

BOFFIN

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BOFFIN

What we don't know about proper fanzine practice would fill the Fancyclopedia, but we suppose there are two methods of selecting a name for a fanzine. One would be to come forth with an eye-catching title, easy to remember, the other to select a name with some special meaning. We hear that many new zine editors have so many names they like that they finally have to draw one from a hat or perhaps conduct a poll among their friends. Such fan are no doubt blessed with fertile imaginations unlike this poor fan who had a heck of a time thinking of anything at all. We nearly took the easy way out by adopting Redd Boggs' recent suggestion of the name of a star or constellation.

Others may think it was a sad mischance but to us it seemed a lucky thing indeed when we came across the term "boffin" in Arthur C. Clarke's PRELUDE TO SPACE. On page 12 we read (boffin) "means any long-haired scientific type with a slide rule in his vest pocket." This seemed just perfect for we are not a scientific type and instead have crossed fingers hoping we are a sapstype. No long hair either but getting thin at the top, yes, just thin, for you can't see the scalp yet, though using a cold comb gives me a chill in the crown. Neither do we own a slide rule or even know how to use one though we are a regular devil with a Marchant Calculator. We stand around with open mouth and respectful mien when certain experts in the new mortgage department use their slide rules to figure the cubage and cost of a projected house from blueprints and specifications. Our look verges on worship when other experts in the bond department whip out their rule, as they'll do at the slightest provocation, and calculate the actual interest yield of a possible purchase from today to maturity, of a U. S. Treasury 2-3/8% of 7/1/72 bought at 101-7/32.

Here it occurs to us that perhaps we have a sub-conscious desire for a slide rule and hence our liking for "boffin." For we don't even have a vest to keep a slide rule in. Vests, ha! The only good thing that came from Hitler's war was the disappearance of vests during the clothing rationing. What possible use can there be for a vest? To carry your watch? So everyone has a watch pocket in his trousers where he carries small change while wearing his watch on the wrist. To hide spots on your shirt? Hmm - the only spots we get from soup or too much mustard on the hamburger is right on the collar lapel of our shirt or right square on the necktie knot. We do know of an elderly Yankee who always wears an old vest when he goes fishing, keeping spare hooks and lures in the pocket on one side and smoking supplies on the other. He, however, is one of a fast disappearing species for Yankees are scarce even in New England. Once some customers in the wife's antique store referred to their family as "an old Yankee family." Louise then (at least half in fun) stated that her father came from a real old Yankee family and was amused to hear them say, "How could they be Yankees when your folks are Irish?" "Well, how do you define a Yankee?" "We call a Yankee one whose folks have lived in New England for many generations," they said. "Ha," said Louise, "My father's umpty-ump great grand-pappy fought on the American side in the Battle of Bennington, (Vt.) in 1777."

This passage at arms led us to do some research on the subject of what constitutes a Yankee. Hmm - to many foreigners a Yankee is an American. To southern

Americans a Yank is a Northerner. Northerners consider Yankees those people living in New England. New Englanders consider Yanks those living mostly in Maine and Vermont whose forebears came over soon after the Mayflower. If our visitors were good samples then these northern New England Yanks (!) consider a Yankee one whose ancestors came over before the Revolution, if said ancestors and their descendants were of English blood and of a Protestant sect. Being of liberal views like all good Saps, we prefer the European definition. Hi, Yank!

We trust the above is a clear and concise explanation of how we came to pick the name of this zine. If you have lasted till now, you know what we meant when we said we were not the scientific type. So naturally we admire the slide-rulers, and consider them the salt of the earth. No doubt we'll be still feeling that way when they make the whole darn world go "Boom."

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FUTURE FAMOUS FEN

By Albert Enn

The editor of BOFFIN has been badgering me to write some sort of article for his zine, insisting that all fen fondly believe they are potential big shot writers, and will reach that status as soon as they concentrate on production. It was without avail that I proudly pointed to the fact that I was the only fan I knew who didn't write for zines. The editor and his cohorts then proceeded to show me the error of my sinful ways. Here I was happily spending all my time reading every book, mag and zine that I could borrow or steal - yes, even buy. What was I doing to advance the glory of fandom? One local member had practically organized the local fan club single handed. Another had a terrific mag collection. Young potential fen were brought to his sacred abode to gaze reverently at his complete collection of "Strange Mysteries of the Spaceways" and trembled with happiness when patted on the head by the master. Number three had made the pilgrimage to the Foundation and returned to form a large dianetics study group. Still another was active in various fan organizations.

