

MLG 23

MILTY'S MAG

CPL. Milton A. Rothman, Co. ~~D.~~^C, Hq. Bn., OTC, Camp Santa Anita, Arcadia, Cal.

For the March, 1943, mailing of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association.....

Gosh, Wow, Boy-oh-Boy.

It was like this: He'd been in the army three months. He'd worked pretty hard in his training, but he sort of enjoyed it, since he was used to keeping busy, anyway. Then they sent him to California to be an instructor in a new training center. There weren't any students for a couple of months, so there wasn't much to do. There were a couple of work details, one day of KP, two nights of guard duty, which he spent counting the numerous meteors -- but no real work. Oh, there was a week of practice teaching, but that didn't take much effort. He'd started out with the best intentions of preparing lessons for the future, but there were circumstances which pulled the impetus out of that. So it was a pretty soft time.

Evenings and weekends were the kind of thing the average soldier dreams about in optimistic moments. Los Angeles was nearby, and every free evening, which meant nearly every evening, was spent there. In a month he had been to three ballets, two concerts, a play, a dance, innumerable movies, and had given a piano recital. You see, although his opportunities were the inapproachable aim of most soldiers, he took advantage of them in his own moderate manner. None of this fleshpot business for him.

Well, that sounds perfect, doesn't it? What a pleasant sort of life to lead.

Strange, then, that he should gradually become dissatisfied and unhappy. What foolishness to be dissatisfied in the midst of a life of pleasure.

The reason was this: In the midst of a world where engineers were making new things, scientists were making new discoveries, men were learning, learning, everything was moving fast ahead --- he was standing still. While men were working furiously all over the world, and even in the California Desert a hundred miles from him, tank corps trainees were sleeping in holes and living on field rations, he was sitting indolently at concerts, bathing his empty mind in a flood of sensory impressions.

Gradually this restlessness came over him. What could he do with himself? How could he get out of his rut? How could he regain the intellectual drive which he had formerly possessed?

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This is all about me, of course you know. I'm a hell of a guy, ain't I? When things are going bad, I'm unhappy. When things are going well, I'm still unhappy. I don't know when I'm well off. But maybe you can see my reasons, if I've explained them clearly enough.

Well, like in the stories, a happy ending happened today. The December FAPA mailing came.

"Migod!" I shrieked silently, staggering under its weight. (Soft life has been taking its effect.) "Did I say fandom was collapsing?" I couldn't even be sad that Milty's Mag was not there, for I knew that it was being sent out in a supplemental mailing.

It was really heartening to see that fans were still publishing. I'd begun to think that they had stopped. But here they were, back in force, with the most amazing array of wonderful, beautiful, controversial material.

True, several announced this as their final plunge, their parting struggle, but some of them may find, as Corporal Bridges and I have found out, that publishing need stop only when you get to the very front lines themselves. Maybe not even then. Who knows?

In other words, fellas, the FAPA has given me a shot in the arm. In an otherwise aimless existence it has given me something to think about and write about for many evenings to come -- at least until my classes start. The fondness which I've had for the FAPA since Blitzkrieg days is strengthened. People, this is something to keep going. Personally, I'm not going to miss another mailing even if I have to pencil each copy while lying in a fox-hole.

12/21/42.

Hilarious sight Department: Myself reading the mailing.

A short-arm inspection was announced for 1 pm and did not take place until three. So all afternoon I sat around in nothing but my overcoat and slippers, absorbed in the mailing. I spent all afternoon reading, and started to write immediately upon finishing. This is going to be mimeographed as soon as possible, so that I will have consecutive parts of this mag complete as I go along, in case I can't finish, for any reason. Watch the dates on these pages.

Further Hilarious Sights Department: In fact, practically unbelievable. Even impossible:

Pvt. Milty playing hymns on the piano in a Skid Row mission. It's like this: Saturday midnight I'm walking up Main Street, which is LA's rough and ready neighborhood, just looking at the sights. I pass what used to be a mission -- one of those places where down-and-outers used to come in for a supper and a sermon. Only now most of the bums are working in aircraft factories, so they've turned the place into a hospitality house for service men. I look through the window and -- naturally -- the first thing that hits me square in the eye is a big concert grand piano standing on a stage in the rear. Hmmm -- I says. I been getting frequent practice at one of the USO clubs, but here we have a grand piano.

