

FAN-DANGO

Vol. III, No. 4 PACIFICON ISSUE, Summer 1946 Whole No. 12

COUNTERCLOCKWISE

C. EDWARD BURBEE

You might, said the sage, compare the love life of a man with the business or profession of racing horses. The racing man has what is known in his and other fields as a string. He loves the business of racing. Even though racing horses should not strain or be forced to violent effort, he races all he can, compatible with his abilities in that line. And naturally, Nature has endowed some men with the ability to maintain bigger and better strings than their neighbors. The racing man, then, loves the Game. To him it is the Prime Subject.

His string is usually divided into four classes, though we will discuss a hypothetical fifth class later on. First of all, he has a few platers. They are called variously, claiming horses, claimers, skates. The term "mount" is used almost exclusively by jockeys when they speak of the horses they ride, but you might expect to see the term used indiscriminately here. These platers are cheap horses, oftentimes mere spavined hacks. The sportsman picks them up out of the claiming races, where any qualified person may buy or "claim" a horse that is run. They are a sort of pickup. Casuals. They do not cost much. He has no great attachment for them. More often they are just fill-ins between the bigger events of his life. He may run them a few times in some of the numerous opportunities he has to choose from, and eventually loses them to somebody else via the claiming route. He expects to, in fact, and often hopes to. He is not particularly interested in them as individuals--too many just like them, no better or worse. Sometimes, though, these cheaper items not only pay their own way but help support his better class stuff.

He also has a few mounts of a somewhat higher grade. He does not risk these in the open market, viz., the claiming races. He watches them more closely, since they usually have more class than the general run of stuff and might easily develop into something better. They generally have been better bred or have by their own efforts raised themselves to the higher bracket. They are not run as often as the cheaper stuff, and their efforts can generally be depended upon to be better. Their style and technique is far above average.

The stake horse is the third classification. Generally the small operator will have only one or two of these. These are the ones that he goes all out for. The other ones are just buildups for these. If financial reverses force him to give up part of his string, he will usually attempt to hang onto these horses, giving them up only as a last resort. If he has something really choice, he is constantly fending off prospective buyers, who often eye his mount with greedy eyes and sometimes cause him no end of worry, since he feels that in a weak moment he might possibly part with this choice stuff. Oddly enough, for all his care and expense, he often gets little or no money out of the stake horses. It costs more to enter them in races, and, comparatively speaking, they often do not make as much as the cheaper stuff.

But he thinks they are better and can seldom be convinced otherwise, even when poor performances should tell him the truth.

The fourth classification takes in the younger stuff--the stuff that is often too young to race or, being old enough, is being held in reserve for special reasons because the owners think it is capable of better things. He may own these himself and spend a lot of time grooming them and observing them, yet never throw a professional leg over them when the chips are down. Not until they are ripe. The time must be right or he will not bring them out. Sometimes he keeps them under wraps and dreams roseate dreams of what they will do when he eventually brings them out and runs them. Most of the time they do not deliver, but he is human and so he dreams about it.

So, it follows then, said the sage that every man should have a string. And most of us do, even if only mentally. The day-dreamed strings are always of exceptionally high caliber, containing fillies in the lineup that would ordinarily never be found in any one string. But we should all have our strings. Good, strong, headily resilient flesh. A warning here, though. Do not become too attached to any of these mounts, no matter how well they ride for you at first, or how promising they may seem. Anything can happen, and usually does, in this mad business. At first they seem to bring great rewards for your outlay, and have cute little mannerisms that endear them to your heart. Be callous to their blandishments, since to grow too fond of your mounts is not good for business. You are likely to squander your portion on them should they later take a turn for the worse.

And if that should happen, it is quite possible that in holding onto this seemingly choice item, you will lose, gradually, piece by piece, the rest of your string, and eventually lose your choice item and be left without a mount. For a time things will be desolate indeed, and you will probably not even care to rush after another string, though the makings lie in great plenty around and about you.

