

SERCON'S BANE #19

FAPA 106

FAPulous 41

FEB 1964



"ALL FANDOM
IS PLUNGED
INTO WAR!"

"--SO WHAT
ELSE
IS NEW?"

-Buz

S E R C O N ' S B A N E # 1 9

Yes, friends, live it up, for here is Sercon's Bane 19, from F M Busby of 2852 14th Avenue West, Seattle, Wash, 98119-- produced for FAPA mlg 106, February 1964.

Now you won't have to go out in the cold and split all that kindling, will you?

This is also (I am telling me here for later reference) FAPulous Pub #41, Elinor being in line for #42-- if I haven't missed a oneshot or so in this denumeration.

The first order of business is that I have not received any postmailing, pre- or otherwise, from P Howard Lyons. If this were the Fantasy Amateur and if I were some other possible Vice-President, you would be out of FAPA there, P Howard Lyons sir. But it isn't and I'm not and you're not. Boy, are you ever lucky!

So now on with the A r g l e b a r g l e concerning the 105th mailing...

Revolting Development: Written by Schultz with a reprint from Berry, stenciled by Schultz (who forgot to drop the "g" in the title), and then disallowed for credit by the S-T. Hope to see you in this mailing, Martin Alger sir.

Different: I still read the Literature, Sam, and enjoyed your remarks well enough, but they're pretty complete in themselves and leave little room for any comment. Well-- I wonder if Pierre will list 12-15,000 titles now...?

The Larean 10: Actually, the mistake on the ballot deadline was mine, by working from fallible recall rather than looking it up in the Const, all applicable sections. I've learned better since, believe you me.

I agree: regional Cons are great fun, but without the One Big Con a great deal would be lost, even though regionals are getting a wider play in recent years.

Alif 18 (& 19): Lovely writeup on the Westercon-- brings it back alive and as if I were back there all over again. Hmm-- not a bad idea!

Akvavit in Aylmer (and damn the asterisks; full speed ahead): This, gentlemen and lady, is definitely one of your better bits of hilarious mutual slander. Gee, it is sure too bad Norm Clarke is so chicken and won't let Boyd use those devastating and funny lines he didn't get to use in here. I am not sure that fandom would ever be the same again, of course, but what's wrong with that?

Bobolings 9 or maybe 10: Bob, I hope you'll find yourself more interested [and thus more active] in FAPA from now on-- not out of "needing" it but simply because it sparks your interest more, in itself.

The Alfa does read like fun; it's been a long time since I owned a car that could "break loose" as part of the handling and without near-inevitable disaster-- the old cross-spring V8s were probably the last US-made cars that were any good for that sort of play, and the present US style of setting the motor directly above the front wheels killed that sort of maneuverability pretty thoroughly. I once had a '46 ["it looks like the '42 model to me"] Champ that was rather spectacular on square corners, but nothing since then that was good for games on gravel roads.

And felicitations on having survived the DisCon so well. You have, haven't you?

Alexandria Trio: I know you were just using words casually, Dick, so take it mellow when I say that I'm surprised to see an ol' Constitutionalist like yourself following the prevalent fallacy that to "complain loudly and pointedly in print" has any but coincidental relevance to Doing Something [as about the Martin Case]. In fact, that's been the main problem all along, as I'll detail elsewhere.

Re "68 copies": anyone who assembles apa bundles by the Pick Up Method needs all the safeguards he can get, because with this system you don't know you're short until you get to the end of the job, and have to sort through All Those Bundles. By contrast, the Lay Down Method [we'll pause while those dirty-minded types have their laugh out] lets you distribute your copies of one zine onto say 68 stacks; if you are short you know it right now and check back immediately and easily. No kidding.

If population is the number of people, is copulation the number of policemen?

[mit Eney, yet]: I can't see publicizing the Hugo results in detail either. Perhaps the nominees should be told the standings if they ask, but that's about it.

Heck, APEX wasn't quite as bad as all that, what I saw of it, anyway [in a bit over one year]. It did have a few foibles which eventually became so annoying that my last page sent for publication therein, dated Oct 1, 1963, was a letter of resignation-- which hasn't (to my knowledge) been printed, though I sent pubbing-expense money as had become my wont. I hear that it's done its trick again, though-- dropping some members and carrying on under a new name, sometime around December or so. And actually it was sort of fun if only the members could have decided what they wanted. Well, I hope this incarnation has better luck than the previous ones.

