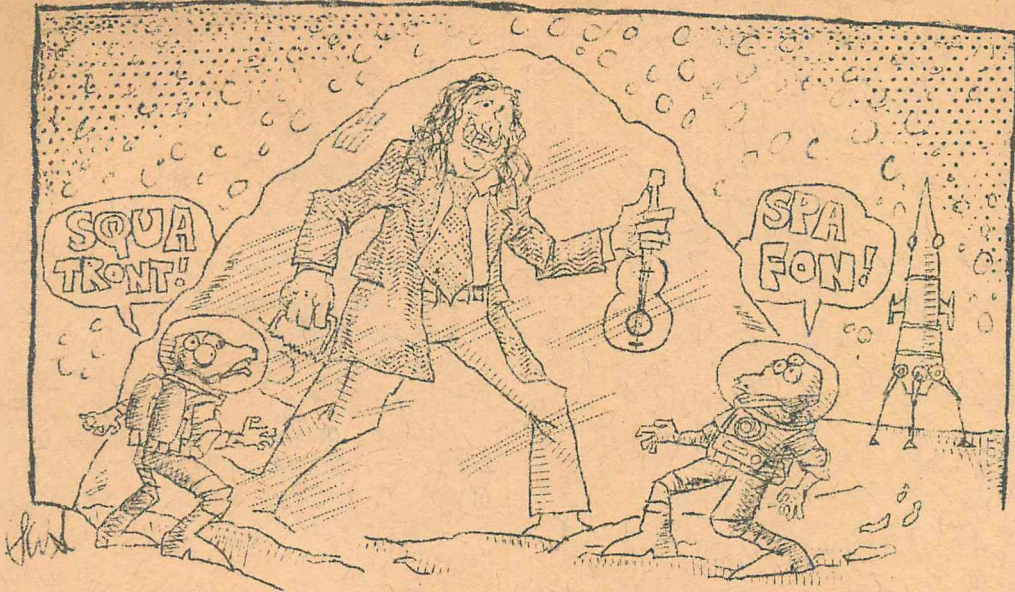


Omaha #2

Produced by Steve Stiles for the Aug. '68 mailing.



My first FAPA mailing arrived shortly before I left for a Fanoclast meeting. Seizing the heavy envelope in one firm hand, I deftly flicked the staples loose, ripping down and across with the other. Little grey flecks of stuffings spewed forth in great quantities, to land --wily-nily-- on my lap, shirt, pockets, the typewriter, the chair, the very floor itself. I didn't care; it was my first FAPA mailing.

I get choked up.

So I went on to the Fanoclast meeting, and as I stepped through the door and into Ted White's fan shack, "The Hobbit House", I espied rich brown seated on the floor. The classic Lotus Position. "Hi there, fellow FAPA member!" I said, and we nodded, grimaced, beamed, wiggled our ears, and gave the Secret Indian Sign, as two members of FAPA would do. It was at this point that I told rich that "Poor Richard's Almanac contains many little comment hooks."

How unfortunate, then, that I was unable to get any of them down on paper, missing the last two mailings. I regret that; my level of fanac has been unintentionally low these past few years... Due to circumstances beyond our control; two years in the army presented difficulties, and returning to the civilian world created some demands. It struck me that now that I was done with school, now that I had gone through my active duty, it was time to buckle down to the art business. I've also written a novel and four comic book scripts for a magazine that folded after I had completed them. Perhaps sections of my novel will appear in Omaha --so that you'll know how a writer's mind works. I'm still buckling down to the art business; trying to cram years of experience into months. Comic book illustration has been the target the last few months. Stories that I've been hired by Marvel are false, sigh. Later, maybe.

I'M THE TAFFMAN, YEAH, YEAH, YEAH: Roses don't usually grown in my garden, so I was a bit taken aback with the news that I had won the election. It was the one eventuality I hadn't counted on...

I left for the UK on April 7th. I returned home on the 22nd. In the time between those two dates, I had a whooping good time; I was much taken with British fandom, met some (more than some) really Good People, and fell in love with the city of London. As for the Third-ManCon, I haven't enjoyed a convention so thoroughly in years.

Particular thanks & good wishes must go to my hosts, the Bentcliffes Bill Burns, Harry Nadler, and Ella Parker. And to guides Gerry Webb, Tom Schlueck, and Arthur Thomson.

