

There is a persistent feeling hereabouts which leads me to believe Fapa Booze has outlived its usefulness as a title. And as an inspired idea, it certainly failed to match its prehistoric predecessor, Le Zombie. Mr. Myers has succeeded where Mr. Lowndes failed. Accordingly, without fanfare or flowers, we return to an earlier title:

CHAPTER PLAY

on the extra-wide stereophonic screen
with cinemascope sound and dirty old
union operators

Episode 4

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CHAPTER 19 (which might well be subtitled "The Balcony Crowd.")

The New York convention, which some of us vulgar heretics like to call "Kyle's Kaper," was remarkable for one thing: it brought out of the woodwork more old-time fans (or ex-fans) than you could shake a chairman's gavel at. People who had not been seen even on the fringes of fandom for one or two decades popped up there to look, to listen, and to go away bewildered. For the most part, they were confounded, puzzled and lost; they may have kept a finger in the science fiction pie for the last many years by occasional peeps at the pro mags, but they seemed to have lost even rudimentary contact with fandom ---- the fandom we know and love and sometimes go in debt for.

Don Wollheim is an example, but not an extreme example; presumably he knows what has been going on recently, and it may be imagined that fans rub elbows with him from time to time. But the Wollheim on the convention floor, in 1956, was a far cry from the man who often dominated the floors (and the conventions) in other years. I spotted him sitting forlornly with his wife and children, listening to some speaker shooting off his mouth --- and I felt a deep curiosity to know what he was thinking. Wollheim, silent and only half-interested; Wollheim, speaking to those few people who knew him and looking aghast at the scores of juvenile delinquents underfoot, surely shuddered and asked himself, "What have I wrought?"

Another, and extreme example, is Trudy Kuslan. I have no idea what her married name might be, but in the years just before WW2 she and her brother Louis were mainstays of Fapa. Trudy snagged me as I descended from the rostrum (after going through those horrible introduction ceremonies), which was almost the only way a stranger could find an old friend in that unruly mob. I don't believe I've seen the woman in sixteen years, and yet she had retained her youth so well that she was instantly recognizable; it was impossible to believe that a career, a marriage and a flock of kids had happened to her since the 1940 Chicago con. We looked all afternoon for the appearance of Jack Speer, and she was quite disappointed when he failed to show. It was agreed, finally, that another fonepole had prevented his appearance.

It happened this way, Juffus: shortly before leaving home, word came from DAG that you were roaming the midlands. I felt reasonably sure that you weren't investigating Degler's home life a second time,

and so leaped to the conclusion that you were en route to New York. (It never occurred to me that you would go only as far as the Democratic con in Chicago, and then return home.) And so we waited for you. Fie on you, sir, you broke Trudy's heart. Why, for all I know, you might have conned her into rejoining Papa.

A third old-time Fap who turned up in New York was the chap we knew as Rusty Barron; I think he was active during the early days of the war, only to drop out while Servicing. It was fun to introduce Rusty by his fannish name, and let the other party grope for the pun. He is now working in New England, spoke wishfully of transferring to Illinois, and also spoke wishfully of cranking out another fanzine. In fact, he extraced from me an iron-clad promise to do a con article for him -- the angry, biting article that I was already threatening to write and Kyle's Kaper had not yet ended.

A fourth was Walt Liebscher, who has been on the fringes for some time. Walt was another hotshot of the gay, early 1940 fans; it is to be remarked that his fanzine is still a collector's item. Walt appeared spasmodically at the Los Angeles clubrooms, and again at the San Francisco affair two years ago. At one time or another, there were enough ex-Faps present in the same room at the same time to make up an ex-quorum. We could have looted the exchequer.

A fifth old fan was a fellow I remember only vaguely; I think his name is Christoff. He was super-active for a while, dropped away, moved to the Gulf Coast of Florida and finally vanished. I was quite startled to see him prancing around the hall in costume. (And speaking of costumes, mention should be made of the Village Invasion --- arty types from pseudo-Bohemia flocked to the masquerade to display their bellies and cop stares from the crowd. They won prizes, too, but I imagine they regard INFINITY as something to light fires with.)

The place was crawling with prehistoric ancients.

And I suppose that label, "The Balcony Crowd" is justifiable. I spent most of my time there; first, in order to see better, and then, as time and tempers wore on, the better to heckle and pressure the hapless committee below me. As things turned out, I was being unfair. The committee couldn't help themselves, for the most part. There was a large amount of disunity and discontinuity on the rostrum which could have been avoided with a dash of common sense and organization. The sense and appearance of aimlessness was more pronounced than at other conventions -- and all of them have a certain amount of it. But I learned later the committee was frustrated; they were just a headless monster. Sic transit gloria Korshak.

