

Plasma

November, 2003

COMMENTS IN A FAPA VEIN

You'd think that someone with such a strong penchant for new titles would think twice before recycling an old one. You'd be right. I *did* think about the wisdom of reviving *Plasma* as a mail comment-oriented FAPAZine — and decided that the reasons I picked the title are still mostly valid.

The title had two shades of meaning when I started using it. One was a homage to Wendy O. Williams, stripper turned rocker who made a lasting impression on just about everyone who saw her outrageous, over-the-top sex-drenched act. The other reason is that mailing comments are the lifeblood (plasma) of FAPA and I wanted to pump some into the FAPA corpus.

I stopped using *Plasma* when Wendy bumped her last grind. To continue you in the face of her young death felt disrespectful.

Time has passed and the second reason, the one about the mail comments, now looms much

larger in my mind than the tribute to W.O.W. Now, if some FAPA scholar can tell me what number this issue should be, I can go back to numbering instead of using the Month/Year system.

The Fantasy Amateur

The Estimable Ken Forman

First, I wanted to say how much I liked the way this *FA* looks. You've put this style together little by little and I think you've now reached a very good, distinctive look. It's well-organized and easy to read.

It also contains a lot of interesting grist for comments. Write in depth about Harry Warner elsewhere in this issue, but the departure of both him and John Foyster to the Enchanted Convention leaves a significant hole in fandom and in FAPA.

On a much brighter note, look at all the

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Corflu Blackjack in 2004.

"Don't ask me nothin' about nothin', I just might tell you the truth" — Bob Dylan.

folks who are joining (or about to join) FAPA! As the President at the time, I take full and complete credit, unless they are all wash-outs and boring stiffs, in which case they joined primarily due to the proselytizing of Robert Lichtman. If you don't like their FAPazines, a forceful, insulting letter to the Sage of Glen Ellen should provide some compensatory satisfaction.

This latest influx shows how the Internet is actually swelling the ranks of fanzine fandom. There are quite a few fans, like Colin Hinz and Damien Warman, who have located our little niche (with the sprawling All Known Fandom of '03) through participation in the fannish listservs.

A Different Drummer #1

Eric Davin

Welcome to FAPA. It's pretty obvious that the writing and publishing of fanzines is somewhat new to you, but I am sure such an obviously intelligent person will learn from the abundant examples contained within the mailing.

Your piece is reasonably well-done, but I doubt there's anything much new here for the long time science fiction and fantasy fans who inhabit FAPA. It ought to get some discussions going, though, and that's probably the most important thing for a new member. I hope you'll also feel moved to talk to us as well as lecture at us in the future.

The comments about the ideas contained in most sf stories and the imagination embodied in most fantasy yarns is well taken. Don't you think

Big Cat Volume 2 Number 2

Ray Nelson

I've got nothing against clip art, except when it deprives us of such beautiful Ray Nelson work as is contained in this issue of *Big Cat*. Really, this is one of the most attractive fanzines I have seen of late and I congratulate you on showing the Jophan-come-latelies how to do it in style.

I can well understand why the symbology of the propeller beanie is so important to you. Af-

ter all, you inaugurated its use in fan cartoons. Yet I don't think your view of its status is entirely accurate.

There's no question that the beanie is an enduring fannish symbol, but it seems to me that its use in cartoons has declined steadily over the last decade. It's not so much that other symbols have replaced it as that fandom is in the throes of what might be called Mundanization.

Where fans at one time gloried in their special status, that feeling of apart-ness from mainstream society, fandom's population explosion has brought with it a banal conformity. Fans may parade a few socially approved signs of minor rebellion, but that sense of alienation from the deadening values of Mundane Culture has largely vanished. For many, fandom is little more than a tricked out version of the larger society with a few easements that allow the socially inept to subsist a little more comfortably (and successfully).

You don't see the beanie much anymore, I think, because so many fans are indistinguishable from the population as a whole. The whole concept of fanac is falling into decay as more and more "fan activities" take on the aspect of fratboyish partying. Being creative, intellectual and counter-cultural is as out of favor in today's fandom as it is in the society at large.

That's why I dislike your idea of using the beret as a symbol. It is definitely appropriate for all the groups you named — except fandom, where the only beret I've ever seen was green and went with a uniform. (I made that up; I've never actually seen a Green Beret in uniform at a fan event, but I liked the sound of it.)

