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GETTING WHAT YOU PAY FOR

I think I know what Leigh Edmonds (*Ornithopter* 9) means when he and Richard Faulder fault Irwin Hirsh for "trying too hard to be excellent." So far, Irwin's *Sikander's* tried a lot more than it's succeeded. I can't help thinking, though, that a fandom gets what it asks for. In the second *Ornithopter* in this mailing, Leigh wonders at the gap between Australian fannish fanzines and the American product. He speculates briefly that it may simply have to do with our greater numbers generating a "faanish...critical-mass", but I think the history of Irish Fandom, or for that matter Australian fandom before the post-Aussiecon burnout, undercuts this thesis. Thing is, make it clear that the sort of ambition Irwin doesn't hide is Uncool, and you'll get an Australian fandom full of boring and complacent zines. In fact, come to think of it...

Irwin's troubles seem from here to consist of wanting to publish an elegant, literate, essay-oriented fannish fanzine (kind of Boggsian, y'know) in a fandom which couldn't be less interested in that sort of thing. He needs to be more aggressive, solicit better material from further away, in the meantime relying more on his own strengths as a writer. In the meantime, I hate to see the impression disseminated that trying too hard is a no-no. It's not as if we were facing a fandom-wide epidemic of the phenomenon, after all.

HICKS NIX STYX TRICKS

This wariness of excessive excellence has been showing up all over lately. Last mailing Brian Earl Brown displayed an advanced case of the syndrome in *Sticky Quarter* #1, mixing good, trenchant points with a fair degree of metaphysical sleight-of-hand and coming up more than a bit muddled. According to Brian, recent fanzines like *Telos*, *Warhoon*, *Boonfark*, and *Pong* are good because they talk about each other and other fanzines, and fandom hasn't been very interactive lately. Unfortunately, they're not that good because, really, they're morbidly preoccupied with digging up the past, and this is bad. At first I was confused at this until I figured out that Brian has obviously been reading subversive and fraudulent pamphlets (widely distributed on street corners in Detroit by undercover agents of the Illuminati) informing him that old-time fanwriters like Terry Carr, Dick Bergeron, Charles Burbée, Walt Willis, and Robert Bloch actually died years ago and have been lying peacefully interred ever since. Well, Brian being the devout Roman Catholic he is, you can imagine his shock when he saw these people's work appearing in the fanzines named above. Visions of obscene rites, midnight reanimations, necrographica and worse probably flitted across his fevered mind. Terrible things, unspeakable and worse. Brian is worried about our souls! I knew there must have been a reason.

Well, I'm glad to be able to set his mind at rest. The thing to keep in mind is that, actually, Brian, those people are still alive and in fact have never died! Yes! (Well, except maybe Bloch.) We didn't have to actually do any digging at all! (Quick, Igor, stash the electrodes.) They're all still around, right now in 1982 and everything, as much a part of the Modern World (very important to Brian) as Atari, electro-
nic toasters, and Joe Wesson.

I hope this can do something towards setting his mind at ease.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

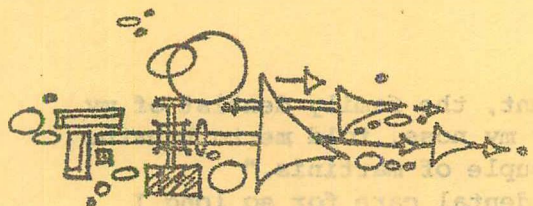
Of course, then there's Arthur Hlavaty. I like Arthur. I tend to think he comes in for rather more random abuse than he deserves, just because he has kind of his own thing going and, well, it's kind of artless and gawky but, hell, so were the fannish geniuses of 1941, eh? Still are, a lot of us, come to think of it. In an odd way, Arthur has been, for the last several years, reinventing the fannish approach while working in fannish circles far removed from us exalted fannish sophisticates. This is commendable, even more so these days as Arthur gradually sloughs off much of his plodding didacticism and comes round to telling us about his perceptions and his reactions to experience, as opposed to whatever maxim Robert Anton Wilson or somebody coined to sum it all up.

A couple of mailings ago, however, Arthur said some things which I thought mistaken in an interesting way, and which Malcolm Edwards recently commented on while reviewing Arthur's fanzine in *Gambit*. I was grateful to Malcolm since his well-put, concise thoughts allowed me to throw away a lot of notes I'd made towards a response of my own. (Thanks a heap, Malcolm.) I'm still left with some tag-ends, though. What Arthur said was this: "Fandom can be serious about not being serious in the sense of forbidding conversation on topics deemed too serious (including, ironically, sf itself). There is an approach now which seems to me to get the whole thing precisely backward. It is an approach that talks at great length about setting STANDARDS for fannish writing, and 'standards' is a word that I associate with seriousness as the antonym of 'fun.' At the same time, these serious critics are every bit as serious about restricting conversational topics to the most trivial."

The part of Malcolm's response that really hit it on the button, for me, was: "Hlavaty has a lot of trouble with the word 'serious,' which for him has negative connotations: it's the antonym of fun. Well, that's a narrow view, as he laboriously works his way to realizing; what he means when he talks negatively about seriousness is earnestness, which is odd, for Hlavaty is nothing if not earnest. So we learn that in Hlavaty's view the only thing fandom -- by which he means fannish fandom -- is serious about, is not being serious. This is wrong: what fannish fandom tends to be serious about is not being earnest. You can write about what you want, provided you do so with wit and irony."