Fine DisCon writeup, Dick; having already commented on it in SAPS, I'll just reiterate one point: Anyone who griped at the guarding of the Costume Ball has one mighty short memory, since it was the inundation of the ChiconIII Ball with all those Young Catholics that showed the need for such action. ...and I certainly doubt that the Sigma Fraps would have been what could be called any Improvement! Again, I'll suggest that perhaps the next thing to try is admission of non-members up to the point where the Committee thinks the joint is full enough already thanks, for some nominal fee such as four-bits or a buck. The thing is that no solution is perfect, but that we find the holes in the next approximation by trying it out, only. Right?

Alva on ASI: This alternate view of Shangri-La is both welcome and extremely interesting. I first read ASI in 1957 (hi, Wrai!) and since 1958 (hi, Burb!) I've taken it that Laney "was not exactly the world's most accurate reporter", so it is no shock to find Alva catching him up on a few points, and in such good-humored fashion, at that. My picture of the events described by both Laney and Rogers will henceforth be something between the two versions, I suppose-- no slam meant at Alva here, but after all he is now 15-20 years away from those events and if his memory over a period of time does not tend to edit itself selectively a little bit, then he is the only person on the face of the earth who is free of the phenomenon; just as Laney was too close to the whole mess, so perhaps Alva is now too far away from it to be sure of recalling the total picture. I know I would be, in his shoes. But this is a minor quibble; it's a fine writeup and by golly I appreciate it.

Horizons 96: I'm not sure whether we'd heard (or remembered hearing) that "Throw the Rascals Out" was significant in FAPA's history; it was simply that in its traditional mundane sense it seemed a perfect slogan for a couple of jokers running to succeed each other in the two offices concerned.

Thanks for the stories of yourself at DisCon and at the editorial desk, Harry.

SaFari v2nrl: Nice to see you here, Earl, and that's quite a picture you wrote for us.

Celephais 37: OK, since you found it not too much work to put on a Con, I'm looking forward to DisConII, and this time by golly I hope to make it there.

I liked the locomotive rundown, and only wish there could have been some pics or at least rough sketches to stimulate my visual recalls a little better.

I always dig your trip writeups, and this one particularly, since you give some good tips toward the upcoming London-in-'65 tour (I need all the info I can get).

Kim Chi [wotever that means] #1: Well, I wouldn't say that "Little Pots of Herbs" was as esoteric as all that, but wothell. We used to have (Befo' de Wah) in eastern Washington the same sort of "turn a car now and then" bit; I was more or less on the outskirts of this activity myself [since it took all my time and money that could be spared from school and booze and women and keeping my own junker in running shape-- rather, to keep any given heap of my own running], but several of my non-scholastic buddies did right well at it. You're right; it's ingroup well enough.

"Our Own Town": you are an evial vicious man, Ellington, and I'm proud of you.

I have a couple more remarks to make on "drunk driving" (including my original point, which somehow got sidetracked over the past few mailings) but best I sort that out into a fractional-length article if I have time. But as I said last time (yeh, I know you hadn't seen it when you last commented) I did quit while I was well ahead, like about ten years ago to be exact. It was a good hobby while it lasted, though.

Bisbigliando (since you insist, Curt): Some title there, bwah. Well, I guess it figures. I dunno what it means but it sounds rough. As do you, betimes.

Well, I can't say I blame you. What in the little green hell were you doing sitting around with no skin on the sole of your left foot? (You say "hurting" and you'll find yourself trying it maybe with both feet!) The last time I tried anything like that I was 13 years old and couldn't be expected to know much better; for over 2 months I had both hands and both feet out of action and I don't recommend it. We went through 3 doctors, or rather 3 doctors went through our meager budget, and finally my aunt put me to soaking the extremities in a near-boiling solution of permanganate (you know-- that purple goop) of potassium, and biGhod it cleared up in about 3 weeks. I suppose that episode finalized my essential continuing distrust of the medical racket or profession. I wouldn't mind if they admitted it was mostly guesswork.

Jeez, that indoor-model flying sounds fascinating-- and exasperating. I did a little of the balsa bit about ages 14-15 and found it very tricky indeed; I can work with tiny objects OK-- but they gotta be reasonably sturdy tiny objects or I goof up.

But don't stay away so long next time, ol' buddy.

A Propos de Rien #11: Jim, I regret to say that the Bare Face Approval Board turned me down cold (oh hell; there goes the format). I don't know about Rotsler...

Perish forbid that I should ever become "scientifically detached" re questions such as "Do Blondes have more fun?" Attached, yes; detached, no. Science wins again.

