Press books in some sort of order and -- when Dial Press was bought by and amalgamated into Dell Publishing -- moved innumerable pieces of office furniture from Park Avenue South to Third Avenue & 47th.

During that time I met James Baldwin, had my copy of "The Jet Set" autographed by Burton Wohl (before I found out it was a mediocre novel), ate lunch with Carl Sandburg's daughter, Helga, and added a goatee to my moustache.

When we moved to Dell, my job was more of the same. I worked in a mail room with Other People, but I still did all of Dial's work. When I finished that, I was supposed to help the Other People with Dell stuff. I also delivered 20-30 manuscripts a week to (and picked up an equal number from) Dial's fee-reader. (Budding young novelists might take note: Dial sends back unsolicited mss. without a reading, despite what the notices in Writer's Digest say; mss. from agents get a reading, altho none of those were bought in my eight-month tenure with Dial.)

I wasn't too much liked when we moved to Dell. I didn't like the monkey-jacket the Dell mailroom men wore, and so refused to wear one. I was also told by numerous semi-supervisors that my beard was Not Liked. I told numerous supervisors that for \$65 a week, Dial Press and the whole flippin' publishing industry could just Shove their opinion of my beard.

Just shortly before Dial Press fired me, and I went on unemployment, I moved in with East Coast Al Lewis (as he was known in those days). His girlfriend (now his wife) had a Real Thing going -- she was studying to be a nurse, lived in an apartmenthouse owned by the Hospital, for which she paid \$40 a month. Al and I paid \$40 a month each and picked up meals besides -- and Sandy was an impressive cock.

For a month or two I didn't even try to find a job. I did next to nothing and collected \$35 from the State of New York. I did some writing, but not much. Al Lewis got out of the Coast Guard. Sandy graduated from Nursing School. I got tired of being subsidized by the State, shaved my beard and started looking for a job and a new place to stay.

Mike McInerney had just come to New York and his room-mate, Earl Evers, had just been drafted. I checked with Mike, and shortly thereafter moved into his place on the Lower East Side. He found me a job at the place where he worked -- a place called Bookazine. Ross Chamberlain, now one of the most talented of New York fans, also worked there. Marlen Frenzel had worked there, as had -- I think -- Les Gerber and Calvin W. "B" D. Not to mention Earl Evers.

About that time, for reasons which may or may not become plain once I get around to publishing my air force memories, I sent the Air Force Reserve a letter telling them they could stop sending me their literature -- I wasn't going back into the Air Force except under the point of a gun, and then only to go to jail. I still had almost a year of "military obligation" left; still, the probability of my having to do anything but sit around and receive "The Reservist" in my mailbox was rather small.

I started another beard, this time a shaggier one -- but not as shaggy as the one Mike sported at the time, which was almost as shaggy as the one he wears now. I didn't exactly get fired. I just didn't get officially hired -- after three months of probation, the Union decided they didn't want me.

Well, I never cared much for Jimmy Hoffa, either.

Or \$60 a week, for that matter.

I went back on the State dole again and got a little more writing done. Again, not much. Then I shaved off my face fur and went out looking for a job in Borgnine. I was hired as a typist and multilithographer for a Madison Avenue Advertising firm, the Kleppner Co. They handle newspaper and magazine advertising for Schenley Industries.

I started the job at \$75 and ended up at \$90. There were all sorts of opportunities for advancement, and I was well-liked; it was one of the few times in my life when I fell in with a bunch of people whom I could work among and not bother to like, myself. Again, I grew a beard periodically -- it had become important to me, since my employers seemed to make such a Big Thing of it -- but only, as I told them, for special occasions. I shaved it off at random intervals. Then the Vice President of the company grew a beard. The President made him shave it off. While still working there, I started looking for another, more liberal, place of employment -- some place where I could look like a little fuzzy, if I wanted, so long as I got the job done.

I moved out on Mike at about that time and back into the little 4x10 room. I wanted to get some writing done, and Mike always had a number of Interesting Things To Do; somehow, I just never had the willpower not to go along.

The Air Force Reserve finally took cognizance of my letter. I was called in to be interviewed by a couple of nice, smiling Air Force CIA equivalents. Sit down. Relax. Have some coffee, a cigarette. Uh, mumble, mumble, by the way, anything you say may be, well, you know, held against you. You don't have to answer. Are you now or have you ever been...