The beret connects fandom to the bohemians and to creative people, which is good, but it doesn't say anything about the things that make fans *different* from beatniks, arty film directors and Parisians whores in old Hollywood movies.

I'm not sure there *is* a symbol that really satisfies my criteria. Bulbous bheer bellies look just like the ones produced by beer and its hard to portray ceaseless, compulsive skirt chasing without making that the actual subject

of the cartoon. (Part of British Fandom's current popularity in the US results from a serious problem faced by some US male fans. Having hit on every woman in US fandom, they almost compelled to pursue female fans in other countries. British female fans are "cheap dates" and even pay their way across the Atlantic.)

Actually, Ray, didn't you introduce a version of this art style in *Wild Heirs*? You've refined and improved upon it, but I see a connection. Speaking of which, consider this your Official Invitation to come draw for *Crazy from the Heat*.

Sansevieria # 54

Dale Spiers

Your interesting piece about encoded post cards put me in mind of our government's concerted effort to stop the use of codes in email. The attempt to prevent people from exchanging messages under encryption is rather curious in a country that professes to honor the concept of personal privacy. Of course, Gingrich wanted to give the government the right to read all the email, but it got buried as his Congressional career unraveled.

Ben's Beat #73

Ben Indick

You are saying that FAPA is "as good as ever?" If you mean over the last decade or so, I guess that's a reasonable and defensible position. My reading of mailings from earlier periods, though, suggests that there has been quite a decline in the quality of FAPazines.

Part of that is that the basic character of FAPA has changed. It once served as a stage for outstanding gen-FAPazines like *Grue* and *Kteic*. Now the emphasis has shifted to a SAPS-ish concentration on mailing comments and a decrease in fan consciousness. I'm not saying this is a Bad Change, though it has drastically cut the size, opulence and frequency of the typical FAPazine, but I think it's observable by anyone who delves into FAPA's history.

This might also be a good place to thank everyone who voted for me in the Egoboo Poll. I am always grateful for such signs of enjoyment, even in a year when I didn't do much more than hang onto my membership. Perhaps my current increase in FAPA activity will make me feel better about whatever votes I receive in next year's poll.

Nice Distinctions #2

Arthur Hlavaty

I'll miss Roy Tackett. He came to prominence in fandom about the time I entered the hobby and we were always on very friendly terms despite the age and attitudinal gulf that lay between us.

Five singles? I don't think I could reduce it to five, but some of my favorites are: "I Found a Love" by Wilson Pickett, "Great Balls of Fire" by Jerry Lee Lewis, "Rainy Day Women 12 and 35" by Bob Dylan, "Mystic Eyes" by Them and "Werewolves of London" by Warren Zeon. (I could just as easily have mentioned "I Don't Like Mondays" by the Boomtown Rats, "Love Me Do" by the Beatles, "This Could Be the Last Time" by the Rolling Stones and "I Don't Wanna Hang Up My Rock 'n' Roll Shoes" by Chuck Willis, "Tracks of My Tears" by Smoky Robinson and "Spoonful" by Cream.

For FAPA

Eric Lindsay

Your comment on the cost of printing a FAPazine explains why print fanzines must eventually and inevitably give way to electronic ones. The cost of printing (and postage), unmodified by the old "sweat equity" paradigm, makes a well-circulated, good-sized, frequent fanzine a nearly impossible dream. .

The biggest barrier is the slowness with which so many active fanzine fans have adapted, or should I say "not adapted" to the new medium. I can tell you from heartbreaking personal experience that it is often very difficult to get *even my friends* to download my electronic fanzines.

What really kicks me in the gut, though, is

when one of these fine folks tells me that they don't download my fanzine because it is so expensive to do so. In other words, it's fine if I pauperize myself by spending hundreds of dollars to print and mail a fanzine, but it's too much to ask for them to pay the comparative small cost of printing out *one* copy.

Jokes I make notwithstanding, I put a lot into my fanzines, whether they are printed or electronic. I know the listservs may give some the false impression that electronic fanac is automatically rushed, superficial and inelegant. The listservs, at best, are like a first draft mailing comment and, at worst, like an NFFF round robin letter.