So, first thing Sunday morning I wanders into the place, and the preacher is playing hymns on an Everett Orgatron. Hmmm, I once more says. After coffee and doughnuts I ask one of the ladies if it's OK to use the big piano, and she says go right ahead, so I wander over to it and am muchly pleased to find that it is a Baldwin in fine condition. So I start digging into the Moonlight Sonata, and pound delightedly through all three movements, watched over by a large poster which says: When did you write to Mother? By the time I get to the end, the fine-upstanding-young-man who leads the Sunday morning services is asking me to play for the hymn singing. I was trapped.

So I dood it. May Ghu grant absolutinn for my purple-dyed soul.

Could I let them know I was a vampire?

And then, a few weeks later, I was playing at the USO, minding my own business, when they asked me to play the wedding march for a ceremony to be performed right there by a round, roly, plump little Salvation Army chaplain.

Everything happens to me.

The fine-upstanding-young-man at the mission mentioned above tried to get me to accept Jesus Christ as my savior. I said it was such a new concept to me that I couldn't give him an answer right then. For some reason or other the LASFS became quite hilarious over the story.

FLUFF.....

12/22/42

Whereupon we once more take up the system of leafing thru the mailing and talking about whatever meets our fancy. Gad -- what a pile! Give me strength.

The Fantasy Amateur: I don't have to worry about the fate of the FAPA while there is an editor like Al Ashley.

I count 20% of our membership in some sort of active service. Can't give a definite opinion about servicemen's activity. Some can and some can't. Depends on where they land. If you want to remove our activity requirements, I won't mind. Makes no difference to me, as you see. Probably a good thing for others.

THE Phantagraph: First reaction is an almost impolite question: Haven't you fellows talked enough about fighting fascism?

Pogorus: So I shall grow up to read Westerns and Whodunits! Ghu preserve me. And preserve me from the deadly horror of Kiwanis and Rotaries. No thanks -- if I've gone through four months of the army without a single poker or dice game, I think I'm safe from them. Sorry, folks, them's not my ideas about growing up.

Sardonxy -- Happy that Russ is still with us, even tho no longer interested in sf. ...

In later years we are going to look back at these wartime mailings and wonder at the strange opinions that we voiced therein. While we are in war our minds are forced to the point of view that all this is done because it is necessary in order that we may survive. Later on we may find that there was another way out, and in a pacifistic revulsion condemn our present opinions. But now, in this present, all the information at our disposal, all the variables in the equation lead to the fact that this war is the only way we now know to do what we have to do. I want to put this down in writing and inform the future me who reads this that if everything turns out to be wrong it is because we didn't have enough information. Right now it looks to me that I'm doing the right thing, and nothing the future can bring will change that.

All this is occasioned by Russ' quotation: "And he is dead who will not fight."

It may be true what they say about soldiers taking up poetry in a big way. I read every piece of poetry in this mailing. I never used to.

Congrats to Norman Stanley for thinking of the potential energy trouble with respect to inertialess travel. It had escaped me. I'd already thought of the atomic and molecular complications. It sure looks like inertialessness is a pipe dream, doesn't it?

Mutant: When Perdue and I were introduced to "surrealistic" jokes about three years ago by the Futurians, we called them shaggy dog stories. We loved them. The one about the potatoes and cabbage was my favorite, only the version I knew was about parsnips and creamed cauliflower. ... I read your article, Russ.

SF Variety: Carnell defending Ackerman. Fight! Fight! Give 'im hell, Ted. I'm behind you. After going around with Forrie for awhile and finding out what makes him tick, I'm glad I'm not the number one fan. I know that I don't have the stuff to do some of the things Forrie does. I know that he does them because he likes to, not because he thinks he's going to get something out of it. I'd say more, only Forrie will read this before it's even mimeed, and I can't praise people to their faces.

Tucky: So the Office of Censorship is worried about the danger address-publishing entrails for us.

What's the matter. Ain't they got any guts?