That's pretty much it. What I'd add is that, like Marty Cantor and others who write about fannish fandom as if it were some sort of monolith of unanimous ideology, Arthur is pretty confused about who habitually says what. (This confusion is in no way helped by Arthur's -- and Marty's -- refusal to use proper nouns in identifying the people being referred to, but I assume that's just ass-covering.) "These serious critics are every bit as serious about restricting conversational topics to the most trivial." This is silly. The list of currently active "serious" fanzine critics, the only people I can think of who vaguely fit Arthur's description of a cadre of fans who invoke Standards all the time, reads like a good skimming of some of our better-known sf authors, critics, editors, and academics -- trivia-obsessed people with no interest in discussing nonfannish topics like, say, Chris Priest, Dick Bergeron, or Malcolm Edwards, to name a few whose interest in writing seriously about topics rather removed from who sawed Courtney's boat is well known. In point of fact, the strain of fannish thought that shies away from anything "too serious" is with us today as much as ever, but as far as I can tell its stronghold is the apas, the convention-and-party-oriented fanzines, the social fans who show little or no interest in heavy fanzine criticism and commentary.

I dunno. I read a lot of fanzines, and the ones that I see Arthur and Brian and their friends referring to as "ultra-fannish" seem to me to be mostly full of stuff about Australian politics, modern music, nuclear apocalypse, Philip K. Dick, mental illness, and relentless esthetic controversy. Admittedly, I don't see much about sf, which I suspect reflects less an avoidance of the topic lest the discourse become too "serious" than a perception that most modern sf is, er, trivial. I dunno; when all those matters plus honest personal journalism and sometimes brilliant mythmaking constitutes "not being serious", what's serious? Genre commercial science fiction? Come on, Arthur. [continued page 8, after article following.]



THE PEAK OF ETERNITY, SF, AND NITROUS OXIDE

or

I TALKED WITH GOD -- YES I DID, ACTUALLY
AND LITERALLY

by Ted White

A few years ago a friend with whom I was enjoying a smoke at a Westercon beamed at me and said, "You know, Ted, I always think of you whenever I do nitrous oxide."

"Oh, really?" I said. "Why?"

"Well, you really turned a lot of people on to the stuff, you know -- and they brought it back to the west coast."

"When was this?" I asked, wondering whether drug consumption had completely obliterated a section of my memory.

"1976 -- the Midamericon," was the answer, and immediately I understood. By ghod I had done a lot of nitrous at that con. In fact, my consumption of nitrous probably peaked in Kansas City. I even did the stuff while walking down the street from one hotel to another. One nitrous-etched memory that still stands out among all the others from that weekend is of approaching a hotel just as Robert Heinlein was making his exit from it. He was with the group of people I automatically thought of as his "handlers" -- the same group that cleared out elevators every time The Man wanted to use one, so that he could travel up or down without suffering the crowding the rest of us usually enjoyed.

The sun was low in the late-afternoon sky, and it shone directly on the hotel entrance. Robert Anson Heinlein strode stiffly into the sunlight. He didn't blink. His features looked stiff, as if carved in wax for a museum figure. He moved stiffly, without animation, as if acting by rote, unmotivated but guided and moved by his handlers. He looked like a zombie.

"My ghod," I said to someone, "that man is dead. I mean it -- he's physically deceased. They just have him propped up and they move him around." My voice sounded a little funny because I was exhaling nitrous oxide. I tossed a spent cartridge over my shoulder. The metallic sounds as it struck the sidewalk and rolled into the street gutter echoed inside my head. So did my voice.

I knew Heinlein wasn't really dead. I knew that what I'd seen was nitrous-enhanced and at best a metaphor for Heinlein's actual condition. What I didn't then know -- what no one then knew -- was that Heinlein was metaphorically dead, or at least prematurely dying from a clogged cranial artery. The man was still only in his sixties but was experiencing premature senility. I saw something of this very clearly -- and Heinlein's dreadful Guest of Honor speech a day or two later only confirmed that something was seriously wrong with the man.

But if nitrous had put me in a state wherein I was uniquely able to perceive that Heinlein was in bad trouble, I was hardly the man who had brought nitrous to the Midamericon, nor introduced it to west coast fandom. I was simply one of its more conspicuous consumers. The real credit for disseminating the gas in Kansas City goes to Mark Kearnes of the Neo-American Church. I was but a humble disciple.

I first experienced nitrous oxide as many people first experienced it -- in a dentist's chair.

I grew up with dentists who did not administer anesthesia of any kind. And by adulthood I had developed a considerable phobia about needles. When I went to the Columbia Medical Center's dental clinic with a minor problem and was additionally discovered to have an impacted wisdom tooth, they put me in a chair and stuck a needle into my jaw and I went into a state of shock, a reaction which affected me so profoundly that it was years before I could be lured back into a dentist's office,

which by that time was long overdue.