I cite, as an example, the introductions of the attendees. It would be unfair to say that the entire convention was organized and operated in a similar manner, but many of us certainly suspect that to be the case. The day before the opening, Kyle approached me with the idea of introducing notables in some new, painless way. He said that if I would whip up a rough script, Boucher, Moskowitz and Hamling would assist me in the presentation; and he outlined the idea of separating names according to geological ages; that is, beginning with the Dawn Fan and working down to 69th Fandom. The idea was appealing and I agreed, providing he would furnish us with the registration list, or a culling of that list. He agreed. I wrote the script. Briefly, it divided fandom and prodrom into four rough groups: pre-1930, 1930 to 1940, 1940 to 1950, and 1950 to 1956. We sat back to await delivery

of the names, believing we could sift through them at the last minute and fit everyone into their proper slot. Naive fools, we.

Came the great moment. No registration list, no culling, nothing. Somebody dashed out to the registration desk and came back with a list of a dozen or so well-known names. And that was that. Hamling quit in disgust and went back to his seat. Boucher, Moskowitz and myself frenziedly began jotting down the names of those we could see in the audience. I went into my script, which was shot all to hell in just about six seconds flat -- names were announced in the wrong eras, names were hastily added, names were mispronounced, names were garbled and occupations twisted, and names were ignored. By the end of that session we were miserably repeating the "Weak-eyes Korshak" debacle of four years ago. Hamling had been the smart one.

And that cured me. I have made my last appearance on a convention program. I blame both Kyle and myself for the fiasco. Someone like Bloch could have saved the day with wittiness; someone like Norreen Falasco could have saved it with stage-presence and dignity. I was out on both counts, and my helpless companions floundered.

Introductions should be jettisoned.

But as a member of the Balcony Crowd, I enjoyed myself. Hoorays for popular causes, and boos for unpopular dittos, sound louder and more forceful when hurled from a balcony. Propaganda leaflets can be sprinkled with maximum coverage from a balcony. It is also nice for sailing airplanes. Political demonstrations are deafening when performed directly overhead; at times the hapless wretches below us must have thought we were going to literally leap down their throats. And there is always the danger of something ... a glass of ginger ale, the milk from the baby's bottle trickling over and down into an unsuspecting lap. I don't envy the people who sat below us.

Too, it is nice to know the outcome of a balloting before the results are announced to the multitude. The London - Berkeley ballot counters did their queer work almost directly below us. Dietz, as the teller, simply handed London votes to Carnell and Berkeley votes to Boucher. Squatting above it all, we counted the pieces of paper.

I am also in favor of abandoning the traditional banquet, and not because I (among many others) received ugly treatment at this one. I stopped going to banquets when I could stomach no more banquet food. At New Orleans, the chicken was abominable; at Chicago, the food indifferent and the service worse; at the last two Midwescon affairs, the stuff gagged me; at Cleveland it was cold and tasteless. I walked out in New York, turning down the opportunity to buy a ticket at reduced prices. A few hours later the gripes of hapless diners told me I had done the wise thing.

What happened during and after the banquet will always stick in my gizzard as a bit of sheer nonsense on somebody's part. A couple of hundred of us must have trotted up and down those balcony stairs half a dozen times, waiting to be admitted. First we would be told that it was okay to wait on the stairs, and then we would be kicked off them. We were in the foyer just outside the balcony, and kicked out of that. Finally, we repaired to the display room a reasonable distance from the banquet hall, and by ghod if some of the committee, acting as guards or sentinels, didn't try to kick us out of that! The only place left to go, if we had vacated the room, would be down to the lobby --- or we could have hid in the men's room. That was when I decided to pack my battered suitcase and head for home. I'd had it.

Happily, two things changed my mind. Rusty Barron talked me out of the radical idea, and Liebscher began telling jokes (again.)

Fortunately, I stayed on, for later that evening something happened which proved to be of paramount importance to my peace of mind. The entire distaste of the con was washed away by four wonderful hours of bliss and contentment, simply listening to a man talk. The man was not on the program, not a dignitary, and the con committee probably never knew he was alive. Fapa knows him of course, and now I know him. The Youngs; Andy, Jean, and Very, were ensconced on the balcony listening to some after-dinner speaker aerate his tonsils, when the tad decided to take matters into her own hands. Possibly she was criticizing the speaker; definitely she owns a healthy voice. Jean had previously gone in search of a babysitter (another one of those things promised but not delivered by the committee), and now she reported back emptyhanded. Young father Young asked Old father Tucker for suggestions. The old man promptly suggested a nice, quiet empty room. To whence we repaired.