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Is Forrie a 37 or 40 mm. Ack-Ack?

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Ooooooh.

Ramblings: Finally Jack and I agree on something. Since we got into the war I've believed that the layman cannot criticize the military conduct of the war because of the fact that the layman does not know and has no way of knowing how the war is actually being conducted. While you are shouting for a second front, one is being prepared.

But on the other hand, people can't sit back in silence and wait for the generals to fight the war. Suppose the African offensive had not been in preparation? Then the protests would have been justified. Mass meetings and related things are necessary just for the sake of the record.

Curious to know just who is the "moral fibre" man Speer dialogues with. Seems to me the lists of names used for examples are rather heavily weighted. You could probably draw up a list that would support the negative side. After comparing my own characteristics with those given for both sides, I conclude that "moral fibre" is as much of a ~~fa~~ fiction as "general intelligence," whose existence has yet to be proven.

Earl Singleton is almost as badly off as Edmund Hall, the New Adam. I don't sympathize. I'd have to be sorry for myself if I did. A person is bored only by himself, and by nothing else.

Speer's style is excellent this mailing. Quite concise, and sounds like he'd done some fore-planning.

Incidentally, Jack, in the Instrument Repair section, where I'm teaching, one of the fellows cooked up a word-association test to give to the new students. One section measured introvert-extrovert tendencies, while the other measured mechanical aptitude. The test was standardized on us instructors. I turned out to have a high mechanical aptitude, which pleased me, but in the other part of the test I came out in the middle group, on the extrovert side. Isn't that funny? When the results of the entire group were plotted, it was found that the introverts tended to have a higher mechanical aptitude than the others. My score threw everything off on that account.



Things are getting mixed up chronologically, now. The last paragraph on the previous page was composed on the stencil as an afterthought on 1/3/43. But I didn't get around to running it off until Feb. 7, which was when I added that cartoon in commemoration of the heavy dew we had recently. The 1/6/43 noted above really applies to the date of composition of the rest of this page, because I'm making this up on the stencil Feb. 14. ... The psychological tests on the previous page turned out to be a slightly half-baked idea of the lieutenant, who is an enthusiastic amateur psychologist. However, we're still giving them, altho I don't know what they're worth. There's a whole set of them: inductive reasoning, structural visualization, observation, etc. The most interesting thing they disclosed was the fact that many of the instructors here have studied psychology. We really have a cultured bunch of guys here at the Instrument Repair section.

Well, back to fanmags:

Censored: Congrats on producing that rarity: a story in a fanmag with an original idea. This business of setting the sights on a rifle for different gravities is very interesting, and one that, as far as I can remember, has never been mentioned before. You know, shooting a rifle is not the simple business of getting the target centered in the sight and firing. If you are shooting at greater than point-blank range you must correct for the variations in trajectory. On the Springfield rifle I used a couple of months ago there was an ingenious little sight which did three things: (1) The peep sight was on a slide which could be set along a vertical scale calibrated to correct for the drop in trajectory due to gravity and air resistance. (2) The vertical scale was slanted to the right to compensate for the horizontal drift of the bullet caused by the reaction of its rotation against the air. (3) A little knob and worm wheel arrangement moved the entire sight horizontally to correct for lateral wind.

Now, to go shooting on various planets you need two more adjustments -- or rather one new adjustment and a change of No. 2 above from a constant to a variable value. You need a knob to adjust for variations in gravity, and you have to take the correction for horizontal drift due to the bullet's rotation and make that adjustable for varying atmospheric densities and viscosities. Methinks it would be simpler to use non-rotating bullets with fins and eliminate that correction entirely --- oops --- you'd have to have a rotating bullet in a vacuum. Fins no use there. But then no correcting necessary.

Possible solutions are: (1) Attach a new sighting mechanism everytime you change planets. That would be a delicate operation. (2) Use an adjustable gravity correcting sight, but eliminate rotatory drift by using finned bullets in an atmosphere and rotating bullets in vacuo. That means two separate guns.

Don't underestimate the rotatory drift. It will throw you off several inches at a 500 yard range, which is a fair distance for a rifle to shoot.