It was my good fortune that the dentist to whom I went, the family dentist of my second wife, Robin, used "gas." He slipped a gadget over my nose, told me to breathe in the "sweet air," and assured me it was just like "a couple of martinis."

It was better than that. And since I had neglected dental care for so long I started making a regular series of visits to his office, during which I became better and better acquainted with the nitrous oxide experience in one of its purest forms.

In the dentist's office nitrous is given in a mixture (adjustable) with oxygen. When the dental work is finished the dentist (or his assistant) turns off the nitrous and allows pure oxygen to go into the nose-mask, to clear out the cobwebs. Within minutes one is standing up and walking out.

Some dentists give a very weak mixture of nitrous to oxygen, but mine did not. Here is the way it felt:

As I began breathing in the actually sweet air I would feel myself first losing touch with the peripheries of my body -- hands, feet, etc. -- and sounds from around me would begin to develop echoes. These echoes would multiply -- the illusion was of pre- and post-echoes of every tiny sound -- until they ceased to be meaningful and the sound simply washed over me. About then my dentist would ask, "How're you feeling?" or "Feeling anything yet?" By then my eyes were closed and I would grunt "Uh huh."

It felt like my chair was on a merry-go-round -- I really sensed motion -- and each time we passed the "brass ring" (once each cycle) a piece of new information would come in -- whether sound or sensation -- prefigured by the "pre-echo" and followed by additional echoes. By the time I was five minutes under the gas the merry-go-round would be cycling at a good clip.

Then I would go deeper. Sounds became distant, muted. The dentist's work in my mouth was a series of brief and only vaguely felt tickles. I would leave my body, journeying -- as I visualized it -- out into deep space. This space was not, I knew, real interstellar space. It was rather metaphorical space -- the space I might travel after death. (Even then I had hints.) It was a trip down the umbilical cord of the soul, back to Original God, to that "place" outside matter, energy, space and time, from which we and our entire physical universe are sprung. It was a journey to that point where there is no past, no future, but only an eternal Now in which all time there has been and is to be is contained.

I visualized it as the Peak of Eternity, that place to which Captain Marvel travelled when he had to go to the Source and the Center of the universe. (I am of course referring to the original Capt. Marvel -- the Big Red Cheese, who was transformed back into Billy Batson when he said "Shazam" -- that Capt. Marvel.) Here all knowledge was spread out before my like a vast treasurehouse of of answers to every possible question. Here I could meet God. Here I could be God.

This did not happen to me just once. It happened every time -- at least once, maybe twice a month, for several years. I remember asking Robin if she'd ever experienced it. She amazed me by telling me that she kept her eyes open the whole time; hers was a totally different experience.

Well, what to do with such an experience? While I was "there" I could find out anything I wanted to know. But the problem was to bring whatever I discovered back with me. It was very difficult to do this -- something I recognized immediately the very first time -- almost like trying to bring something of value through customs without declaring it. Anything I brought back I'd have to smuggle back. It had to be simple, so that I could remember it. So each time I went "out there" I wrestled with the problem of how to encapsulate as much knowledge as possible into a simple paragraph or, better, a single sentence, phrase, or -- yes! -- word. It had to be "encoded" in a sentence, phrase, or word which, when I remembered it, would imply the whole. "Must tell Robin," I thought, and then I supplied the key codeword,

Naturally, since all answers were there to be found, I did find the exactly right codeword. I found the same exactly right codeword each time. It was impossible to improve upon. It said it all.

That word was "everything."

The merry-go-round would eventually slow and I would come down. The chair always came to a complete stop and then rotated backwards a half turn.

"Okay, Mr. White," the dentist's assistant would tell me, "we're all finished. You feeling okay?"

I would say something reassuring and stagger shakily to my feet. I tottered out to the reception area, made my appointment for my next visit, and, usually, scrawled out a check, my handwriting larger and more sprawling than usual. Then I'd stumble out to my car and sit in it for several minutes until I felt I could drive.

And that, for a number of years, was my sole exposure to nitrous oxide.

Then I went to a Phillycon in the early seventies (1971? probably, although it might have been 1972) and met some local fans who belonged to the Neo-American Church. They took me to their parties and introduced me to Mark Kearnes. Mark was the head of the Church in Pennsylvania and he so impressed me that I subsequently joined the Church myself. This article is not about the Neo-American Church, but I should state that the Church was founded in the early sixties at Millbrook by Art Kleps, a man of extreme good sense whose only mistake was to try to live in Timothy Leary's Millbrook commune where Leary wanted to be King. The Church is devoted to the psychedelic sacrament, and nitrous oxide had become one such sacrament -- and just about the only legal one.

The form in which the Church customarily used nitrous oxide was not the big tank, mixed with oxygen and administered through a nose mask. Instead small cartridges, almost identical to those used for CO₂, intended for use in seltzer bottles or commercial whipped cream dispensers, were used. Because the gas released from such a cartridge has been highly compressed and its expansion sucks a lot of heat out of the air, one would not want to inhale the gas directly from such a cartridge. It would freeze one's mouth and throat. So an intermediary device is employed: a balloon or a seltzer "machine." The gas is released into either of these devices and then inhaled from them. It is still cool, but not dangerously cold. One cartridge is about the amount of gas one can inhale into one's lungs (some people do only half). One exhales the air from one's lungs, inhales the gas, holds it as long as comfortable possible, then releases it. The "high" this induces is considerably less psychedelic, or potent, than that which is possible with the nose-mask and constant-flow method. It lasts only one or two minutes.