My concern is not just that I am dying of egoboo withdrawal, but that forces appear to be disrupting the traditional fanzine fandom eco-system. The cycle of publish—LoC—editorial response is breaking down as fans drift into forms of written expression in which they talk *at* a mostly anonymous audience of indeterminate size instead of participating in the truly interactive experience that is at the heart of traditional fanzine fandom.

If I'm going to write for a bunch of people I don't know and who will rarely respond in any meaningful way, then I want to get paid for it, just like all my other professional writing. I've stayed active in fanzine fandom even while I write for money because it promises a different kind of experience. If that experience dies away, the incentive to write and publish for fandom dies with it.

I didn't stray into the huckster room at Westercon, eager to avoid spending temptations, so I can't comment on the prices of collectible science fiction books. As an expert on collecting, though, I can say that the price trend for collectibles of almost every type is currently down, down, down.

The effects of the recession/depression and the decline in the collector population are rewriting the price guides every day. Look at the number of items on eBay that don't even get a bid or which sell for close-to-minimum amounts.

This comes as quite a surprise to many consumers who aren't truly collectors. They had the idea that prices could only go in one direction — up. EBay prices show that the collectibles market is just as volatile when market factors turn negative.

Safari 3.1

Earl Kemp

My delight at seeing this goes well beyond the fact that FAPA has added a Hugo-winning fanzine to its arsenal. Frankly, I don't put that much stock in awards, though you richly deserved the recognition you got. No, it's the pleasure of seeing you fully returned to fanzine fandom with a genzine and an apazine.

I did a little work in the adult field at one time. Nothing major, but I did do a column for a *Swank's* flanker titles. It was a column that reviewed x-rated videos from the couples perspective.

It led, indirectly, to one of the more depressing incidents of my professional writing career. And like most writers, I've taken plenty of bangs along the way.

Back in the 1970s, emboldened by my credentials as a genuine professional smut-monger, I went on a tour of the topless bars of New York and wrote a piece for *Four Star Extra*, the fanzine I co-edited with Joyce, Bill Kunkel and Charlene Komar Storey) called "Smut New York."

Imagine my surprise (and chagrin) when I picked up *New York* magazine and found that there was an article that virtually paraphrased my entire piece, line for line, idea for idea... by *Nelson Algren*,

He's Nelson Fucking Algren and he has to cop my story? I loved his books and I guess I still do. Just haven't had the heart to read them for a long, long time.

Alphabet Soup #39

Milt Stevens

When graduated college in 1968, I became eligible for the draft even though I had already committed to graduate school in the fall. I was-

n't worried, because I knew my eyes would keep me out of the service.

I appeared at a collection point where I was bussed to Ft. Hamilton in Brooklyn. I went through the mill without incident, until we came to the vision test.

"Read the chart," one of the examiners instructed me.

"What chart?" I inquired.

"The one on the wall," he replied

"What wall?" asked — and we were off to the races.

My examiner called all the others over to watch me take the eye test. Really, I felt like a celebrity as I strained to do something useful through my coke bottle lenses.

Quite a crowd collected and there may have been some side action, betting on whether I could read even the largest character on the eye chart.

It was quite jolly for a moment. Then I noticed that, in the hubbub, someone had stolen my bag of valuables. That loss seized more of my attention than the man at the desk who confirmed that the army did not want me at this or any other time. Well, to be technical, they gave me a 1-Y. So if my vision improved six months from then, assuming I was still liable to the draft at that time, they might see fit to conscript me.

Voice of the Habu Volume VI #3

Roger Wells

Fandom has grayed right along with the rest of the country, thanks to the Baby Boom population bulge. I knew very few fans in their 50s — I'm now 57 — when I was a fiery young fan and few of them were doing much of anything in fanzine fandom. Now it's quite common for people 50-70 years old to do substantial amounts of fanac.

So Picard's academy rival is your namesake? That's cool. All I've got is some Nick kiddie show I've never seen and the pig on *Green Acres*.

I met Fred Scott, who played Roger (no known last name) on *Captain Video*/ The show,

written by well-known fans-turned-pro, also had a character named "Tucker," who was further identified as "the bum of the spaceways" or something like that.