A cold feeling of dread went through me when I realized that I was on the verge of the final insult. They were about to call me an inactive fan! I might even be banned from the most important club rite of all - the monthly bull-session on ASF vs Galaxy! In desperation I remembered the ruse of Achilles and quavered, "I'd write something but I just don't know anything - too dumb, I guess." All the heads present nodded in hearty agreement. However, the editor was not to be swayed from his inflexible purpose. Though I could dimly hear him muttering something to himself that sounded like "shouldn't do this even to fapa," (whatever that is), he then drew himself up haughtily and delivered his ultimatum: "Look, even you must know something about fen, fanzines or slandom. Ghu knows you read enough of them. Tell you what, if you come through with something readable I'll let you read the next sapsmailing for only 25¢ instead of the usual four bits!"

This was the first mention of any reward and my Scotch sense of values was aroused. A chance to save money as well as to make my way in fandom! The others had retired to a corner to form plans for the next meeting and it was obvious my presence was not desired. Unless I wanted to go back to my old hobby of pawing through the city dumps to augment my collection of old medicine bottles, it behooved me to get going. But what to write about? What would a clear do if

faced with this dire emergency? Then I had it! Sure, he'd think it over carefully and would come up with some stuff that was like other zine stuff. But at the same time he would somehow get a subtle revenge on the slans who had made him work over a hot typer on a beautiful Summer day when he could have been lolling in his hammock, sipping on a cool, strengthened, fruit drink, and reading "Spaceship" or "Fan Variety." At this very micro-second I heard the crash-shattering of several of my heaviest engrams, followed at once by a low humming between the ears, there was a flash of multi-colored lights and my fingers moved across the keyboard. Staring at me from the paper in bold caps was the legend "Future Famous Fen." Verily I had been upon the mount and received the high message - the rest should be easy.

Of late we zine readers have been deluged with pieces on the greats and former greats of slandom. Ackerman, Sneary, Rapp, Wollheim, Coslett, Boggs, Speers, Tucker, Warner, Moscowitz, Carlson, Moore, all are receiving egoboo they no longer need. Everyone knows that these great slans can write better fiction or articles than the pros, find it easy to drink kegs of fandom's favorite elixir with no discernable effect, and can sit down at any time of day or night to compose a 25-page article on "Fiendish Solar Tales - The Greatest Prozine Before 1922." All accept without question that they can obtain the company of the fairest damsels by a crook of their fingers. When they deign to make their annual visit to the nearest fanclub, we understand that all fen present immediately rise to their feet and stand at attention with proud hearts and bent heads until given permission to resume their seats. If two of these greats meet by chance in a strange city, they immediately locate the nearest mimeo and in about 45 minutes have issued a 65-page one-shot that becomes a collector's item at \$1.50 per. Then there are the times when they appear at the entrance to the Annual Con and are embarrassed by the way in which certain fervent fen throw themselves to the aisle floor so that they may be trod upon by the masters. Indeed such dogma is required learning by all neo-fen and thoroughly memorized by their third meeting. What is needed is more data on lesser known fen who are struggling toward the threshold of fame in fandom. Being a new fan writer, we feel kindly toward these neglected fen whose triumphs and failures go uncheered or unwept. Kind words that follow can be considered largely true while with other remarks any resemblance to the truth can be regarded as purely coincidental. Our fortunate victim is commonly known as Chick but his real name is Charles Braid. Just reaching his 16th birthday, Chick is chief organizer and livewire of the loosely formed group sometimes fondly referred to by him as the Springfield Fan Club. With another year to go at the local commercial high school, he is high up in his studies, president of his class, a leader in school club activities like Hi-Y, pitcher on the baseball team and a hard man to stop on the soccer team. So now that we have given him his just due, let's see if he will be a famous fan in the future.

PRO - 1. He is a diplomat. Though we know he has no use for AS we recently heard him say to a fan who sleeps with it under his pillow, "AS? Well it used to be awful - now it's only poor!" Immediately we realized that this big concession was because he was trying to enlist the fan into the local club. A rumor heard recently was that when visiting a fan who is strictly for fantasy, the host began to dish out some strawberry shortcake. The base canard has it that Chick, who is rabidly for S-F, began immediately to praise FFM.

Old timers may say that diplomacy is not needed to advance in fandom but such fen do not realize the change taking place in fandom. It is now much more competitive and organized. Some day Chich will have a zine and will be able to get fen to submit material. Or he will be a fan club officer and find it easy to get

others to do the work!