This really doesn't tell you too much about the specifics of my trip; I'm saving it for the TAFF report. Yes, Virginia, Phil Harrell, Ned Brooks, and other members of Norfolk and Newport News, there will be a TAFF report --if only for the reason that I want a day by day documentation of the trip... I'm in a rather up in the air situation at the moment, -trying to get into different work- but an optimistic hope is that job struggles will be resolved within four months, leaving me reasonably clear for fanac. Present bit is to produce twenty pages on Black Bolt as samples, and get this FAPazine out.

Tentative price for the report will be \$1.00 or 7/-. Tentative title will be Harrison Country. No money now, though, for pitythake.

This is also an opportune time to announce that TAFF is now open for new nominations. Check out the newszines for details, and... gads, I'm going to have to start putting out Progress Reports, aren't I?

As has been mentioned, apathy ran rampant in the previous voting; this was particularly noticeable in the overseas voting, but U.S. turnout fell quite short of being impressive. Theories are a dime a dozen, and I have a few of my own; the *Friendly Competition* that generates interest in a race and was common in, say, the Bjo-Carr race, was conspicuously missing this time around. Flashy TAFF reports, which also might generate interest, have been conspicuously missing for quite some time. Trends away from genzines and into the epas have cut down on available sounding boards. And it can't be denied that contacts between British & American fandom have lessened in the last few years. Dissuasion, anyone?

Moving into more sordid areas, now that many months have gone by, now that time has healed wounds, now that the paranoia has subsided, now that I've won TAFF, this True hoary old Army Story can be told:

How I Squealed On FAPA To Military Intelligence (A True Story)

It was a bright, chill morning in April, 1967. I reclined in my army cot and idly watched "Modern Farmer" on Sp5 Jerry Ryberg's home-made tv set. Pvt Polluck was fondling his rosary beads again, and out of respect for the superstitious nonsense, I kept the volume down. I suppose I could've kept the set off entirely, but there was something about "Modern Farmer" that captured my imagination. And besides, I was a sick man --having just (and here we run into an appropriate place to turn the page...)

recovered from a bout of pneumonia-- and sick people deserve every consideration. "Modern Farmer" was enthralling, later there would be the "I Love Lucy" reruns, and then I could look forward to the contestant shows with the average American housewives on skate boards, balancing pies on their noses. There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," I called, propping myself up in case my visitor happened to be the CO. The door hesitantly opened, and a balding man in civilian clothes and bowtie shyly poked his head into the room.

"Are you Stephen Stiles, specialist?" he asked. "I'll bet it's a fan," I thought to myself. I ran into a lot of fans while in the army. "Yes...?" I answered...

"Stephen, I'm Burt Shanker. I'm sorry to see that you're sick -- I had some questions to ask you. But I'll come back later, okay?"

"Questions?"

Shanker smiled genially. "Yes, you see I'm from Military Intelligence. It's nothing serious, just something we turned up on your papers that we'd like to go over with you."

"I'll come right now --I'm not that sick..." My curiosity was aroused. I've never done anything heinous, after all...

"Are you sure you feel okay?" Shanker inquired anxiously, "I mean, I can come around later..." Gee, what a nice guy...

I put on my civvies, and we rode out the main gates of Fort Monmouth into Eatontown. Shanker kept up a cheerful patter, and I responded in kind. Normally, anything of this nature would've had me up the wall, but the fever had left me a bit giddy and lightheaded, and in two more months I would be a civilian again. I was surprised to find that the MI office was located above my favorite bookstore.

Still keeping up the patter ("Darned key always sticks --one of these days we'll have to get it fixed."), Shanker opened the door. We stepped into a small, neat room with an orderly desk, two chairs, and a photo of Lyndon Johnson on the otherwise bare walls. Shanker sat down, motioning to me to do the same.

"Now, specialist," he said, "it is my duty to inform you that anything you say may be held against you. Of course, you have the right to remain silent if you so desire."

I laughed. "That won't be necessary. I'm sure we can clear things up."

He wrote something down. "Subject waives the rights under Article 31"?

"You are also entitled to legal counsel." he said with his mouth.

It was a precisely that point that the hackles and the fine hairs on the back of my neck began to rise.

"I waive that," I said. I knew that right and justice and truth were on my side.

"All right, Stephen. Now, I have to ask you if you have any objections to taking a lie detector test. Do you?"

"Yes, I do object to a lie detector," I replied. Shanker looked startled, gave me a speculative look. Maybe "We have a live one" flashed through his mind. It looked that way.