Now we speak of the fifth class. Here the analogy is not perfect. Here is proof that the horse-racing business is run more sensibly than life. Imagine, if you can, the racing commission giving a man a mount--at his request, mind you--and forcing him to enter it only, mounting but the one filly for the rest of his or its life. He is forced, brutally and without thought of deprivation, to forsake all others. In other words, he is not permitted to have a string. He must pin all his hopes on this one horse, which he thinks at first is a stake horse. He enters into a contract to keep this horse, feed it, care for it, placate it. For this he thinks he is entitled to certain considerations, which is why he signed the contract. But! These very same considerations are not specifically mentioned in this ambiguous and misleading document. He only imagines, fondly, that he will receive these considerations, and he later learns to his bitter sorrow that the mount itself is seldom in a mood to do other than abide by the written letter of this heinous contract. The mount moreover, by contractual right, can refuse to allow him to acquire other mounts, though the mount itself does not allow itself to be ridden more than once a week, and often much less. And literally never, after the signing of the contract, does this mount run other than a half-hearted and uninspiring race. Why, any green and untried filly out in the paddock can do much better. So the poor man, who loves his racing more than anything, and considers it to be his prime subject, finds himself restricted and bound in and pent up until he feels veritably imprisoned in a cage of his own making.

COMMENTS ON THE SPRING MAILING

INSPIRATION. The review of stfzines was very interesting, and should prove of considerable usefulness to those of us who have not read all their back issue zines....The interesting discussion of traffic control and city redesigning would be much more valid if it had been better designed to fit in with present-day cars and highways. Electronically controlled automobiles are very well...but what about the millions of cars on the road today, none of which are so controlled? Are their owners to be compelled by law to have them adapted to fit the new system? Are they to be scrapped arbitrarily? Certainly an electronically controlled highway network will fall far short of its aim if it is used by vehicles not so designed. It is all very well to bring in these new devices, but at the same time it must be remembered that many very commonplace automobile improvements are not shared by all cars on the road. For example, although the first four-wheel brakes appeared in 1923 or 1924, there are many cars still in daily use which have only the two-wheel brakes. I saw two today, a model T vegetable truck and a Dodge touring of about 1922 vintage. Safety glass has been available for twenty years or more, and has been standard equipment on many cars since 1928, yet many cars are still in service which do not even have safety windshields, let alone side-windows. I believe that is enough to demonstrate that radical modifications of the motor car will take a long, long time to become universally adopted. And then there is the matter of highways Lynn talks about roadside controls. All very well, but consider the thousands and thousands of miles of presentday highways which are definitely obsolete and inferior even according to the standards of 1940. Three-lane highways have been condemned as death-traps for well over a decade, yet there are still plenty of them. I drove several hundred miles over such roads in my 1943 trip from northern Idaho to Los Angeles, to say nothing of an even greater distance over obsolete two lane highways, with turns banked for 25 or 30 miles an hour instead of the 50 plus at which even my antiquated Willys was rattling along. And I know of several major and semi-major arterials which still bear their antiquated black-top paving, and are liberally sprinkled with signs reading: "Slippery when Wet or Frosty"The point I'm trying to make is that while it is all very well to build up pipe-dreams of one kind and another, it seems that a more practical, though certainly as interesting, discussion could be built up if we took greater efforts to coordinate with things as they are today, and try to trace a gradual evolution, rather than outline some arbitrary system of fifty or a hundred years in the future....Robot ad was lovely.

---ooOoo---

FANTASY AMATEUR. I voted Yes on both these questions. Did you? Of course it is of academic interest only, but I was struck by the slipshod reasoning of some of our members who seem to think an augmented membership is the solution to our financial woes, rather than an increased dues. If mailings average 35¢ each, there is automatically a 40¢ per member per year deficit on postage alone. Just how can it solve this situation to enroll further members at the old rate?

---ooOoo---

FAN-DANGO. That was the last of the pink issues, I hope. I made a lovely boner when I said Bessie and Bennie would not be of interest on the same side, forgetting about OK 8946 and 8949!

PLAUTEUR. Sinatra crossed with Bing, eh? That isn't fantastic, my friend; that's Perry Como! ... I am rather strongly inclined to doubt if maintenance and repair can legitimately be considered as disagreeable jobs, even though in many cases they are "dangerous or arduous". Danger per se will certainly never keep a job from being filled. Some of the jobs in the woods, for example, such as topping trees, give me the heebie-jeebies even when I think of them in the confines of my armchair. I wouldn't tackle that kind of job for all the money in the world. Yet I have been casually acquainted with several men who do that kind of thing professionally; not only are they unbothered by the dangers, but they actually tend to regard themselves as a sort of guild, an aristocracy among lumberjacks. Since he came to work in the same shop where I am employed, I have discovered that Burbee is scared of the saws. I'm a timid little feller myself, but I'd just as soon saw plastics as perform any other operations on them--don't even consider the saws to be especially dangerous if one keeps his wits about him. And so it goes. Not only is the job one man regards as dangerous tame stuff for someone else, but there is no job so dangerous but what someone will willingly undertake it.