2. He is a sincere fan for his greatest ambitions are to publish a fanzine, to go to a World Con and to have a story accepted by a prozine. Proof of this sincerity is the following incident. We had located a second hand shop which handled old mags and cherished the secret of this out-of-the-way shop. A few evenings ago we visited the treasure trove and found the S-F shelf as bare as a nudist convention. Later a similar catastrophe took place at the leading bookstore's library discard department. A few skillful questions at each emporium revealed Chick as the interloper! Here is a young fellow, full of beans, who should be spending the short time left over from his big school program, with the guys and gals at the neighborhood juke box joint. Instead, he is beating up the byways to add to his mag and book collections.

3. He is positive in his likes and dislikes -- a mark of greatness observed in all BNF'S. Merwin is the Genius of the Age and SS and TWS should be printed in gold on the finest vellum. When reckless fen try to make a case for other mags or editors, he lets them rave on for 10 or 15 seconds and does not interrupt until their second sentence. But in his eyes one can see the pity he feels for morons who could relish such utter crud.

4. He can take it, for when Sam resigned we expected an utter collapse. Who knows how many hours he spent in frenzied grief? Perhaps he solaced himself by his favorite amusement of tearing off the covers of certain rival mags? When we first saw him after the dreadful news, he was bearing himself manfully and whispering over and over, "Anyway I can reread the Merwin mags. Say, I'd better get them bound -- they'll soon be worth their weight in uranium."

CON - Duty compels us to examine "the dark side."

1. He is too spread out. No, not like this writer when he sits on a hard chair. What we mean is he has too many fan activities. A typical evening of Braid at his fan work must be something like this: A. Dashes off letter to prozine in which he slyly inserts a sentence which infers that any fen who do not get to the next club meeting are missing the greatest opportunity of a lifetime. At the next get-together fen will arrive believing that this is where they register for a free ride on the first spaceflight; B. Does similar promotion over the phone on guy who has just read his first S-F mag. Name was obtained from newsstand dealer in his pay; C. Writes article for zine "Ambrosia" on the "Magnificent Merwin" - 2,000 words; D. Writes several letters offering to trade 1949 WT's for 1939 SS's. He'll pay the postage! E. Sorts and reasorts his mag collection; F. Sends 10¢ each to several zine editors for sample copies, regardless of their listed price. Then goes to bed wishing he had time to read some S-F mags some time, some day.

In his heart he knows he should adopt just one of the following courses in order to become a BNF: A. Edit "Nectar" the classzine that is whimsical, caustic, literary, zany, clever, serious, brilliant and nuts; B. Become a sought-after columnist whose constant theme is the good old days (any time over five years will do) when fandom was a he-man's world with no fen fans, leading zines had a top of 40 subs, and fen took their liquid nourishment straight without a dash or two of ice water; C. Become a noted collector, known as the only fan who owns both issues of "Horrible Horror Stories." D. Be elected a key official in a national fan club and spend every waking moment answering gripe letters from members complaining because they only receive \$2.00 worth of benefits for the \$1.00 dues they pay (often six months late) when they expect at least a \$100.00 value in benefits annually!

2. He is fast approaching the dangerous age of 17 to 20 when even the most fanatical fen often become aware of certain other pleasant pursuits. About this time they realize that the human race is divided into two main types. The other type then seems to be different only in attractive ways. Obviously the way to overcome this division is to form some sort of limited or even legal partnership with another type human. We have shrugged off this possibility as pretty remote as our subject has often publicly stated that his only interest in the other sex was to get them off the mag covers to be replaced by rocket ships, planets or exotic machinery. In the famous debate "Should spaceships have stewardesses?" he was the determined rebutter for the negative team. So we were ill prepared for the tragic news one of our agents just heliographed to us. C. B. has been seen several times recently with an other-type human. At first we prayed it was just recruiting work for the club. Possibly she was a serious, scientific type with a "cybernetic" brain. Alas, further reports revealed that she was widely admired for her pulchritude - also that a glint in his eye as he clutched her books under his arm seemed to hint that he would prefer to clutch their owner! A serious crisis indeed.

3. He is a talented ball player in a city well covered by big league scouts. What if they should lure him away with baskets of bonus paper colored green? Whoever heard of a pro athlete who was a S-F or fantasy fan? For that matter, whoever heard of a fan who was athletic? Those we know reach their limit of endeavor when forced to stand tiptoe to get a mag from a high shelf. Unless you count the mad dash for the door with a quick, "Bye - the last bus you know," as the waiter brings the check.

SUMMARY - Chick Braid seems to have all the necessary qualifications, plus the necessary determination, to be a future famous fan. Yet he is faced with the hazards of adolescence (including the new compulsory military service). Fan cynics of the past would have insisted that his very normality was against his staying in fandom. That this was ever true we doubt, anyway in 1951 we believe that the screwball fen are quite scanty in number. Yes, we believe C. B. will be a famous fan although he might be better off to join SAPS and sink into blissful oblivion! The old gent with the scythe will be the only true judge.