And so for the next four hours I listened to Andy Young, astronomer royal to the Fapa, expound. He expounds magnificently. Now and then Jean would insert a word or sentence, but the play belonged to Andy and he kept it. He speaks fluently, learnedly, and with a madly gyrating finger to emphasize his points. Among the many, many things I learned that enjoyable evening were:

- a) how, in a piece of fiction, a hero could detect life on Mars, aided and abetted by his trusty laboratory. Scientifically.
- b) how, in a piece of fiction I have in mind, an apparent survivor from an apparently-wrecked spaceship could be placed on board a passing ship without arousing the hero's suspicions.
- c) how stinking stupid was the astronomical basis of "When World's Collide." I learned that a man doesn't plot the path of an oncoming meteor (or another planet on collision course) within a matter of weeks, and then rush out to cry havoc.
- d) the advantages and disadvantages of refractor-vs-reflector telescopes. I had supposed that I wanted a refractor to peep at my neighbors and the bowl of night, but he tactfully told me I'd been conned by the high-pressure catalogs.
- e) how like fandom is the queer personnel of an observatory.

Oh, that was a fascinating evening let me tell you. I can still see Andy's darting, determined finger writing pi in the sky.

The choice of hotels was a monstrous mistake, and that can be blamed on Kyle and his desire for "bigness" and a prestige address. The air-conditioned rooms for the amazingly low prices, as promised in the progress booklets, was a joke. Bill and Frances Hamling finally got one, after raising hell, and were charged \$19 a day for it. The genius who blocked off the front elevators should be run out of fandom -- it happened that the registration desk was at the back of the hotel and so fans were permitted to use only the rear elevators. In this manner, no one could sneak into the hall without first passing the committee's desk -- over and over again. You could have registered on opening day without avail; it was still necessary to trot around to the rear, ride up and pass the scanning committee a thousand times as you went to and from the hall. On the final evening, when everything was over and done, the front elevator men still would not accept fans for the 19th floor. Nobody had remembered to cancel the ban.

In keeping with its swanky address and prestige-loaded name, the prices in the hotel bar and dining room were outrageous. I'm proud to say I never bought a drink or ate a meal there. I let Ted Carnell buy me one, but when I discovered it cost him a dollar, I balked. Infinitely more enjoyable was a nearby basement-restaurant where eleven or twelve of us had drinks and dinner, dawdled for two hours, and the total cost was less than three bucks a head. (PS: to the rest of you who ate there with me that night: the manager took me aside afterward and asked curious questions. He thought we were a group of European immigrants just off the boat. It seems that two or three big ships docked that day, and he had received some of the traffic. And after all, you will admit, we were a most informal and ignorant-looking mob.

In closing: to Kyle and his witless Kaper, a hearty bah! To the good companions who made merry on the balcony, my joyous blessings, and I hope to join you on countless future balconies. To the Youngs, who enriched my life, my undying love for each member of the family.

CHAPTER 20 (which might be subtitled Miscellany, Juffus.)

Did you know that in 1898 the Chinese Dowager Empress assumed the regency? What's she doing these days, do you suppose?

No, I didn't mean "what comes before the paleozoic." I'm under the impression that the mesozoic preceded the paleozoic. I want to know what follows the paleozoic but precedes the proterozoic. There's supposed to be an empty-type gap between the end of the Cambrian and the beginning of the Keweenaw. I wish I could remember what Jean Young said about this baffling enigma.

I got me a book on radio-carbon dating; having a great time tracking down the dates of bird droppings and human drippings. Such are the important interests of we scientists. Some future issue, mayhap, it will furnish information for another clutch of Culture.

Two conventions have been held in New York. Both conventions had Exclusion Acts. Therefore, all New York conventions have Exclusion Acts.

Jack Harness's statement, "My I.Q. has gone up fifty points while I've been here a year" might have some meaning if he would tell us what his I.Q. was on the day he entered. The increase has not contributed to his ability to communicate his thoughts. I find his meg the most difficult to read and understand, in the mailing.

Thank you, Redd, for "The Snows of '46."

Forgot to mention on page 2 that Rusty Barron is James Hevelin, now on the WL. Also forgot to mention additional greybeards seen at the kaper: Allen Glasser (editor of the world's second fanzine, The Comet, in 1930); Paul (who introduced pantaloons to the world); Ray Cummings (who introduced everything else); Julie Unger (who will go down in history as the fan who gave Claude Degler a job in his grocery --- and thus for a while Degler had enough to eat); Dick Wilson (who published the first Science Fiction Newsletter, from which so many similar titles sprang); and Mort Weisinger (who had a giant hand in the giant fanzine of 1932-33, Science Fiction Digest. Old home week.