I did two things that I later regretted. One, I mentioned the Ellingtons. (Yes, I suppose you could say I know some radicals -- anarchists, or syndacalists as I understand them. Dick & Pat Ellington. But they don't represent my beliefs. The Ellingtons? I think they're in the...no, I'd rather not say anything more about the Ellingtons.) The second was in answer to their question about narcotics. (What do you mean by narcotics? Well, I've never had any of the bad stuff -- I've smoked marijuana and taken LSD.) But I just don't like to lie...they let me go with a smile and a nod;

I guess they thought they had me.

I received notification in a week or so that my case would be heard in Denver, Colorado. My refusal to return to active service because I felt the war in Vietnam to be immoral was overlooked; I was charged with having taken drugs while still, in their eyes, a member of the Air Force. For this, I was told, they could give me an Undesireable Discharge.

My military counsel in Denver happened to be a Capt. Gary Wendell. A guy I knew from Bitburg; we had acted together in a play ("Visit To A Small Planet") there, he had advised me on how to apply for copyright on the 15th issue of PRA, and I had slipped him one of the best refrigerators in Housing Supply for his house on the economy. (Oops; "on the economy" is Air Force (or military?) terminology meaning that he chose not to live in Base Housing, but to rent a house in one of the nearby towns.)

That was all in my favor.

I had worked hard for an undesireable discharge -- had been working for one for almost three years by that time, which included my last two years in service -- but damned if I'd let it be for reasons other than the ones I chose. So, with Captain Wendell, I set to work. LSD was not, at that time, illegal in New York State. Nor most other states, either. Further, the regulation cited did not mention LSD. After pointing this out, it was safe to assume, I hoped, that the charge referred to my admission of having smoked cannabis. Zo...in New York State, possession of less than one ounce of marijuana was punishable by as much as six months imprisonment, but the usual course of such cases was a six months suspended sentence. I had, however, never been convicted of such a charge. Blah, blah, blah. Blah, blah, blah. I cited the Leguardia Report on marijuana -- the only authoritative report on the subject -- which stated that marijuana is not condusive to the commission of crime, nor to taking other drugs, nor does it cause as much damage to bodily tissue as drinking, nor is it addictive. (Habit-forming, yes, but not addictive.) The punishment, I argued, did not fit the crime; it was much too severe. So I had to settle for an honorable discharge, after all; I won my case.

After that was over, the beardyearning overcame me again. I moved the Mulberry Street, midway between China Town and Greenwich Village, and quit my job on the Mad Avenue for one with a group of newspapers on Staten Island that paid a little less but interested me more.

I still work there. In fact, I'm typing these very stencils in the office. I do paste-up, some small amount of layout, a lot of typing, and write a column -- titled "Poor Richard's Almanack" -- for the five monthlies. I only work four days a week, ten hours a day, though when the occasion requires I've worked as many as seven and eighteen of each respectively, though usually not all at the same time. And I rather like it.

I keep getting ahead of myself. Let me think. Seven or eight months ago Mike and I shared another, larger place -- two four room apartments done over by Ted White into an eightroom place --

just north of the Village. I grew my beard again, as my new employers don't care about such things.

For a while, I thought about moving to Seattle & environs -- I have an old Air Force buddy who lives there, or at least in Kirkland, and I've liked the Seattle pipples in general since I got into fandom via the good ol' CRY in late '57.

I made plans for just such a move; I even advertised it around a little bit. But then I changed my mind at around the last minute or so. I was too much a part of this city. Also, I met a girl here. She came with me as far as Kirkland and Seattle, but she wanted to come back here too. Inasmuch as we got engaged somewhere along the line, it seemed the Right Thing To Do. Her name is Colleen Woo.

We went to Kirkland and Seattle for a couple of weeks. I had two very enjoyable (though regrettably short, which was my fault) evenings at the Bushys, and introduced Pete Williamson to Seattle fandom (did he ever pick up his lighter, Buz? or get to another Seattle fan-gathering? I hope so -- he's a hell of a nice guy, and that's understatement; he's actually the best friend I've ever had.).