Nitrous oxide has several interesting properties. Perhaps the most significant is that the body does not metabolize it. It goes quickly into the blood stream from the lungs, reaches the brain in seconds, and causes its effects during the period of time it is circulated through the brain. The blood stream returns it to the lungs, and it is exhaled unchanged. This means it can be reused. If one is inhaling it from a balloon, for instance, it can be exhaled back into the balloon and then inhaled again, allowing one to get several "hits" from the same quantity of gas. Or, more enjoyably, it can be exchanged with someone you like, mouth to mouth, and even swapped back and forth several times this way. (The point at which diminishing returns set in is caused by the gradual dilution of nitrous with stale air from one's lungs. The taste becomes objectionable before the recycled gas has lost its potency, however.)

While one cartridge will (if not recycled) give only a minute or two of "high", this can be enhanced considerably by successively inhaling several cartridges, pausing only for a few breaths of air between each.

On one occasion a group of us were in my living room doing cartridges when it was decided to give me several hits in a row. I had just done my fourth when Frank Lunney said, conversationally, "Isn't that someone walking through your garden, Ted?" My back was to the window but he was facing it.

I stood and made my way in slow motion to the window. The day outside was washed-out by light but I saw that my garden was empty of intruders. As I turned Frank grinned at me. "I thought you'd like standing up," he said. "You manipulative fucker," I grinned back at him. "You're right, though. It's neat standing up and

walking around." It was the first time I had tried that.

By Kansas City in 1976 I was trying everything. I did nitrous while walking down the streets (I didn't feel the pavement with my feet for a dozen steps at a time, but had no real trouble walking right through the "high"), and I did it while listening to a not very good live rock band. I even did it for several program items.

But I didn't really enjoy it nearly so much at parties -- which is where the west coast fans were introduced to nitrous. There are several reasons. One is that nitrous is not a social drug. It momentarily takes you away from everything. A person enjoying nitrous just kind of phases out for a spell. Old hands will go on with whatever they're doing -- a kind of nitrous machismo -- but that's bravado. Another is that usually the cartridges are passed out by the host, one or two at a time to each person, and then the appliance (balloon or machine) for using the cartridges is passed around. Even with several appliances in constant use (which will wear them out fast -- the freezing effect ages and destroys rubber) most people at a large party will be waiting their turn and perhaps squabbling over who's next. And people get greedy. They squirrel away cartridges and ask for more, claiming to have not gotten their share. In general it brings me down to see people get greedy like that and I don't care for practices which bring out this trait in my friends.

Getting a big tank (which usually requires a large deposit for the tank -- \$50 or more) solves many of these problems, but not the bigger problem:

Getting "high" on nitrous oxide is really, I eventually realized, experiencing a foretaste of death. All of the effects of nitrous in the brain are caused by a peculiar form of oxygen starvation, the nitrous taking oxygen's place in the brain's physiology. As one gets further out on nitrous one realizes that it takes one somewhere and that it is possible to go too far out to return. That, I think, would be actual death.

If we accept any of the life-after-life experiences now entering the literature, let alone most of the more established "Eastern" metaphysical philosophies, we can appreciate the fact that death may be indeed "the ultimate trip," and perhaps a genuine high, if it can still be comprehended in those terms by that point. Equally, my early nitrous experiences (going to the Peak of Eternity) can be seen in terms wholly compatible with those of death and the whole metaphysical construct we are beginning to build concerning death, reincarnation, godhood, etc. Although on one level the nitrous experience can be considered one of self-deception, self-delusion, or whatever, the "delusion" of a nitrous high may be in fact the only metaphor the living human mind can construct around a pre-death or death experience.

This is, at least in our culture, pretty heavy stuff. I found it a bit too heavy, myself. After 1976 I stopped doing very much nitrous, inhaling it only on rare occasions thereafter. Perhaps it's just my own hangups about death (I'm not ready to go yet), but nitrous lost much of its original appeal to me.

However, I did have one memorable nitrous experience post-Midamericon. And it was my most stfnal.

I'd had several boxes of cartridges lying around; they'd been given to me as a Christmas gift and I simply stuck them in a cupboard and forgot about them. One day several newer friends happened to ask about nitrous oxide, and after telling them something about it I offered to let them try some. We got out a box of cartridges and my machine (a seltzer dispenser) and did a few rounds. I no longer recall how many I did myself, but it could not have been more than three or so. Perhaps because it had been many months since I'd last done the gas, perhaps because I did mine in quick succession, I "went" further out than I normally did on cartridges.

I found myself in an interior space which was not that which contained the Peak of Eternity. Instead it was like being in a field that was filled with fence posts -- the "posts" crowded so close they almost touched and filled the landscape in every direction as far as could be seen. I knew this was a metaphor and I knew what it was a metaphor for.

