



Burbee, Laney, & Rotsler.

April 21, 1949

FAPA

"DEAR FERRY:"

by F. Towner Laney

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In GLOM #13, Forrest J Ackerman has himself a fit about the so-called "insurgent element" which we would ignore (using our customary pose of saintly patience) were it not for the fact that we like Forrest J Ackerman.

Get that, Ferry? We like you, each and every one of us. We confess an antipathy towards some of your friends, self-termed and otherwise; we deplore some (not all) of your attitudes; occasionally we take a dim view of something you do or do not do. Was it not ever thus between or among friends? "Love me; love my dog" is not the way most people operate. We think enough of the man Ackerman that we overlook the occasional things he does we do not like. We feel that this man Ackerman has enough good points to counterbalance far more flaws than he actually has. We usually like your writings and we always enjoy your company. We like you, Ferry.

This being the case, it isn't right you should entertain as mistaken a view of us as GLOM #13 would seem to indicate.

Since GLOM #13 seems to have been inspired by WILD HAIR #3, it might be instructive to glance at our significant fanzine. WH#3 is definitely not anti-Ackerman. In one place, I chide you about a book--the same sort of friendly banter I'd have directed at Burbee, Condra, Vidner, or any other friend. On page 27 is an inch-square caricature of you by Rotsler. In "Watch Your Money" is the one really pointed crack at you in the entire issue (p.28). It is a stinger all right, but is no rougher than Condra's half-paragraph on the high decibel Laney voice.

Though WILD HAIR is definitely anti-LASFS, 30 of its 36 pages have no connection with or aim at the LASFS or any of its members. And of those six, two happen to have only isolated cracks at the Shangri-La Utopia.

Another thing, Eph Konigsberg of the LASFS was invited to the session by letter, and you were invited verbally. Both of you accepted subject to prior commitments, and it was a matter of genuine regret to those of us who did publish WILD HAIR that we did not realize our date conflicted with the Evans banquet until it was too late to change it.

So much for that.

You seem to have the notion that we "hate the LASFS", "thrive on rebuttals, indignation, anger". It is a pity that an intelligent person like you should believe such guff for a moment. We satirize foibles, laugh at hyper-seriousness, and occasionally cry out against some condition that needs correction (like the queers in the LASFS or Daugherty withholding the NFFF's Pacificon money). We also attempt to create writing and drawing of as high a quality as our own limitations will permit; some satiric, some burlesque, some serious, some pure humor--and all of it written for our own (and others') pleasure.

You say: "The Insurgents will fail as the ill-fated Knaves and Outsiders failed." How can we possibly fail? We have no mission. We aren't trying to Do Something. With us, Random is not a way of life. We do what we do because we enjoy doing it. As long as we enjoy doing it, we are successful. If and when we no longer derive enjoyment from FAPA membership, fanzine publishing, one-shot sessions (which by the by are at least 75% social functions), amateur drawing and writing, and the other things we do; we'll quietly fade out of the picture and find something we do enjoy.

The Knaves did not fail. They consisted of four people who tired of the LASFS, pulled out, and published three fanzines under the name "Knaves". Their motivation was remarkably like our own; they enjoyed what they did as "Knaves", and when they were tired of it all, they quietly sought other interests. Since they had no high-flown aims, they couldn't fail.

The Outsiders in a sense did fail. To the primary motivation of the Knaves, they added the objective of building up an adult science-fiction fan organization of intellectual pretensions in LA. The Outsiders felt that such a club was needed to try to undo the harm done by seven years' existence of the LASFS, and eventually hoped to supplant that bumbling and feckless group. Instead, the Outsiders folded.

But the Insurgent Element cannot fail. We have no club, no organization, no meetings. As a matter of fact, Burbee coined the phrase "Insurgent Element" solely so that you semanticists could have a high order abstraction to wrap your tongues around and get excited about. All we are is a small group of friends, neither compact nor exclusive, who have certain interests in common. And we are no more insurgent now than Burbee and Laney were in 1945 when the one edited the LASFS magazine and the other (God forgive him) was director of the LASFS.

In passing, I'd like to state that I find it difficult to comprehend the state of mind that would cause a staunch science-fiction fan such as you, Forry, to speak of the "sacrifice of standards" entailed by our welcoming R. P. Graham to our typewriter party. He is every bit as desirable an associate as the van Vogts, Bryce Walton, or any of the other pro authors you are proud to number among your friends. I have no doubt that he and they would find much in common, and that they would be good friends if they were to meet and become acquainted. We are above drawing the "color-line" against a man just because he has written and sold a million words of stf.

I'll close with two friendly challenges. First, GLOM #13 is too full of puns and side-issues to make sense to the non-LA reader. If you care to cast it into serious English we will be happy to publish it and anything else you may care to say on the subject verbatim in your choice of WILD HAIR #4 or FAN-DANGO #22.

Second, you speak of the LASFS' "good meetings and good works". Heh. We was dere, Sharlie! We seriously doubt that the LASFS can put on a good meeting. Why don't you put on a good one and let some of us come and report it for the #4 WILD HAIR? If you came thru with the goods, you would be treated to the happy spectacle of the Insurgent Element eating their own words in their own magazine.

P.S. We anticipate no change of diet.

But in any case, Forry, remember that we all like you. Not Evans, not Daugherty--but we like you.