"Why not?"

I carefully explained to him that I just didn't know enough about lie detectors to trust them. In fact, what little I had heard about them indicated that they were fallible. Besides, --although I didn't mention it-- there's something that sticks in my craw about trusting my reputation to a machine. Never met a machine that didn't have it in for me; pay phones, elevators, coke dispensors --you name it...

Shanker carefully explained to me that lie detectors reacted to changes in pulse rates. It was a pertinent point; I'm very high strung and jumpy. Just the kind to react to a Leading Question, innocent or not.

"You see," I said, "if you asked me 'When did you put the axe to your wife?', even if I hadn't, the very nature of your question might cause a reaction."

"B-but," said Shanker, greatly surprised, "we're not going to ask you anything about axes!" No lie, gang; he really said that. I began to worry. I began to see that there might be a problem of true communication here.

We went around the bush with that for quite awhile. Finally I won a partial victory. Then I raised my right hand and swore to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth. And we got down to the nitty gritty.

Shanker passed me the papers I had filled out while in the process of getting drafted. The item in question was on the subversive organizations page. This page lists all the organizations that the government considers detrimental to our hallowed institutions. Some might genuinely pose a threat, from the C.P. to communist front groups, viz "The American Friends Of The Albanian Groundhogs". Others seemed to me to be rather absurd --outdated anarchist and radical groups that had some power in the twenties, but were now reduced to cult status. Like, f' example, the IWW.

(Here it comes.)

After the question "Are you, or have you ever been, a member of any of these organizations?", was the question "Have you ever known, communicated with, written any member of these organizations?". And after that question was my answer, "Yes. In 1962 I exchanged three letters with Mr. Dick Ellington, a minor official in the IWW."

Hi, Dick!

I'm not sure of the ethics or morality of using Ellington's name on that questionnaire, but my reasoning was that it was common knowledge that Dick was a member of the IWW; he's said it in print, he's gotten credit in Wobbly, and the rolls of the organization are there for anyone who cares to look. I was also in the process of trying to dodge the draft, and felt it points to admit that I had contacted a subversive. In this game, the object is to be as undesirable as possible. But I hope this doesn't put out Dick Ellington.

Shanker evidently ^{thought}/it was a good psychological moment. "Well, Steve?"

("Care to get it off your chest, son?") ("We're trying to help you, kid --wiseup!") ("Ah, Lenny, it's Father O'Brien yer talkin' to...")

"Well, Steve?"

("Shove it, fuzz --I got the warden down here!")

But I dramatize. "Nothing to it. I can explain everything. You'll laugh." Whimper. "In years to come," I thought, "you will look back on all this and laugh, perhaps write it up for FAPA." Whimper. "Keep your cool," Ardis Waters had once told me. And in years to come I had kept my cool, truly a White Negro (Norman Mailer def.), my books and my poetry to console me.

"Yes, I wrote Ellington a few letters. Four, I think."

"About what?"

"I wanted to join this organization..."

Wipeout. "The name of this organization...?"

"F.A.P.A. The Fantasy Amateur Press Association."

"'Fey-pah'? And what is the purpose of this organization, 'Fey-pah'?"

I chose my words carefully. I told Shanker that FAPA was a happy go lucky group of people who liked to discuss poetry, books, and music in these mimeographed magazines. I didn't mention politics, and I thought that science fiction would only cloud the issue; "Well, you see there was this guy, Hugo Gernsback, and Bloch..."

The man was fascinated; he wanted to know how much I got paid for my efforts. But, getting back to Ellington...

"How long have you known this individual, Mr. Ellington?"

("We were baptised together. And we both collect silver bullets.")

"Well, I don't really know him, I know of him -- through these fanzines, you see. Fanzines are really these innocent organs.. or, rather, amateur magazines, sha, devoted to discussing Walt Kelly and the like."

"So you wrote Ellington about joining Fey-pah. And what was his reply?" (Scribbling furiously.)

"Well, he wrote me telling me how to join, what the dues were."

"And your reply?"

"I thanked him for the information, and enclosed my dues."

"And then?"

"He wrote me. He told me he recieved my dues, and that I was on the waiting list."

"That was all?"

"Well, he once asked me for artwork for his fanzine, Kin-Chi."

"Kin-Chi?"