And I rather doubt if arduous is an apt description of the average maintenance job. It is true enough that the maintenance man periodically has to work unusually long hours doing something unusually difficult, but it must be remembered that he also spends much of his time in pretty much of a standby status, puttering around with an oilcan or greasegun. In most cases, it averages up pretty well. It must also be remembered that many men definitely enjoy tinkering around with machinery and equipment, and in many cases derive sufficient pleasure therefrom to go a long way towards nullifying any hard work which might be involved.

I am inclined to think, on the basis of the specific suggestions I already made, that very few jobs I didn't actually name but could either be shown to be pleasant enough to someone to warrant their retention in my utopia (!!) or else could be eliminated. And though Don mentions moving heavy objects by hand as being "simple", a little thought will show that the elimination in one way or another of manual weight lifting will also eliminate the arduousness from most industrial jobs. For instance, if the machinist has the proper lifting equipment he'd as soon fit his lathe with a 24" chuck as an 8" one.

One very unpleasant thing I did neglect to consider was heat, and I suspect that it may be one of the knottiest problems of all to solve. While the less exact applications of heat, such as smelting or brick-baking or industrial "cooking" could very likely be taken care of through a mixture of remote controls such as I suggested for mining, and air-conditioning coupled with protective suits; it is difficult for me to see how many operations--such as plastics moulding or forging or welding or heat treating--can be adequately performed without the presence of one or more skilled workmen. Can any of you gentlemen suggest suitable techniques?

---ooOoo---

LIGHT. Is there room in the Society of Pollyannas and Optimists for an old pessimist? I'm going on, just as though things were not going to be blown all to hell in another decade or so at most--perhaps a little more intensively than I would if I figured on a lifetime's normal span--but am most certainly not giving anything away and preparing for The End. I'm going to get my money's worth out of what time I have left, even if an atomic bomb does interrupt me.

INK'S FORM LETTER. Is this "explanation" truly "official"? Any attempt to say what shall and what shall not be credited against activity requirements can lead only to a sorry mess. Let's not get ourselves into one.

-----ooOoo-----
FANORAMA. The "blackest little bitch in these thar hills" is not named "Fewmets". While no official spelling of the name exists, it may be tentatively set forth as Fumous, with the accent on the first syllable. The name was given her by Quiggie, and, so far as I can ascertain, represents the quintessence of a three-year-old's impressions of a black cocker. The name fits Flame's personality so well that we all call her that now. She even answers to it. (For the benefit of anyone who may still be reading this, Black Flame is Ashley's pooch, who lives with the Lanays due to Ashley's unconverted landlord.)

-----ooOoo-----
AD INTERIM. Sure, let's all Dunk the fellow.

-----ooOoo-----
GLOM. Oxnard forever!

-----ooOoo-----
SUSTAINING PROGRAM. When I compared Everett to the barfly, I was referring entirely to religious diatribes, rather than objecting to autoanalyses and other self-revelations. For some reason, I feel a mixture of embarrassment and disgust when someone starts bloating about god and how he is saved. Religion, so far as I'm concerned, is not a subject fitted for polite conversations. I suppose that this reveals something wrong with me, but that's the way I feel about it anyway.

Quite frankly, I approve in the main of self-revelations. For one thing, the mere marshalling of the facts and fancies into coherent enough form to express often helps one to resolve or at least alleviate some problem. Even more important, the more we all know about each other, the better we probably will be able to get along. At least, we will know enough not to rub acid into each other's sore spots, unless for the sheer joy of kicking up a rumpus.

I'll take a raincheck on your education essay. I wonder how many members dug that second interlineation on page 16? Talk about a nice, sly, subtle crack!

I think Daugherty has a most lovely coiffure, but I must still politely decline his invitation to the strip tease.

-----ooOoo-----
A TALE OF THE EVANS. I wasn't aware that I was going around making so much noise about the fact that I do NOT believe. I have perhaps mentioned the fact obscurely a time or so.