Your political arguments (or stance) seem(s) reasonable enough.

The Lovecraftsman #1: Very fine, Redd. And just what I had always suspected, too.

Psi-Phi #9: I dig your BArea reminiscences, Bob. One point, though: El Cerrito did not originate after War II, but rather at least 2 years before it.

Aside from anything I may say elsewhere on the subject, let me give you a capsule history of the Martin Case: "Martin's partisans ignored and spurned all Constitutional means toward their goal while loudly demanding that the officers accomplish it by extralegal means. To date the officers have not gone along with this approach."

Too bad Ray's bit on Romantic Love couldn't have gone into Apex, hey?

Ambivalent Amoeba #3: Well, in your honor, Jack, I refrained from saying anything about Choate's letter in the preceding zine.

Ingenious covers; otherwise I find it hard to comment on this fast minac stuff.

The Persian Slipper #3: Congratulations & happy nuptials to you and Joyce.

Baldly: From what I hear, you may have sparked a proposed amendment to outlaw full credit for double-spacing per the Predue Decision. Well, it's the breaks.

I certainly hope that nerve bit clears up for you, Rusty. Sounds real mean.

Phantasy Press #43: Lots better luck and more activity for you this year, Dan!

Salud 19 and Booze in the Night and Sercon's Bane 19: I stand back of every word of those.. WELL back.

Bete Noire #6: What Towner would of done, Mac: he would of woke up the blonde again. Unless his feet were of clay all the way up to . . .

Ankus 9: Son, Ah 'preciates yo' sediments-- but still I think you talked rougher to the Knights of Saint Martin than even I [in my current halfass-embattled state] could approve or justify. Verse and enthusiasm are a tricky mixture; no?

But always remember-- just swing the axe at the fugg, not the head. OK?

POSTMAILINGS, THE FIRST OF WHICH IS: A Fanzine for Now #???: Your Libyan description and anecdotes are a gas. The political stuff: well, politics may be a man's game, but as a spectator sport it leaves a lot to be desired.

So much for this day's portion of comments on the 105th FAPA mailing, kids.

"She's a nice girl but too broad in the beam," said Tom hypocritically...

Jesus Bug #10: Glad to see you like aboard, Andy, and it is nice to get caught up on what-all has been happening with you and Avram and all souls.

I can envy you the parties but not-- not at all-- the hitch-hiking trip. Oog.

Damballa #1: And nice to see you making it after all that time in the Shadows, Chuck.

Did I ever write and tell you how much we enjoyed your SeaCon Report in one of your first Shadowzines? Probably not, slothful as we are-- mea culpa.

Heck, I don't mind your "goshwow approach" to ConReports: it is nice for a change to see someone admit that he enjoyed himself; there are too many who seem to have to show, by incessant upstage bitching and nitpicking, how Above It All they are. [Oddly enough, few of this latter type have ever themselves served on a ConCommittee.] So I get a fine big kick out of your DisCon Daze except of course for the sad prelude. (And my advice is to get a puppy as soon as the weather is fit for housebreaking!)

And I'm pleased to see another clearheaded view of the Martin Matter.

Fly in the Salad #2 (with accompanying petition): Elinor said last mailing that if another Martition were circulated, she would sign it. And she has done so, too. Since it takes both her signature and mine to make one vote in this organization, I felt that I would probably sign it also, if only on the basis of "Well, if you can get 32 other names, far be it from me to stand in the way of Ed Martin's chance to give this group his very best royal razzberry." But Ted's rider accompanying your zine & petition pretty well unsold me again; a pitch like that one could unsell Joan of Arc at the stake on fire extinguishers. I'll think it over...

Null-F 34-1/2: A few things I left out of my remarks in the FA, Ted: it may look impressive to say such things as that "the largest burden of guilt" is my very own to keep and cherish, and to cite personal remarks in this here zine as somehow carrying some kind of official weight which they certainly do not, but it doesn't hold water; Elinor and I first took office exactly one year after Martin's zine appeared in Mlg 97, and until this mailing my only official words on the subject were 8 lines in Mlg 101 declining to kiss it and make it well, and 2-3 lines stating that Ruth Berman's petition was a legal act if it got the 33 signatures; naught else. It is possible that you might have been better off to have left it at that rather than displaying such a complete lack of understanding of the job you're running for.