That was about the extent of the questions on Dick Ellington, viper in the homeland. Shanker did, however, want to know just when we had exchanged those letters way back in 1961. He seemed disappointed when I couldn't produce exact dates, or even the months in which the letters were written. "Try to think back," he urged, "Try to think of the weather. Was it snowing, raining, was it hot outside?"

In the following two days, we went through my story a few more times, for purposes of transcribing my story, producing an exact statement on each point. Shanker was very helpful in advising me on what to say so that I wouldn't mix up the Washington offices with ambiguities and humorous asides. He got upset when I referred to my story as "My Story". We covered many things; my political concepts, ("What do you think about communism, Stephen?", "I think it's a bag, man." "What do you think about Viethan?", "Well, it's the only war we've got..."), my work record, my contacts abroad. "It says here that you know people in foreign lands; what foreign lands?" "Well, Canada; actually."

On my third day, I carefully initialed the beginning and end of each paragraph in my three page statement. In some cases, I would initial single sentences ("I will bear arms against foreign invaders. (M)"). It was at this point that I began to relax; the questioning was over, and it was obvious that I hadn't gotten anybody --particularly myself-- into any difficulties. So I asked Shanker a question. I asked him how anyone could possibly consider the IWW a *Threst* when it was so obviously out of contact with the times, an organization that had lost all vital juices in the late twenties.

"Stephen," he said, all earnest and serious, "the people who composed the list have their reasons; they know far more about these matters than we do." It's not up to us to question.

Hey, I started out this article as 'light humor', but now I'm getting angry!

"You certainly have been cheerful about this whole matter," said Burt Shanker of Military Intelligence, "for a man whose whole life could've been ruined."

I am The Walrus, cuu cuu ca-choo.

MAY 19

I just recieved the 123rd mailing, feeling discouraged that I haven't had anything in the previous two mailings ("Professor Thint-whistle" aside). Time has been passing me by a lot, things have been busy, but it's irksome that I can't whip out any solid achievements on ya. I had planned on doing some drawing today, but have come down with the granddaddy of all colds, and don't really feel competant enough to push around a pencil on my usual level. Typer keys are more my speed, and with the arrival of the 123rd FAPA mailing...

Colds are handy.

This would've been a bigger Omaha, more thought provoking; I had typed up six stencild on my thoughts of the Viet Nam farce (there, I've just done it in a sentence), but on rereading my pages, I came to the conclussion that I was coming on like a poorly organized Ted Pauls. That, friends, is just too much; the supposed Shrewd Political Analysis was dispatched to the circular file. The Tet offensive, what happened to Hue, LBJ's step down from power, and the current --hopefully-- "peace" talks rendered a lot better unsaid.

My brother Jeff, home on leave from the Navy, arrived shortly after my homecoming from England, so I was able to avoid the post TAFF trip blues (dammit, I want to go back!). I'm too well aware that leave time is too precious to fritter~~er~~ away on nonessentials, so we caught a lot of what was happening in the city, breaking my hermit circuit --seeing movies ("Camelot", "2001"), parties, a peace rally, art shows, and the (wow) so-called *Hippie* musical, "Hair". Described as "vulgar, perverted, tasteless, cheap, cynical, offensive, and generally lousy" by the Daily News (doesn't the irony just flash through you, NY fans?) "Hair" misses the mark. Perhaps solely on my terms, for as I say and watched what I hoped would be devious put-on, I couldn't help but notice how everyone in the audience (save my brother & I, of oourse--incredibly hip...) seemed to be from Fallen Armpits, Nebraska. This was no doubt not the case, nor do I have anything against the locale, but the character of the audience and the slant of the acting made me aware of just how much the "hippies" have become a spectacle, just how much their "movement" (or a group's way of life) has been exploited by the mass-media. A blatant invasion of privacy on large scales. Much of the dogma of Leary, Oracle & hangers-on, is ludicrous --but I can't help suspecting that the hardcore pioneers held ideas, attitudes and values, that could've stood nourishing. There's been a lot of talk in the fan press about drugs --kids discovering a new toy-- but beyond drugs, at the heart of drugs, what were these people really after?

Look around.

"Look around" --yes, pompous; well, a few days ago I did look around. I flipped open my evening paper to page two. "Six netted in plot to kill cops, spark riots" said the headline --and there, in one of the photos was someone I knew. A quiet, gentle guy who stuttered a bit, liked jazz and good books, a Good Buddy.

Null-Q Press