(Any similarity between Chick Braid and any known fan, living or dead, is of course purely accidental, as this is only just good Sapstalk. A.E.)

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SAPS COMMENT

We seemed to be divided into two schools of thought. One group believes in making comments on the material in each mailing - the other does not. BOFFIN goes along with the first bunch. It seems to us that one of the purposes of joining SAPS besides the fun, and the opportunity to read each others' stuff, is to learn how to improve one's style of writing to make it more effective, more interesting, more like a pro's to some extent. We don't feel we are qualified to do such comment, especially as this is our first issue, and the idea is still too new to us. But we do believe that the more veteran SAPS members should, if they are willing, make it a point to constantly comment on as many sapszines as they can handle. It should be a benefit to the rest and should be appreciated by all.

If members are against comment because it is too much work, or think it a waste of time and space, or because they do not like criticism, then we think they are dead wrong. If they do not believe

they can offer any good suggestions, well that's different but even then they can mention the stuff they liked. While the looks of a zine are important, we all know that everyone doesn't have the same opportunities for publishing and even if we did, some would still be pretty new at it. The same goes for writing skill. However, we'll take the interesting or well written zine every time over the one whose chief virtue is fine covers and good format throughout. This we know is heresy to many zine editors who go all out for eye-catching colors, illios, etc. They are quite right too on subzines. SAPS, however, is more of a place for the personal comment zine in our opinion.

The activity requirements seem just right to us. Dues, though, should be a dollar to join and then at least a dollar a year. If the treasury still goes flat sometime, then raise the dues or have the OE slap on a modest special assessment for the emergency.

The zines we enjoyed reading the most in the last two mailings were, in order of preference: Sapsides, Gem Tones, Orgasm, Huckle, Sopian, ZZZZ, Revoltin Development, Alpha and Omega, and Wastebasket. Perhaps we are easy to please but we really enjoyed reading all the sapszines probably because we realize the effort, time and money spent to produce any issue. Pieces we liked best were the "Official Report" by Poul Anderson, the "Letter to a Flying Saucer" by Redd Boggs, and the Norwescon article by Martin Alger. There were oodles of other good stuff and the Glory Mailing certainly made SAPS look terrific.

Despite our high rating of Sapsides, we found the article about certain unusual tortures as just too, too revolting. Seems as if we remember our hard working OE giving someone a warning about postal regulations. So then what happens - he has a picture that went the farthest of any we've seen without any compensating humor. Of course we've only read zines for three years now so perhaps we are still a gentle soul who will toughen up in time.

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NOVICE

If there is no requirement officially then there certainly is no necessity for baby SAPS to identify themselves in any way except by name or address. Someone suggested recently that such information is helpful in sizing up a new member and his zine. We never believed that familiarity breeds contempt or even content! Rather, it should produce closer friendship for we suppose SAPS are friends of each other under the skin.

This infant SAPS is male, 39 years old, white, weighs 210 lbs., 6 feet in height, ordinary looking or worse. Schooling was high school and banking school. Job is in the office of a large savings bank, been in same bank since 1930. What a rut! Married to same beautiful and pleasant girl for 12 years. Politics are independent Democrat, religious belief is Roman Catholic, by descent am 1/2 German, 1/4 English, 1/8 Irish, 1/8 Dutch - just a mongrel. Hobbies are sports, fandom, music, literature, gardening. Member NFFF, USCO and the local fan group. Fanzine experience limited to writing just a few articles for Peon, Aleph-Null, Timewarp, TNFF, Utopian and Spaceship. A pretty sordid and meagre record, but hope to do better. Hello, SAPS.

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THE NEW ENGLAND FANSAUCERS:

Until last August 4 we had no definite opinion on the truth of various reports about people seeing flying saucers. We figured that most of them were sincere, not liars, but the objects seen could still have been balloons or meteors or something. Baffled and on the fence - that was our position. Then our ever loving wife and her uncle saw one at close quarters about 7:15 P.M., on a clear sunlit day, a day that was not windy or even breezy. The darn' thing hovered over the lake where they were outboard motor chugging along to a favorite fishing spot. Their description tallied with the usual reports you read in papers. It took off very swiftly and climbed at a steep angle into the sun. The local papers reported that two days later four persons saw two saucers over a town midway between our city and the lake. Recently a fellow about 37 or 38 dropped into our local fan group meeting. He has a supervisory position in a large local insurance company and had missed the first two meetings since he contacted us, because he was committed to vestryman's meetings on our meeting night. What we are trying to say is that he is what could fairly be called a serious minded person. He stated flatly that five girls in his department saw a saucer streak by while they were looking out the windows during a rest period last Summer. They screamed in unison and when questioned gave him a good description. We were able to fix the time as about the same as the other two sightings. Mentioning these facts to an acquaintance who was in the Air Force in W. W. II evoked no surprise, only interest. He told us that his brother, (whom we met in 1946) a Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force, is convinced there are saucers and believes they are not of Earthly origin. Said brother has made quite a study of the subject.