Possibly, the only accurate solution is to change the entire sight at each planet, because atmospheric density and viscosity will be varying independently of gravity and it will make a hell of a mess to calculate. On a small-arm you want simple mechanisms. On artillery it doesn't matter. All you would have to do there is change the range drum on your range quadrant and make the necessary lateral corrections with the panoramic telescope.

SPACEWAYS: Speaking of fantasy music, I came across an item recently which I don't think has been mentioned before. It is the ballet "Giselle," by Gautier, which I just saw the Ballet Russe do in LA. It's about an incognito prince, and the pretty but poor maiden he woos. The villain discloses the prince's identity, and the girl, knowing that she cannot have him because of sociological reasons, kills herself. Then in the next act the prince comes to her grave,

"and now are seen the midnight dances of the Willis (a tradition of nocturnal dancing known in Slav countries under this name), affianced maidens who have died before their wedding day, in whose hearts which have ceased to throb, in whose dead feet, there still remains the passion for dancing which they were unable to satisfy, and so they whirl through their mystic rites, unable to find rest in their tombs." Quote courtesy of program notes. It looks like a new type of supernatural being for the record.

Ballet is just filthy with fantasy ideas. Incidentally, the original idea for the one mentioned above is by Heinrich Heine, in case you are interested.

The note about del Rey and his unknown soldier story was amusing. To answer the question raised: No, del Rey does not always believe what he writes. He writes for money and isn't ashamed to tell you so. Campbell wanted a patriotic story, so Lester wrote it. Originally, the idea was to have a story to match the flag motif on the cover.

Re my letter. Rank at the moment has finally crystallized...And it's very rank. They just made me a Private First-Class. Gad -- the degradation of it. In Aberdeen a Pfc. was a step lower than a fresh, clean yard-bird. So I was in no mood to accept a mere single stripe in this camp, where they have apparently stopped jumping people immediately to corporal. Well, you can't have everything. I should kick.

KONAN: So finally Speer finished it. Gad ~~~ how I watched that epic grow hexameter by hexameter. I guess he's been writing it for about five years by now. It's amusing as all hell.

Futurian Review: A brilliant piece of work, indeed. What eruditeness displayed in the translation and genealogy. Why is it that of late the Futurians have sounded better in humor than when being serious? Could it be that the world has passed them in its anti-fascist effort and that now they have nothing new to offer?

Reader and Collector: Vast amusement at Koenig's letters to heckbers. (With effort I could probably make a pun about Heck Koenig and hecklers, but I won't bother.)

Salute: Seeing something like this in the FAPA pains me. Up to now we have been fairly free of the flag-waving brand of patriotism, except for an occasional lapse from Rochester. This sort of thing has always seemed as out of place in the FAPA as a religious tract. Religion and flag-waving are two of a kind, and I have no time for either of them. I can be a better man without religion than most church goers, and I know my place in this war better than many who try to appear patriotic. I find no necessity for speaking of God and country and duty to the fatherland and reverence for the flag and other slogans. What has meaning for me is the actuality of the people of the world and their future civilization. I have no mental need for the symbol of a flag.

Civilization is so loaded down with symbols that it makes me afraid everytime I see a new one. Look at the recent crop: Pearl Harbor, V for victory, Lidice, Dunkirk, Bataan, the Minute Man, the Swastika. There is an actuality behind those symbols. When I talk, I talk about those actualities, because as soon as you start symbolizing, then you oversimplify and you lose the accuracy of your thinking. Lord knows it's hard enough to think clearly without tossing away half of your facts in the process of symbolizing.

Re the salute on the cover: What happened to Russia?

The trouble with Cunningham is that he has (to coin a phrase) a formality complex. His workings are good. Sending magazines to fans in service, or

overseas is fine. Personally, I'm in a position to buy all my own, but others may not be so lucky. So they would appreciate it. And I appreciate what a fine thing it is to send them the mags. Lord knows, I'm too lazy to do much in that way myself. I content myself with seeing that everybody in my barracks gets a chance at my magazines when I'm finished with them.