Nitrous shortens one's attention span by narrowing the focus of attention to an immediate now. My focus had been narrowed to the point where each "now" was extremely finite. I realized that "time" did not flow like a river, but rather was made up of thousands of finite and static moments which we experience as a continuous flow, even as we experience the still frames on movie film as a continuous flow of moving pictures when they are shown on a screen in rapid succession. My attention span had been so shortened that I was able to perceive each separate momentary "now" as distinct; further, I was able to perceive the gaps between these moments of "now."

But what really overwhelmed me was my vision of how these finite "now"s actually existed, like posts thicketing a field, side by side in every direction. The reality we experienced, our forward movement in time, was but a single course among an infinite number of possible courses, all of them simultaneously concurrent. It was as if, to use the metaphor of the field of posts, we moved from post to post under the illusion that there was but one single string of posts stretching before and behind us, the rest of the field empty. But actually there were post equidistant from each other in every possible direction, and one could chart any possible course through them, in straight lines, zig-zags, curves, or whathaveyou. All time being an illusion, all "now"s actually existing simultaneously, only our particular perceptions provided the illusion of a "past," "present," and "future." Theoretically, it was possible for me, having glimpsed this field of alternate courses, to move in a new, fresh direction which might appear to those around me to be outside their reality. I might go back or sideways in "time." I couldn't leapfrog immediate "now"s to more distant ones, but did I have to follow the single course already apparently charted for us all, out of the myriad courses I now saw?

Well, all too soon I was "back" in mundane reality.

"Wow!" I said. "I just had a genuinely stfnal experience!" When pressed to explain I said that I'd never really, on a gut-level, believed in many of the common concepts of sf like alternate realities, enjoyable though I found them to read about or write about. Like FTL space-travel, they were, I thought, amusing sophistries -- stuff to play with but not to be taken seriously.

But I did not experience this metaphoric field of posts intellectually. It took considerably less time to experience and understand than it has taken you to read about it: it was an immediate reality for me, something I more or less "figured out" after the fact. The fact itself was something I felt and it was as "real" as any experience I've ever had. It genuinely jarred my complacency.

Now it is easy to say, "Ted, these are delusions. Your mind is playing games with you." And on one level I would have to agree. The validity of a genuine perception of the gaps between finite static "now"s, even if they really exist, is problematical and of course unverifiable. Maybe the whole thing was simply a clever fantasy constructed by my unconscious mind while I experienced partial oxygen starvation to my brain. Maybe it's as big a cosmic yuk as my success in bringing back "everything" -- over and over again -- from the Peak of Eternity... a great joke on me.

Maybe, or as Krazy Kat once observed, "Mebbe not." There's no way to know. Not yet.

But I don't mess around much any more with nitrous oxide. I'm willing to wait.

-- Ted White: July 1982

[PNH, continued from page 3:]

It's also interesting, this bit of Arthur's about Standards being associated "with seriousness as the antonym of 'fun.'" I hear this from enough different people that I find myself being forced to the conclusion that they must be talking about something real to which I am, mysteriously, blind. Eric Mayer actually touches me in Brian Earl Brown's *Sticky Quarter #2* (in the same FAPA mailing as this *Zed*) when he talks about how the recent run of fannish criticism makes him feel like he's in school. I guess all I can do is say I'm sorry and it's very sad they feel this way, but gee, I always thought history, analysis, good dialogue, and a general sense of depth (the sense, as it were, that there are lots more interesting things out there that I have yet to find out about) were fun. Other things are fun too, and anything can be done to excess, but then almost everything except this sort of thing already has been, and I didn't see these fellows complaining then. I'm reluctant to come to the conclusion that there's an element that feels threatened by the suggestion that maybe there are levels of the game they haven't thought about yet, but it does look that way sometimes.

At this point it might be useful to suggest a proper response to much recent fannish (fanhistorical, fanzine-critical) analysis, which is to take it seriously but for God's sake not that seriously. It's a sport, a form, an excuse for discursive writing and illuminating side-observations; ultimately, just another vehicle for self-expression, self-revelation, self-aggrandizement. Most of the didactic content of the current discourse on fanzines boils down rather simply to "Do your best. Be aware of some sort of standards beyond the rather limited ones prevalent in pulp writing and other fanzines. Be interesting. Don't settle for second-rate." If this is emotionally threatening then there's something wrong, and it's not with the critics.