Target FAPA

Richie Eney

Yes, let us sing the Sage of Glen Ellen, *Robert* Lichtman, one of FAPA's all-time greatest Secretary-Treasurers. *Robert*, unlike the rest of us vainglorious office-seekers (Gordon Eklund, Joyce Katz, Jack Speer, me... that whole crowd), serves out of a sense of duty and desire to be of service.

Yet even if *Robert* had the same base motives as the rest of us, his performance would earn him a spot among legends like Bill Evans and Bob Pavlat as keepers of FAPA's purse and roster. As you point out, he does the little things that not many others would trouble to do. That's why I vote for just about anything *Robert* wants to do to the FAPA Constitution.

Bird of Prey

Jan Stinson

Welcome to the only club I know with a more overblown constitution than the dear old NFFF. I concede the excellence of the construction and wording of the FAPA Constitution, which is only fitting for the FAPA officer charged with its interpretation, but it would suffice for a somewhat larger organization... say a small country.

I spent some time in the N3F as a neofan, even heading a couple of those ubiquitous bureaus. I left because the club did not materially enhance my understanding of, or pleasure in, science fiction fandom, but I think it's fine for those who want it.

You know, it was much harder to be an insurgent in the 1940s than it is today. Back then, you had to say stuff about people and institutions that could fight back. It sometimes seems to me that 2003 Insurgent credentials are acquired rather cheaply. All you have to do

is assail Claude Degler, the N3F and TAFF, all of which pretty much past it.

The problem is that all we insecure fans want to be loved. And it's very hard to confront Alluring Evil and stay popular. Now that Ted White has gone Full Mellow, rich brown may be the only true example of genuine fan insurgentism we have left.

The Road Warrior 8/03

Tom Feller

I was struck, while reading your con report, how individual convention experiences are. I would have written up few, or none, of the things you described, because I wouldn't have attended most of those parts of the convention. Yet it's obvious that you enjoy "your" con as much as I enjoy "mine."

I go to conventions primarily to see friends and, secondarily, to enjoy the society of fanzine fandom in person. I'm one of those guys who doesn't care if everyone at the business meeting bursts into spontaneous flames — not that I would actually wish anyone any harm — as long as my fellow running dogs are ready to party.

Congratulations on the new home. As you may've noticed in *Flicker #2*, Joyce and I have moved into a new-to-us rented house on Eugene Cernan Street in an area of Vegas known variously as West Las Vegas and Summerlin South.

The home is 1,500 sq ft. divided among six room. There are two bathrooms and a two-car garage that now looks like a poorly organized warehouse.

We wanted a place with no lawn, sprinkler system or pool to kite our water bill into the stratosphere, so the outside is somewhat plain — gravel and tree in the front, dirt in the back.

I sympathize about things that need repair. When we moved in, the air conditioning died, the stove didn't work, the dish washer was out of commission and the garage opener didn't open. The landlord has now given us a new stove, dishwasher and air conditioning system,

so there is Hope that other things will be fixed in due course..

Trial & Air 14/15

Michael Waite

Don't you think that running the contents list for an as-yet-unpublished fanzine is double-dipping at the egoboo trough? Especially when one page of it duplicates the contents listing of the last couple of issue of *The Fantasy Amateur*.

I'll be very interested to see what your writers have to say about Harry Warner. My take on the Hagerstown Hermit will be found elsewhere in the mailing.

Not Purple

Janice Morningstar

Owing solely to my slothful, semi-attentive ways when fandom is simmering on my backburner, I believe this is the first time we've "met." So allow me to be the *last* person to welcome you to FAPA. Let me also express the hope that you'll adding Corflu 2004, Corflu Blackjack, to your con-going schedule for next year. (The con, chaired by Ken Forman and Ben Wilson, should be a blast and you'll get to meet quite a few FAPAns.)

Post Office invasiveness is not new to Fandom. Ray Fisher (then known as "Dugie") had to sneak over to the next town to mail his fanzine after the Post Master took issue with a Ray Nelson cartoon. Max Keasler had to change the name of his fanzine when the PO banned his existing one due to a joking reference to drug smuggling. Both incidents happened circa 1950.

Not only did I *not* stumble across fandom," but I entered it as the culmination of a convoluted strategy concocted with the aid of my best friend and fellow dweller on Patton Boulevard in New Hyde Park, NY, Lenny Bailes. Both enthusiastic science fiction readers, Bailes and I divined the existence of fandom through microscopic examination of the fanzine review

columns of Rog Phillips for 1950s *Amazing* and *Fantastic*, which we read in 1961-62 when we began buying cheap back-date SF prozines.