What rubs me against the grain is the atmosphere that Cunningham builds around all this. Look at Salute: The cover with a conglomerate bunch of mystical symbols; the formal letters, signed John M. Cunningham on every page; the British and U-S- Seals; the air of slushiness about the whole thing. Hell, we FAPA'ers don't have to be so formal. Isn't it sufficiently effective to say: "Well, jerks, I've went and gotten into the army. In case I get out of touch with the bunch, it's been nice knowing you. But who knows? There's lots of mimeographs around. Maybe I'll find one. Then I'll be back."

See:

Letters of Henry S. Whitehead: I like this kind of people. Where do they hide?

Jan. 31, 1943

Gad, but time swishes along. Business at camp has been booming since the first page of this mag was written. Goldbricking days are over. When I'm not teaching class, I'm giving psychological tests for the purpose of picking out the guys who are going to get high ratings or be made instructors. And when I'm not doing that I'm preparing a new course in the administration of the Medium Maintenance Company. I look at army organization charts until I'm blue in the face and cuss the guys who wrote the technical manuals for using the most unclear language I've ever laid eyes on.

So, since time's a-wastin', let's get back to the last mailing for a few final comments.

Jack Speer has loads of interesting things to say. He was on the ball when he wrote this Sus Pro.

No need to wonder how I felt at the compliment that in describing my own feelings I have depicted the common man's mind towards the war. I would be very happy if that were really true. For I'm not the kind of person who goes around with his head in the air, despising everybody but his own tight little group of intellectuals. There are many ways in which I think differently from most people (resulting from a more materialistic and behavioristic way of observing things), but when it comes to social questions I look at myself as being part of the world.

Speer had the insight to note that freedom of speech is something different in time of war than it is in peace. What's the sense of sending soldiers overseas to fight with guns if we allow our enemies-- the people we are fighting against -- to shoot their mouths off on this side of the water? The concept must be held clearly in our minds: we are fighting a war; there are people and ideas we have decided we must get rid of. At the same time we must think: What effect will this have on democratic processes after the war. Maybe you can't get one without compromising on the other. Here you have to evaluate.

Actually, what I was talking about was an extension of the democratic process. Democracy is a loosely organized debating contest.

The purple shirts over in that corner send out a lot of propoganda arguing for an idea which you do not like and which you think is dangerous to yourself. If nobody does anything, the purple shirts are going to convert a lot of people to their ideas and the result may be trouble. To check that you have to do two things. First, get up on your own legs and talk. Don't let people be argued to that other side. Blow your own horn. Make your own propoganda. Simultaneously, find out what it is that is making people dissatisfied so that they join up with these inimical groups and do something about these conditions.

That is the basis of a peaceful world: Don't let the other side get big enough to hurt you, and keep conditions in such a good state that people will not want to flock to harmful ideologies. Theoretically, the second should take care of the first. Personally, I have a suspicion that counter-propaganda is necessary in spite of social stability. That is why I say that I like to get on a side and do my own arguing.

..... Begging your pardon, Jack, but when you say that people should wear neckties as a sign of self-discipline, you are just being full of stuff. As I say elsewhere in this issue, the less symbols we have the better. I like it. Hell, neckties aren't a symbol of comfort vs. social aims (I may ask what social aims) -- they're a sign of man's slavery to fashion. I like neckties with pretty designs and colors from an aesthetic point of view, but why wear them on hot days? The Russians have a better idea. They embroider the entire shirt and don't bother with neckties.

I wrote a rather boring article on the nature of war just so I could join into the present discussion that is going on. However, I won't have time to stencil it, so you can shout hallelujah. It boiled down to interpreting war as a method of solving disputes which evolved from simple hand-to-hand combats to very complex formal wars. People fight wars because they have gotten into the habit of solving problems in that manner and they don't know how to get out of it. I don't think there are any basic instincts for war per se. Certain instincts, such as possessiveness and self-preservation may be channeled by these habits into war. Without reasoning from the past to the present, the picture of a highly trained man in a highly developed machine like the airplane shooting high-velocity projectiles at other men in similar machines is entirely senseless. When you visualize it as the end product of a complex evolution, then it is possible to understand it. Understanding doesn't mean condoning.