FREEZE-DRIED INSTANT COMMENT CRYSTALS

After all that surely you don't expect lengthy mailing comments on the last two FAPA mailings, which is a good thing since I don't have them. For one thing, mailing #179 isn't to hand; must be loaned out to someone. Mailing #180 is here, though, which means I can skim through, hitting the high points, knocking them off one by one. (Watch out.) Arthur Hlavaty (him again!), I gotta admit, scores a good one off me in pointing out the rather hyperbolic righteousness of my comments in the last *Zed*, though I do still hold to the substance of what I said. Robert Silverberg is, unsurprisingly, very entertaining, and I was particularly croggled to read about how he's never made it up to the electric typewriter. I bet he hates getting comments like this. I'm not sure I can describe the effect that Guy Lillian's comment about how "Southern fandom is people fandom" had on me; I assume he means fans everywhere else are into lobsters, or something. Christ, I should stop yielding to the temptation to say things like that. I find Marty Cantor too pleasant personally to want to get all riled up arguing about tobacco with him. Robert Runte's contribution puzzled me; my problem is that I wonder why, if he's so all-fired nationalist, he ran this past all us United Statesians for comment. Did anyone other than me get the impression that if we said frankly how smart Spider Robinson (god wot) sounded compared to Robert on this question, we'd just be dismissed as having a predictably USAnian imperialist opinion? Oh, well... Seth Goldberg caused a ripple of amusement locally with his description of Gary Farber, who isn't that much younger than Seth. In any case, I don't think fanzines have always been published just as a substitute for talk, any more than I think people write novels as letter-substitutes. And speaking of the fanzine as High Art (arf arf), a real fanzine from Redd Boggs is always an Event in my book, even if it's just a collection of notebookklings. For that matter I also enjoyed the similarly-disjointed but oddly elegant first contribution of D. Carol Roberts. Jack Speer, now, is mistaken when he asserts that I resigned from FAPA in 1978 in response to my proposed amendment not passing; in fact, my membership lapsed due to the minac deadline coinciding with a period of perfectly innocuous apathy. The amendment, as I recall, failed by one vote -- and one of its co-proposers, Terry Carr, failed to vote due to being flat on his back sick. Jack's tossed-pff and unsubstantiated assertion, like his ingenuous question in re a picture of me some years ago as to whether I was "a boy or a girl" (oh, come on!), is unworthy of him; I cannot imagine [continued at bottom of back page]



The Zed Letter File

F. M. BUSBY: Invitational apas. The only two I'm in are really Correspondence Substitutes rather than apas as such, so the attitude is not one of Keeping People Out but rather (when a vacancy occurs) "Who do we need in here?"

The voting-shootout you mention must be the Pout in the Customs (not Rules) of Lilapa, 1st mailing of which was 1 July 1965. Far from being "elaborate", though, those Customs (which sometimes get reprinted for the membership every 5 years or so) cover less than 1/3 of a page. And hardly true that "anyone can bring in new members": a 75% Yes vote of memberships is required for that. But the Customs provide that any member can register a Pout against inviting someone, and in that case there would be a vote, as to whether the invitee or the Pouter would be thrun out. However, for the first 17 years of Lpa's existence, no such vote has been necessary. 2-3 times, maybe, someone has said, "If that sumbitch is voted in, I just may Pout." Mostly in the earlier years. All that happened was, the Yes votes ceased coming in. Lpans have always been slow voters (I think it took nearly 3 years to build the roster from the 6 charter members to the theoretical limit of 15), so there was plenty of time for other grotchers to put a word in.

The other group invites by a majority of Yes votes and not more than one No vote, which also seems reasonable. In neither outfit has the question of inviting any specific person become any great hassle. (For one thing, people aren't exactly standing in line to join obscure Correspondence Substitute groups.)

Add item: these things are not Secret Apas, either. Private, not Secret. Exactly the same as personal letters: one may quote from the mailings, or not, just the same (in one's own judgement) as from one's latest letter from Joe Fann.

Basically we're talking about Xerox Corp's contribution to the idea of the Wide Open N-Way where N = the number of the ~~best~~ group. Okay? (2852 14th Ave W, Seattle WA 98119)

JOHN D. BERRY: ...Having been in a couple of private apas, I'm surprised at what you say about the genre's failures. I can't recall that the invitational nature of those apas was their most salient feature, and when clashes of personality broke out they didn't do so over who should be In and who should be Out. That's my experience, anyway. My experience has also been that such apas work best when they're founded as extensions of some natural social grouping; the first I was in was actually created to continue the good feelings that had evolved in a series of room parties among a fluid group of fans at the previous worldcon. The least successful mix I've seen was in an apa that was founded -- or rather, whose initial membership was chosen -- on the basis of how fannish the members were.

Loren's article is the highlight of the issue. I'm sure I hadn't read it in another version, but it all sounds familiar; he must have told me about it sometime last year, perhaps in a verbal reworking of what later became this article. I will try and root about in my piles of decaying paper and find my copy of the little booklet put out by the British Columbia Provincial Government, all about historical plaques of B.C. It lists them all, in order, from the southern tip of Vancouver Island to the point where the Alaska Highway crosses the B.C. border into the Yukon, and gives the complete text of each one. You never have to travel a mile of roadway in British Columbia; you can become an armchair adventurer, courtesy of the B.C. Ministry of Tourism! I'm sure Loren would appreciate this. (525 19th Ave E, Seattle WA 98112)

TED WHITE: "Cry of the Painless" is possibly the best thing I've seen by you, Patrick.

But although I am told I bear some of the responsibility for introducing nitrous oxide to fandom, and I still do it once in a while, I do not think it's a good social drug and I suspect it is not a genuinely "good" drug at all.

(I've been "doing" nitrous since the mid-sixties when my dentist introduced me to it, and I've had several genuinely revealing experiences on it, which if you twist my arm I might relate -- but not right now; it's too late and I'm too tired -- but it is my considered conclusion that in fact the nitrous experience is, to the extent that it is a profound experience, the experience of death. Make that Death. Maybe I should write you an article on the subject. Give my arm just a light twist...)