Liberace's picture was a chopped-up remake of "The Man Who Played God." The first version of that story came in 1922, but I know nothing about it. The George Arlis version, in 1932, was reasonably good. Liberace's version was a resounding failure, and contributed to a top-level shake-up at his studio. They have a new management now.

I suspect this will be continued on the following page.

Welcome, welcome, Norman G. Wansborough! Your sparkling magazines will give some of our sloppier publishers a target for aiming. And I prefer The Happy Traveller to hundreds of old football tickets. Choosing the Cadillac simile for "Notes on Culture" was fuzzy thinking. I know better, and agree with the Toronto-Pgh buffs. I should have used the simile in the original article: a Guernsey cow.

I read somewhere (but failed to save the printed source) that an "immaculate conception" isn't necessarily a miracle. It seems to be happening to thunderstruck women, infrequently, thru-out medical history. Virgins visit the doctor with queer symptoms and discover they are making history. Nobody believes the virgins, of course, and they are tabbed with the scarlet letter. This is on par with the much more infrequent reports of men who have conceived children. The last one I read originated in Poland a few weeks before Hitler gave that country the works in 1939. I never learned what happened to him and his. Do you suppose that someday medical science will prove this an entirely possible and relatively common thing? Sic transit gloria, Gertrude's beloved marriage mores and paramount reason for intercourse.

Gertrude: please ignore the clamor by other members to drop the religious discussions. I love them, and the bloody rebuttals. Seldom do I agree with a word you or your distractors say, and most decidedly I disagree with your chosen religion, but I think the heady debates are fascinating. Query: I would like to know the number of people who left the RC church last year, as contrasted to the 135,000 who joined. What percentage of the US population do the RC's claim, and what percentages do the other faiths claim?

Drat my habit of making ppp when I mean only pp!

CHAPTER -21 (Which might be subtitled, Oh my ghod, Georgina!)

Oh my ghod, Georgina!

What a dreamer you are; what a glorious-technicolor-colossal dreamer you are! Quote: " (The writer should plan a schedule.) Leap out of bed at 6, bound out the door and fill his lungs with smog or whatever is available, and then stroll for a mile or two with the wind blowing thru his brain and the starlings twittering in his ear. Then back to his shack for a bath as he sings cheerful songs --- selections from Gilbert & Sullivan maybe, if he's musical, or just St. James Infirmary endlessly if he's as unmusical as I. Then a cold splash to shut off the music. Then a hearty breakfast. Then he should shut off the energy and make like a statue for a period of meditation, in which time he would rough out or detail what he is going to write in his first session. Then with a glad cry he should fly to his mechanical bride and start producing brain-children." Unquote.

Oh my ghod, Georgina.

I feel it my bounden duty to disillusion you; to show you how one writer operates -- although I doubt I am typical of anything.

On an ordinary day I awaken at ten or eleven a.m. and bellyache for my breakfast. Sometimes I get it. On an un-ordinary (or bitchy) day I am awakened early in the morning --- say eight or nine a.m., by my two-year-old youngster entering the bedroom and hurling the cat on the bed. I hurl the cat back, lick my wounds, and bound out of bed with a hearty snarl. So begins another productive, creative day.

Shuffling dispiritedly into the kitchen, I scratch my chest. (No bath this month.) Pushing aside last night's dishes, I eat breakfast; read the morning paper and dispute every scrap of news printed there;

P. Howie Lyons and his get-rich-quick schemes are fraudulent.
I sent him a dollar. He did not send me a certificate saying
I'd been conned, nor did he go to Florida. Fraud! Fraud!

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peer dimly thru the window at the (sun, rain, fog, snow); and perhaps catch an unhealthy breath of fresh air if someone happens to have the door open. Finishing breakfast by stubbing out a cigaret butt in a half-filled cup of cold coffee, I pick my teeth with a long fingernail grown for that purpose. If I'm in a daring or radical mood, I will then wash my face and comb my hair. On Sundays and Wednesdays it's customary to shave and wash the teeth.