After the Navy announced saucers were cosmic balloons, we read a newspaper piece in which two pilots and a civilian saw a saucer circling a cosmic balloon! This seemed to us to be the Air Force answer to the Navy! Yes, we now believe in saucers and even feel amused at those that don't. Sometimes we feel sorry for them and sometimes we think they're pretty thick! Whether the saucers are from space or are instead a U. S. secret invention is something else again. We dunno.

SKEPTIC:

In a recent "Spaceship" Bob Silverberg described himself as a "skeptic" regarding various things, among which he included flying saucers. We wrote and told him about the August 4 sighting here and he replied saying he was still a "skeptic." Looking up the word we find it has various meanings. Eliminating the ones not applicable, leaves us with "doubts a well established scientific or philisophical belief." Nope, saucers are not that well established. Well, how about "doubts the truth of a statement." Ah, there it is. Well, let's see, does he think such reports are pure fabrication? Probably not, so then he believes they are something else that fooled them - jet planes or something. So neither of us have seen saucers. We believe in them because people we know well have observed saucers. He doesn't because no one he knows well has seen them. O. K., we are both honest in our opinions. But in the interest of a little friendly controversy, we'd like to ask two questions. How much proof is needed by reliable witnesses before a skeptic changes his mind? Heck, I've never seen a VII rocket but agree they exist. Also, why is it necessary to be skeptical about things not proven? Can't we be open minded and neither believe nor disbelieve until more is known? We just can't see why so many people have to take a definite position on about everything and apparently do not feel comfortable until they do!

LOCAL:

From our city paper we gathered three items of interest the same day. A local scientist named McEwen, has just announced that he and his associate at Harvard have decided that space contains quite a bit of hydrogen. (That could perhaps make the H-Bomb even more successful!) If memory serves us, this is the same fellow, who at age 16, in the early 1940's, made an important discovery in the field of electronics, was given scholarship help to aid his activities and education, later was reported to have done very important secret scientific work for the government during the war and has, we believe, still some connection with the Navy. He is living science while we read about it! . . . The book reviewer in discussing Willy Ley's latest book, points out that many of his predictions in his 1944 "Rockets" have now come true. . . . The movie critic mentions one new to us, "Passage to Pimlico," a British picture in which a community, through an atomic freak, is taken back into an interesting historical occurrence of the past. Sounds good - but what piece of history, please?

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FAN EDITORS

We have a lot of respect for these fen, having at least a faint idea of the difficulties they face in trying to turn out a good zine. Not forgetting, too, that they usually are way in the hole financially on their zines. The way some treat the writers for their zines is, however, a scandal to the jaybirds. At least more than a few editors act this way. First they write frantically to a fan urging him to immediately write and send in an article. They may even suggest the type desired. If the writer is foolish enough to answer explaining he is ignorant of the suggested subject or too busy, then usually an air mail is received right back saying, "Write on anything - but write, the deadline is getting near." Little does the new fan writer realize that the deadline is about six months away. If he inquires as to the deadline date no answer is received for two or three months. Then comes another air mail. "Where is that article? Didn't I tell you the deadline is near? Come on, shake out the lead." Though the editors never believe it, the writer spends a lot of time and energy to get down something that meets his standards, whatever they are, and the article is sent out. If the piece is ever published and he receives a free copy of the zine, he is pretty fortunate. More likely the zine folds and the editor sends it to another zine which also folds. Or he files it in the w. b. Usually he keeps it for the new zine which he'll start some day and of course that day never arrives. Probably there are hundreds of unpublished fan writings still in the attics of former zine editors! Seldom does the writer receive an acknowledgment of the receipt of his contribution. He secretly hopes that if the piece is unacceptable it will be returned with a plausible reason like no space, etc. About three years later the fan writer feels he is turning out pretty good material. At this time he receives a copy of a new, mangy looking zine and there is the piece he wrote when an infant writer. The new editor explains in the zine that Joe Jokes sent it to him, it isn't much good, but deserves publication as it is by a BNF writer - though he must have had an off day when he wrote it! We suggest that the way to avoid such torture is for fen who want to write, to join SAPS and put out their own stuff. That way all they have to worry about is their fellow SAPS!

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