The two of us produced *Cursed #1* in the hopes that its publication would bring us to the notice of some helpful fan. This plan superseded one that hadn't worked, though I'd had great enthusiasm for it. I wrote to old addresses in those columns I picked my recipients extremely well — Buck Coulson, Dean Grennell, Dick Geis — but none gave me one molecule of help. Coulson had moved (to his Hartford City address), Grennell sent a postcard that wished me luck and did not in any way direct me to fandom or anyone connected with it and Geis me fandom wasn't worth it, anyway. (Ironically, when Geis changed his mind and wanted to return in the 1960s, he wrote to me to help him get back into things... which, of course, I did.)

As part of the plan, we included an article about *Amazing*, which I then mentioned in a letter of comment to *Amazing*. I had become one of the magazine's most visible letterhacks and generally had a letter in each issue. Editor Cele Goldsmith kindly left in the mention and, in due course, I did hear from an actual fanzine fan, Judi Sephton.

Big Fish #3 Sandra Bond

Speaking of Corflu, as I was just a few paragraphs ago, I'm delighted to hear that you will attend Corflu Blackjack. I don't know about that "fannish carnivores" thing — I do like hamburgers a *lot*, even if I eat fewer of them these days — but Joyce and I are very eager to meet you. Although you can't actually tell from my silence, I've enjoyed *QuasiQuote* and have vowed to write a letter of comment on the next one.

I sympathize with your shock at failing that exam, but at the risk of Formanizing, you may come to think of it as a good thing if you now train the powers of your Fine Mind on the task.

It is more common than you might think for very smart people like yourself, ones who have not had to work very hard for top grades, to hit this kind of problem when the academic bar is raised a bit higher.

My first year in college wasn't stellar, either. I did learn from the experience and, by my Junior year had advanced to the Dean's List. I have no doubt that someone as smart as you can do the same.

Sweet Jane 38 Gordon Eklund

I'm not sure of the exact date, but the first prozine I read was an early 1960s issue of *Amazing*. It contained the first part of a serialized novel by Robert Sheckley, *Omega!*

I loved the first half of the story, my first exposure to Sheckley, but it was several years before I got to read the second part. Lenny Bailes, who borrowed my copy of *Amazing*, promised faithfully to buy the second part to return the favor. Alas, that issue came and went on the newsstands, but Lenny didn't pull the trigger on the purchase.

I searched for that *Amazing* for several years until the novel finally emerged in paperback as *The Status Civilization*. Truth to tell, the conclusion disappointed me somewhat; Sheckley appeared to tire of his story and the second half lacked the wit and charm of the first.

Synapse Jack Speer

Your page derived from that article in *Atlantic Monthly* about taboo words for textbook writers is but the latest example of how dull academic writing got that way. Whomever framed this ridiculous list undoubtedly started with a high purpose, to reduce offensive language and minimize unintended slurs.

I think we can all see how eliminating words like "Gook" and "Wop" in supposedly elevated writing would be a good thing. Lamentably, this also shows the tendency of people

who think in terms of such guidelines to continue well beyond that modest goal and go many miles past the limit of good sense and practicality.

Attempts to "legislate" language, whether it be this or France's insistent efforts to "purify" its language, are rarely successful. The attempt to impose arbitrary order flies in the face of the methods by which language is created and changed.

English is not standing still, nor as I have remarked to you once or twice before, should it. It evolves in response to usage. This occurs on two levels. The written language changes in response to what educated people write and the spoken language changes when the way people express themselves changes.

Sanitizing English through a litany of summarily imposed rules is not the answer. We stopped writing and saying "Gook" and "Wop"

because most people realized that using those terms generally drew negative consequences from readers and listeners. ("Nigger," which is utterly *verboten* for all White people who don't own a KKK uniform, is still in active use in both song lyrics and everyday speech by African-Americans.)

Thanks for printing this, Jack. It's good for the rest of us to know what the fools have in mind for us.

And with that....

It's time to pull the plug on this issue of *Plasma*. See you all in three months, if not before.

— Arnie Katz
Las Vegas, NV
October 1, 2003