I doubt if Everett will ever be offered anything comparable to his life philosophy and religious beliefs. For someone interested in a neatly blended mixture of fact evasion, self-justification, and escapism--not unmixed with a certain amount of glory-seeking exhibitionism--Everett most certainly has a first class offering. The chief point to the criticisms is simply that many of us either do not require such personality props, or else prefer to attain similar ends with a bit more subtlety. Also, it must not be forgotten that any magazine submitted to FAPA is subject to discussion and criticism which is not always aimed at soothing the ego of the person at whom it is aimed. Ask me sometime; I've had my share of brickbats!

THE BINDER. In reference to Everett's remarks on giving presents and then not getting the sort of response he wants, wasn't it Benjamin Franklin who pointed out that the real way to get a response out of someone was to make him do the giving? At least I have found that it works beautifully, if I'm trying to get set with someone, to make that person render services for me which he or she can easily feel could not be rendered by anyone else. The warm glow of righteous egoboo arising usually makes the character feel quite kindly towards me--and of course I'm not proud; I don't mind someone's going to a good deal of trouble for me. Only trouble is, such a procedure knocks me out of my ego-boo. Ho hum.

---ooOoo---

READER AND COLLECTOR. Robert Butman did not live up to his promising start. Some points taken out of III-6: (p.13) Butman certainly does not understand the fan field well enough even to mention it. His discussion of the field ranges from half-truths to glaring errors, with a majority of the latter. (p.21) Butman sounds as though he thought the UAPA, a wholly mundane aj group, was not only HPL's personal club but was a major influence on the development of fantasy in America. Later on the same page, Butman speaks of Machen and Bierce almost as though they were followers of HPL, rather than the reverse. (p.23) This is a very minor point, but one should reasonably expect an author of a serious piece of scholarship to keep his sources straight. My glossary did not appear in The Outsider.

Thru this entire chapter, Butman writes as though H. P. Lovecraft were the influence on modern American fantasy, and this he assuredly was not. If one examines the field of fantasy impartially, he is forced to the conclusion that H. P. Lovecraft was both a slight and a fleeting influence. If he was other than a slight influence, why is it that, outside of stories written by his own most intimate friends, there exist scarcely any stories which can possibly be called Lovecraftian? If his influence was other than fleeting, how does Butman account for the fact that the new Lovecraftian story is today a definite rarity? And how does he account for the further fact that another equally slight and fleeting influence (Unknown) has arisen, flourished, and declined since Lovecraft's death? If Lovecraft were the influence Butman imagines him to be, half or more of the fantasy today would bear definite marks of having been influenced by him. Does it?

Finding Butman patently in error concerning matters which I am in a position to verify makes it extremely difficult for me to give the rest of his essay any serious consideration. If he is wrong in these things, I think, how can I expect him to be right on these other matters?

---ooOoo---

HORIZONS. For an educated man, old Hard Luck Gardner shows less appreciation, or indeed, knowledge, of literature and literate fiction as contrasted against the cheap slop of the pulp magazines than anyone else in FAPA. "Now it is an ascertainable fact," he says, "that book fiction is usually utopian, sociological, and often of a lower grade than the fiction published by the best magazines." Do such bibliophiles as Koenig, Liebscher, Searles subscribe to that statement? And his statement about naming the top 30 stories! Certainly if one has confined his reading to the cheap magazines, his list of favorite stories will reflect this fact, but the more discerning fantasy reader, who has given the hard-cover side of our field a reasonable perusal is not apt to give much tolerance to the pulps. A couple of stories out of ASF, a couple more out of UNK, and perhaps something by HPL or CAS--apart from that, they'll be naming book stuff among their favorites.

HORIZONS (cont) ~~But what of FFM?~~ I myself consider that the magazine is far below what it should be, but a moment's analysis shows that most of its faults are those inherent in all pulp magazines. Realism, particularly as related to the mores, just isn't permitted in the magazine field. The wellnigh Victorian outlook on life, the prudishness, the unconvincing motivation, the mawkish characters, and all the other flaws of the old three-decker novels of a century ago are preserved today more than anywhere else in the field of periodical fiction. FFM is no better in this respect than any other magazine, and as a result is unable to consider most of the truly outstanding pieces of book fantasy, or is forced to resort to drastic revision of the stories. Another point that should not be overlooked is the fact that these magazines are, on the whole, catering to an immature if not moronic audience. A study of the advertising contained in them can lead to no other conclusion, for if these advertisements were not patronised they would not continue to be inserted issue after issue. I have heard the statement made that these ads are placed in an entire chain of pulps irrespective of title, and that consequently stf magazines must not be judged by them. Perhaps so, but I have also noticed the way they are keyed, so that the advertiser not only knows what chain of pulps, but what title, is pulling in his returns.