And you say that as Pres I "had the power to force a reconsideration of the affair." In one sense this is true, in that the Pres has "power" (since you like the term) to deal with situations not covered by the Const. One such situation is that of members ignoring Constitutional remedies and then calling on the officers to fix it up for them. But what makes you think I did not use those "powers" and deal with the situation? I did, you know. I decided that no presidential action was called for under the circumstances. I realize that you do not agree with that decision but your disagreement in no wise impairs my right to make it. I am continually amazed at the way some of you guys are outraged when someone won't play trained-seal for you.

I had hoped that your silence after the CRYbeef indicated that you were thinking it over and that if I just only stayed off your back for a while we might get back onto reasonably good terms in future, but it appears that you were merely waiting for a new handle. Well, that's entirely up to you, but a little more research would be advisable the next time you go to jam me up; wouldn't you say? Meanwhile I'm not particularly bugged-- just frustrated at having to leave out a lot of the supporting material (and indeed some of my Best Lines) in order to keep the VP Message down to some sort of reasonable length and still stretch the coverage as far as possible.

I expect you'll have dissents and questions; I'll try to answer these as clearly as I can, and as usual will admit goofs whenever convinced of them. But only then.

Unofficially, I should say that I could not rule whether GROTESQUE was a reprint because I don't know. A reprint has to be reprinted from a previous appearance, and my ignorance of such is no proof either way; the question would have to go back to LA, I guess, for a definitive answer. Sidelight: when does an overdependence on quoted material verge upon reprint status for the entire presentation? A lot of things we have not settled in this microcosm, I'd say. ..And so much for Mailing Comments...

D r u n k e n D r i v i n g a s a F o l k A r t F o r m

Several mailings ago as you'll recall I entered a plea against the universal intolerance accorded to the "drunken" driver. "If you haven't tried it, don't knock it", I said, and other remarks to the same or similar effect. Here in FAPA, this freehold of independent thought it says here, I expected something more in response than a series of stereotyped quasiquotations from the National Safety Council. But regardless of the degree of brainwashing in this august assemblage I did do these many mailings ago have a serious point or two to raise and by golly I'm gonna do it.

It's my own fault that these points did not appear as self-evident in my earlier pitch; I got carried away and pulled a JWCjr ["Slavery is GOOD for you!"] and never did get around to qualify the challenge meaningfully. I hope it's not too late now...

It was NOT that I intended to defend the individual who tries to drive a car when he himself is out of control. Rather, I wished (and still wish) to protest the automatic verdict that the joker with booze on his breath is ipso facto out of control. Sometimes he is and sometimes he isn't. And to short-circuit both your rebuttals and my own punchline, the problem is that there are no objective means to tell the difference, short of performance. And in order to emphasize that aspect of "performance" I related a few indefensible but adequate performances from my own past, NOT meaning that it is OK to drive blanked-out but rather that if this can be done then obviously the arbitrary .150 on the balloon test is something less than definitive. So now let us consider the problem as it is, and how the propaganda falls short.

To begin with, the great NSC argument about "slowed reaction times" is the purest BS. Not that booze doesn't slow reaction-times; it does. But the allowable range of reflex-lags (in states that test for this quality, as Washington once did) is so great as to render the entire argument irrelevant. That is, the liquor-slowed reactions of a healthy young drunk may and often are still considerably quicker than those of an ailing aging sedentary teetotaler who yet has full run of the streets and highways. There is of course more to it than simple reflex abilities. Slowed reflexes can be compensated by increased concentration, alertness, looking ahead, and leaving oneself more leeway as a matter of habit. All these compensating factors are equally susceptible to erosion by alcohol, I readily admit; it's all a matter of paying attention.

The dangerous thing about booze is not that it slows the reflexes, but that it can by way of euphoria wipe out caution and the sense of responsibility. In large doses it can drastically shorten the attention-span and destroy concentration. When these things happen to a driver he becomes the menace that the "drunken driver" is universally purported to be. BUT-- these effects are not constant from person to person; two beers may unhinge one individual while another can drive home in reasonable safety with a fifth under his belt if he didn't rush it there. And the same person may be dependable most of the time but goof up unpredictably. And THERE is your case against "drunk driving"-- not that it's inevitably dangerous to anyone at .150 on the Drunkometer, but that (just like anger or fatigue or sickness) it can make the driver unsafe without his realizing it, though ordinarily it (and they) do not. Y'see?