In any case, "Cry" is tight, amusing, and has the basic ring of truth. Is it?

I've been in a number of invitational apas, by the bye, including the first, APA X/APEX, and I never noticed that the question of whom to keep out was one of any importance to the group. Nor were any of these apas "run" by a single person, although once or twice someone thought he was running the apa. (That person was Arnie Katz, whose history in regard to private apa is a checkered one. I'm glad he is no longer in any respect active as a fan.) I assume the apa in which one chooses between the new member and the one who objects to him is Lilapa, since it seems to me that I once heard rumors of such a rule. I know very little about Lilapa, never having been a member, but I don't believe it actually operates that way. My impression is that it is weighed down by deadwood, since there are no activity requirements once you're in. I have been in two private apas in recent times. Apathy was more or less killed (by extreme apathy) by its last manager, although I hear rumblings of a revival, which won't be its first either; Apassembly has been pooting along comfortable for around 14 years, having survived two Arnie Katz upheavals early in its life.

I see the private apas as closed-door room parties. You restrict the membership to a number which allows a comfortable conversational level. There is no thought of being Exclusionary; one is free to get up and wander out to another room party, and just about no time at all is wasted on considerations of who is In and who is Out. These apas are just small gatherings of old friends, many of whom have no other means of maintaining contact.

I don't think there is actually any "more doubt about the inherent physical addictiveness of the opiates than about that of tobacco." Both work through exactly the same mechanism: nicotine metabolizes into a substance which works on precisely the same receptor sites as does an opiate. It is no coincidence at all that tobacco withdrawal is very similar to opiate withdrawal -- the symptoms are identical although usually less severe.

As regards mothers (or families) with small children, I don't think restaurants can be compared with convention audiences, but I do think that entirely too many mothers (or parents) thrust the experience of their squalling infants upon people who neither desire ot nor enjoy it.

We took our daughter everywhere we went when she was an infant -- she attended both LAcon (at 2) and Torcon (at 3); she was breast-fed until she was two and there was hardly an alternative. But we avoided situations where it was obviously an intrusion, and if she refused to shut up when offered a tit, she was retired from public.

When I hear a baby howling I for one am powerfully distracted from whatever else I was about. The baby's cries indicate that its needs are being frustrated or that it is in ill-health. I find that hard to ignore. If the cries persist, my anger is not with the baby but with its uncaring and inconsiderate parent(s). Mothers who blandly ignore their babies are not ranked high in my book, and their obliviousness to the disturbance which is being caused by their indifference is all the more annoying.

I mean, after all, if someone in an audience or a public place like a restaurant was given to loud whooping coughs, explosive sneezes, or a loud clearing of throats, I would consider that person equally disruptive and inconsiderate. People have a right not to be disturbed in such circumstances.

One does not need to be anti-children to feel that children are not appropriate to all situations and circumstances. (And I speak as someone who not only remembers

vividly what it felt like to be a child, but has a child, one for whom I have received compliments...) (1014 N Tuckahoe St, Falls Church VA 22046)

KEN JOSEPHANS: Not too much to say to Loren MacGregor, though I liked his bits.

Harlan Ellison paid some many thousands of dollars for a desk at the Noreascon II art auction simply because of the elaborate woodcarving which had gone into it. I don't think Ellison got a lie detector, though. Anne Laurie said, "I don't need a paper shredder or lie detector in my desk because I can shred my own paper and detect my own lies." She wishes she'd had the money to bid against Ellison for that carved desk, though. (Anne Laurie should write her own loc.) (605 S. Grand, Lansing MI 48933)

RICH McALLISTER: Zed was fun, though, mostly because a fair amount of it was stuff I had been involved in -- the nitrous party at whatever con it was, Loren's tale of the plaques in Volcano (no e, like in potato) (actually, I remember the historical-plaque-commemorating-the-first-historical-plaque bit being my idea; see if I ever say anything funny around Loren again. So there.), and Lee Hoffman talking about the Bible which I assume was prompted by the "my bowels shall sound like a harp" line I sent in and you used as an interlineation. I have to admit I didn't actually read the Bible to find it, Lin found it in a dictionary of quotations she was looking through (no, I don't remember if it was under "bowels" or "harp"). The only funny Bible quote I have left is "The horseleech hath two daughters, crying 'Give! Give!'" which is in Proverbs someone (in the King James version, of course -- the more recent translations change it into something that makes sense). Proverbs is a good book to read when stoned; after awhile you can start making up your own, like "As the snake doth behold the sunrise, so doth the sluggard behold his bed." (2369 St Francis Dr, Palo Alto CA 94303)

WILLIAM ROTSLER: Just below my letter was a quote about me by Bob Shaw, about how I no longer find naked women interesting to look at. Wrong. What I've said is that they (singly or in "reasonable" clusters) are no novelty. I was once found lying on a water bed the size of Iowa with four nude women of considerable pulchritude -- all professional models -- reading the latest mailing from a "secret" apa of which Mr. Shaw has recently become a member. It was just that the models I had seen all day and the mailing was new.