I have no quarrel with Hard Luck Gardner, who evidently enjoys his pulp stf. I like the stuff myself. My only complaint is that he should not blind himself to the fact that 99% of this stuff is sheerly trash, no matter how much pleasure he or I or anyone else may derive from it.

---ooOoo---

L'INCONNU. I'm not looking for any sepia strange stuff, Art. I just thought that blues verse off a classic Armstrong record would be amusing to put on the cover of a Speer-inspired magazine.

---ooOoo---

EN GARDE. In case anyone was wondering, I'm a graduate of the University of Idaho.

---ooOoo---

Well, that's about it. I don't see too much point in making comments just for the sake of making comments. If I have something to say, I most certainly will say it (and indeed will often hold forth at great length when I have nothing whatever to say) but if I feel blank about a certain item why should I underline this fact by giving the boy a paragraph.

I am sorry, though, not to have any jazz discussions in here for Chan Davis. Somehow, I guess that I'd rather listen to the stuff than write about it, despite all my threats a while back about an all-jazz Fan-Dango. I think that perhaps the best solution would be for Chan to pay me a visit sometime, and let my phonograph talk instead of me.

CAMPAIGN PROPAGANDA.

In the last mailing, I demonstrated the shocking hypnotic control which Ashley sometimes has over me by speaking of running for the secretary-treasurer's office. I wish I hadn't, but dammit, my name's on the ballot, I guess, and having more or less given my word, I suppose I'm stuck. But I will take it as a supreme favor if you'll all vote for someone else. If there is no other candidate, I suggest you might write-in Speer or some other wheelhorse with an overdeveloped sense of duty.

The fact is, since making this rash statement, so that Ashley would take his knife out of my ribs, I find myself with a full-time fan job (editor of the Foundation) and I just don't see how I can handle a FAPA office too.

TOOT BURBEE, concluded from page 2:

Why it is a truly ghastly picture to contemplate, is it not? Can you imagine, anywhere else in the wide world, the existence of so unfair a system? But, thank God, the racing commission imposes no such limitations on any of their fellow men. They are men of logic, governed by logic; men of high principles guided by the golden rule.

The glue factory won't take my horse. Do any of you guys want it?

* * * * *

MISCELLANEA

For the special PACIFIC CONGLOMERATION, the combazine flung together by that high flinger E Everett Evans, I am inserting pages 1-2 and 7-8. They should give a fair sample of Fan-Dango, even some mailing comments. For the benefit of combazine readers, I might mention that the four other pages of this issue consisted exclusively of comments on the previous FAPA mailing.

Ordinarily, the ratio is better. The last issue, for instance, carried five pages of commentary out of a total of twelve; the remaining seven comprising a two page article by Burton Crane and five pages of original articles by myself.

With the demise of The Acolyte, Fan-Dango becomes my only fanzine--and it is my intention to offer it to my exchangers in lieu of Acolyte. To make it worth offering in exchange, I'm going to have to soup it up a bit, and with this end in view, I'm asking for contributions of written material.

There are only two criteria. First, the stuff must be well-written essays or articles. (No fiction or verse.) Second, none of this material may have any relation to fantasy, weird, or science-fiction. Any cultural subject otherwise is welcome.

Fan-Dango does not want a wide circulation. It is not for sale, and I'm doggoned tightwaddish about giving copies away. Contributors will get one copy each of the issue their stuff is in. The 65 members of FAPA will get Fan-Dango in the mailing. Any fanzine editor who is willing to exchange all of his for all of mine will get the thing with depressing regularity. The only other way to get it is to be a beautiful woman on whom I have evil designs.

I'm not entirely sure myself what sort of a magazine it will turn into, now that I intend to devote more effort to it. I imagine, though, that it will run 16 to 18 pages per issue as long as I don't have to write more than half of it myself. I have no doubt that the continuation of the old policy of composing on the stencil will periodically get me into hot water with one person and another. Anyway, its development may be fun to watch; at least I intend to have some fun out of it. It will be published to please one reader--myself--so those who don't like it can grit their teeth in vain. It will reflect me (or on me) and may be expected to be swayed by passing whims and whimsies as well as by more serious purposes like horse racing and its concomitants.

FAN-DANGO is the personalized, composed-on-the-stencil effusion of F. Towner Laney, who quarterly inflicts it upon the long-suffering membership of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association.