If we consider a load of alcohol as a handicap to good driving, it is obvious that (like any other handicap) practice will help to overcome it. That is, you'll find that your habitual boozing driver will have learned to compensate for the load to a considerable extent and that for the most part he will stay out of trouble. The National Safety Council would hate to admit this but it happens all the time. The cops know it well enough, too; it's the novice or ape drunk who gives them all the trouble, or perhaps I should qualify that to say 98 percent, because there are the exceptions. But the boozer who is neither madcap-euphoric nor bombed out of his skull is every bit as good a driving risk as the fella with the bottle-bottoms glasses and the radio turned all the way up, the twitch who is on tranquillizers, or the ulcer case with the incipient shakes. [So much for Equal Rights, hey Martin Luther?] Not to mention the hausfrau with 3 kids and 2 dogs in the back of the station-wagon, with no attention to spare for emergencies such as traffic lights and people making left turns. It all evens out pretty well if you just look at it objectively for once, which is seldom.

But now do we have a better view of the problem? It is not that One Glass of Beer makes an irresponsible maniac out of Everyman, but rather that there is as yet no really objective criterion by which the really dangerous types can be sorted out from the ordinary cases until after the damage has been done. Please note that I hold no brief for Idiots-at-the-Wheel even though I have played the part myself on occasion, without damage for the great majority of cases but still Not A Good Thing at all.

I'd like to cite two incidents. One morning in the fall of 1949 I came off the graveyard shift at 7am and somehow got involved in an all-day drinking party. At 11pm that evening in a drenching rain I was pulled over (on my way home from a real swinging excursion to an outlying town) for speeding, after having slowed down and ducked into a side street when I spotted the prowlcars up ahead (but had to pass them before I could turn off). After about 15 hours of steady boozing I was so smashed that I couldn't even get worried very much; the cop asked questions and I answered blithely but not impertinently. He said do you know how fast you were going and I said, no sir, although I really did know: 75mph in a 30-mile zone just before I spotted all that law up ahead, but quite a bit less than that by the time I passed the law and naturally showed them no more stoplight at all. He said how much have you had to drink and I said I don't know, sir. He said what do you mean you don't know and I said I wasn't keeping score, sir, which was true. He said all right let's see you get out and walk around, so I did, and that cold wet air and rain hit me and I just had time to think hoo boy you have sure had it now, and he said well I guess you're all right --and that is when I damn near fell on my face but not quite. Then after I got back in the car he said I am writing you up for 45 in a 30 mile zone; is that all right with you? I said that seems perfectly fair to me and took the ticket. Then I went about 15 miles up to the north end of town to another booze party and after about an hour of that I cut out for home which was about 10 miles and sacked out. A couple-three days later I paid the \$13 for the ticket and well worth it, I'd say.

Incident #2: in the fall of 1951 a gang of us took off after work and boozed up and missed dinner. Some hours later I was batting up Rainier Avenue too fast because a guy in the back seat threatened to puke and I needed a place to turn off the arterial and let him out. I didn't run any lights but I was "doubling them up" a little bit and necessarily changing lanes more than usual though not cutting people off or like that. So I got nailed, and the only good thing about it was that someone pushed this guy's head out the door after we stopped and before he threw up; look for the silver lining I always say in a square crowd. This cop hollered I'll have your license for this before he even got close enough to smell my aromatic breath, so there was a good array of charges although speeding was the only actual legal offense. So down at the station I blew up their balloon (feeling just a little high but perfectly OK) & damn if it didn't register .253. Disbelieving this I insisted on a blood test; it came out .257 of all things. So I went through the physical coordination tests and on the basis of these was acquitted of the Drunk Driving charges, when it came to court. I did get tagged for "reckless" rather than just speeding, and when I asked how come I was told that if I had not had beer on my breath I could have done the very same things for \$15 instead of \$75: simple-speeding rather than reckless-driving. But since as I say the cop blew his stack before he got within range, I tend to discount that tale even though it would bolster my present thesis to swallow it whole. I think the city was just hard-up and money-hungry then, as now. Well, so much for Sea Stories, hey?

Again, these incidents are aggravated instances that do nothing much in favor of my thesis. Unfortunately neither I nor anyone else have any statistics on the rather large number of persons who drive home from parties with a load on and attract no attention from either the law or the Safety Council; it's not on the sworn record. I don't do it any more unless it is absolutely necessary (which is damn seldom) but I knocked it off because of the legal risks, not the physical; insurance gets too costly after such as the 1951 brannigan, even for cautious and conservative boozers.

But back to cases: my gripe is that the law states categorically that a touch of alcohol incapacitates a driver whether it really does or not. No help for it though...