It's not that I find nude women uninteresting to look at, it's just that most women (and a helluva lot more men!) are not that interesting to look at. I remember going to my very first nudist camp with a very busty stripper named Jenny Lee. My main worry was not that I might have an "inappropriate" erection -- this was in the early '60s when nudist parks were pretty "cool" -- but that I might have to look at the unclothed horror of some 300-pound woman with 19 scars and a tattoo which depicted the 4th battle of the Staple Wars.

Came the time a 300-lb etc (sans the tattoo) walked between me and a very attractive naked female of the very opposite sex... and all I thought was, "There's something momentarily between me & her."

Later on nudist camps became semi-demi-orgy pits (if you knew the right one) and S*E*X was considered somewhat more acceptable. I remember once when Uschi Digart (the extraordinary woman I deem the World's Most Famous Fugure Model) took me to a local camp. I remember lying on a water cushion (a kind of holeless doughnut-shaped water-bed) and a well-shaped, quite large and firm bosom plopped, totally by accident, into my open mouth. What I remember is that she was oily.

In the middle & late '60s I was doing a lot of "nudist" magazines for a company Old Fan Earl Kemp worked for -- an incident involving a boulder in the road & a pornographic border-crossing was mentioned last time. We would take a group of professional models, or in the case of Haight-Asbury, non-pros, and we'd do Frankenstein, the Mummy, Black Magic, The Old Dark House, The Phantom Of The Discotheque, Little Orphan Annie, pirates, cowboys, etc. Once we did Sherlock Holmes investigating a crime in the old

house the LASFS was meeting in at the time. We went to Mexico, Malibu, Big Sur, the desert, etc.

One of the models we used a lot was named Karen, an extraordinary young woman, who took a fancy to Evan Hayworth, who was helping me then. We went into the desert once and stopped in some one-dusty-dog town to get food and drinks in the market. We went in, scattered in several directions. Evan and Karen started eyeing each other sexily, as if meeting for the first time. They started necking over the frozen peas, went into a passionate hands-down-the-denims clench, he bent her over the peas and she had a noisy climax. Then they straightened their clothes, said "Nice to meet you," and proceeded to the checkout stand separately.

We did sorority stories, nurses, wild parties, fake movie making stories. We shot in movie ranches and borrowed houses. There was NO repeat NO sex in any of these highly sanitized epics, but there were a lot of nude people. We also had a lot of sex.

I just read another part of your ~~zine~~ *zine* (anyone who publishes a letter of mine I don't want to be in) fine & upstanding publication in which the letter you published last time was actually sent to *Mainstream*--? Egad, sir and madam! I write about 2 letters to fanzines a year (whether I need to or not) and one is misdirected into a fanzine I didn't even write it to--!?!?! Is this like surrogate motherhood? (2104 Walnut Ave, Venice CA 90291)

WAHF: Stu Shiffman, doug barbour, Kevin Smith. Their letters will appear in *Mainstream*.

[continued from page 8] how someone of his talents and accomplishments can occasionally be so ill-behaved. Gregg Calkins made many good points, but I hope he'll forgive me if I say I really don't want to argue current political events in FAPA, not because I think such discussion has no place in fandom but because I value other things about many FAPAns than their politics. Finally, Art Widner is simply a delight; inherently interesting content, real style and ~~verve~~ *verve* in presentation, and lots of it. Great show.

One correction to *Zed* 3, in the May mailing: it was Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, not General George C. Marshall, who urged during World War II that Kyoto be spared from bombing. (Source: New York Review Of Books, 27 May 1982, review of two WWII books, by David Kahn.)

WHY THIS ISSUE LOOKS FUNNY

Sorry about that. Now, at least, we know a few things about this ancient electro-stencil cutter: like, turn the refrigerator off and let the machine warm up before trying anything. Lest you deduce that we keep the electrostenciller in the refrigerator perhaps I should explain that the two processes are separate: household fridges have this tendency to turn themselves on and off automatically, causing massive variations in the power supply and giving the electronic scanner fits. Still, we doubt we'll use it for text again; this issue was originally mastered for xeroxing and, when that fell through, run on the e-stenciller and mimeo as an experiment. Vide the results. Now I remember why I don't like all-electrostencilled fanzines.

The article by Ted White included herein was written on request, as a careful reading of Ted's loc ought to make obvious. We like several things about it, not least that it avoids the all-too-common pitfalls of personal journalism about recreational drugs, managing instead to be interestingly serious as opposed to numbingly earnest. (Now where have I heard that before? Could be...)

Apologies, incidentally, from Teresa for her absence this time: the mystery illness alluded to at the end of *Telos* 5 has been diagnosed as narcolepsy, which certainly goes a long way to explain the mid-day falling asleep into the sixth cup of coffee. It's reassuring to have an explanation, but it's nonetheless an incurable disorder; 20 mgs. of prescription Dexedrine (that is, speed) per day does a lot of good but is still what one of her doctors calls "cosmetic." Still, what with making the necessary readjustments, she's probably getting more done now than when the problem was just starting to show. Which, unfortunately, doesn't include getting around to FAPA this quarter. Next time: who knows? Back in a quarter or three.

- pnh, 4 November 1982