Humming a line from "The Eagle Flies High in Mobile" (which carries connotations of paychecks arriving on time), I saunter into the living room and fall onto the couch for a siesta. Awakening, I read the mail if someone has remembered to bring it in. Fanzines are always good for a few hours' study, and a mailing can fill the entire day. An obnoxious salesman usually puts in his appearance about this time. I spend a pleasant thirty minutes baiting and badgering him, and when this playful mood is gone, kick him out the door. Next, some fool thing has to be done around the house, such as fishing the cat out of the toilet or replacing shingles blown off in a recent storm. Turning on the radio to soothe my shattered nerves, I listen rapturously to Elvis as he croons to his hound.

That hound is the most.

Feeling greatly refreshed and magnificently inspired, I fly to my mechanical bride and fling myself down with a glad cry, preparing to symbolically ravish her. Just as promptly I fling myself up again, because the youngster has thoughtlessly left a peeled banana lying on the chair, and I am in my shorts. Eventually, work begins.

The task for today is a re-write job.

A paperback editor has returned a certain manuscript with a note saying that he likes it, and that the tale has definite possibilities; but it needs more Sex and Gore. Will I please inject more Sex and Gore, and submit the script a second time? I will, of course, being a coldly commercial sort of fish. In this critical and calculating mood, I scan the manuscript:

" Kinnison, looking blackly down at that crater, did not feel the glow of satisfaction which comes of a good deed well done. He detested it --- it made him sick at the stomach. But, since he had had it to do, he had done it. Why in all the nine hells of Valeria did he have to be a Lensmen, anyway?

Back to Lonia, then, the Lensmen made his resentful way, and back to bed.

And in the morning, early, workmen began the reconstruction of Cartiff's place of business. "

(Well --- yes. That was rather dull and sexless. Much too dry for today's red-blooded readers. What can be done with it?)

" Kinnison, glaring gleefully down into the crimson crater, felt a glow of deep inner satisfaction. A good deed well done! The bodies of his recent enemies decorated the sides and bottom of the gory pit, forming a pool of rainbow-blood. Green, golden and purple blood had flowed recklessly as he blasted again and again, shooting down the treacherous dogs like the treacherous dogs they were!

Splat! and another Valerian bit the volcanic ash. "Take that, you bloodsucker!" he cried with childish glee. "And that!" Splat! With each glorious killing, the notches on his blaster handle multiplied. He could soon join the '500 Club' and the boys would initiate him with a bucket of wine and a nubile maiden.

Kinnison whirled, hearing a whisper of sound from behind him. None too soon, for as he turned, a maddened Valerian leaped for his throat with terrifying screams of vengeance. Kinnison squeezed the trigger -- but the tiny Bergonholms had failed! The blaster failed!

Whipping out the jewelled dagger at his belt, he plunged it deep into the twin hearts of the alien creature, and contemptuously flung the body into the crater after the others. It was but the work of a moment to wipe the blood from his blade. A keen job, keenly done.

When the last, moaning native had been dispatched, Kinnison returned to his ship and blasted away for home. Lonia would be awaiting him -- Lonia, lolling on the silken sheets with her sheer legs kicking invitingly. Lonia, who disdained sleeping garments of any variety, and was always waiting for him on the bed. She would have a tall, cold bottle of his favorite beer opened and ready, and would tease him excruciatingly while he drank it. The aroused wench was always impatient to begin.

Kinnison sighed and increased the speed. His throat was dry.

And in the morning, early, workmen would begin the reconstruction of the pleasure palaces the pair of them would wreck in riotous revelery. "

And so, Georgina, another day's dreary routine is done.

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This is as good a place as any to mention that I've changed publishers. Dean Grennell, who is such a good man that scoundrels like myself take advantage of him, begged off from printing this issue because of a tremendous press of outside matters. Graciously permitting him his rest, I joined the line behind McCain and secured the services of Mr. Ted E. White of North Tuckahoe street. Bidding goodbye to the gestetner, this sterling fanzine now comes to you by courtesy of the QWERTYUIOPress. However, while examining the keyboard of my typewriter, I discovered that Mr. White dropped a character from the name for his press. Actually, then, this sterling fanzine comes to you by courtesy of the QWERTYUIOP¹ press. Royalties, please, Mr. White ??

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Page-top interlineations, surplus, crowded out, etc:

The charging of his enemy was but the work of a moment. -Don Quixote
 We hate you, Tucker -- hate you, HATE YOU! Yaaaaaah.
 I have a cosmic mind and I know what to do now.
 He's a rather scrawny-looking mummy.
 "For Earth!" he screamed, "For Earth!"
 The fairy turned and slowly rode a moonbeam to the top
 Why doesn't someone drink it and find out?
 "Yes, yes, I know what to do! Let's get at it!"
 All fandom will be plunged into war!

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An error reared its ugly head on page 5. Allen Glasser published The Planet, not The Comet, in 1930.