I am still working for the Staten Island newspapers, and will probably stay with them until the unlikely occurrence happens and I submit and sell the Great American KGNovel I "gafiated" five years ago to finish. It's only in its ninth revision, and I don't want to rush things too much.

After that comes Bob Leman's remarkable asterisk and one hell of a resounding silence....

*

HARRY WARNER, a few Fanoclasts, and Ted White and myself are the only people who know The Truth about the Great White-Brown Feud of 1959-1960, which took place in the pages of two or three fanzines published by Ted Pauls; dhog was one, Disjecta Membra was another, and it seeped over, I think, into some early issues of Kipple, and shortly thereafter into at least one CRAPzine.

It started innocently enough. In a review of GAMBIT in CRY OF THE NAMELESS, I quoted Ted as saying that he "wasn't going to write any more Fabulous Burbee-Type Material anymore." I had but recently lodged an unjustified grotch at Ted in The Cult and he had smashed it in his then well-known ungentle manner. Who, I wanted to know, that Ted White wrote Fabulous Burbee Type Material -- besides Ted White, that is? I had second-thots about the piece when I saw it gestetnered in blue & white, so I drafted a letter to Ted, saying I would retract the statement or -- if he wished -- we could conduct a mock feud; I even suggested he might come on all fuggheaded and I would come on fuggheadedder and we'd just keep pushing it and pushing it to see how long it could go on before fandom caught on.

But, as I later remembered it, Ted was too fast on his toes. CRY had been at my home less than a week when I received the Ted Pauls fanzine that contained Ted's reply. And this was, I remind you all, before Ted got to beknown as Mr. Sweetness & Light.

It got fast & furious for a few months. I began by taking as many things as I could that Ted had said to me, and turning them

back on him. Ted obviously noticed this, because he was doing the same thing. At that point, the feud -- it was just a minor argument, but I didn't know the difference between the two (ah, the bliss of innocence...) -- the feud ceased to be a feud with me. It was an amusing game with words. The important thing was to make his words fit against him; I had to stretch a few points to do it, and sometimes I looked a little fuggheaded when I did so. Ted was, and I knew this at the time, much better at the game, but I assumed this was so because I presented a much larger target. And if these words of description seem Weird, I can only say it was because the argument and the game (which, it seemed, both Ted and I knew we were playing) was so much more fun than arguing the Real Issues Involved. To myself, I conceded the argument to Ted -- and then went ahead and tried to prove him wrong, while scoring as many Points as possible.

Ted Pauls, it seems, was interested in the Real Issues. I distinctly remember scoring a beautiful Point, by my own system, in a letter I wrote him for publication. A nice, meaty paragraph led up to a single stinging sentence, and the last I had borrowed from Ted's previous letter. Pauls printed it -- without, the last sentence. The paragraph was made pointless. I wrote a final letter to Pauls, explaining how such creative editing was just beyond the pale -- I could only argue as long as my points, my whole point, can be made.

There it stopped for a while. Ted White, I assume, was not told of my final letter to Pauls; he wrote a reply to me, but I did not receive the issue it was published in. Ted probably assumed I had Given Up. So, a short time later, he wrote an article for Pauls about how the feud had been a hoax, how I had written him saying we could make a big thing of it, and suggesting that Ted come on fuggheadedly, only Ted had changed tactic and forced me to take the fuggheaded side. He wrote the article, he said, because he didn't want people to think I was really fuggheaded. It was, of course, bait -- but Pauls never sent me that issue. When Ted later learned of this, he reprinted the article in CRAP. By that time, my memory had grown dim, and I thought -- well, maybe I did send that letter to Ted, after all. So, in CRAP, I said, sure, that's what happened there, alright. Ted, I guess, was nonplussed; he couldn't understand why, I guess, I allowed this lie to stand. But as far as I knew, it was true -- and, as I've said, when the argument got rolling, I really didn't care whether I appeared fuggheaded, just so I Scored One here & there. At the SeaCon, Ted tried to draw me out, and after ten minutes of me nodding my head and saying, "Yup, that hoax feud of ours was a lot of fun" and things like that there, Ted finally gave up and said, in desperation, "Put rich, that article was a lie -- I was baiting you!"

Well, it certainly was a wonderful thing. And all because Ted wrote some Silly, Pointless Sentences that I thought were true.

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