

S N I C K E R S N E E

VOLUME ONE

NUMBER SEVENTEEN

Nodeja, 1964-65

Published for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association by Bob Silverberg, 5020 Goodridge Avenue, New York 71, N.Y. Adherents to the vile Zip Code please note that my serial number is not that listed in the Fantasy Amateur. Gestetner work by Boyd Raeburn, who probably uses East German equipment.

\* \* \* \*

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME. Fifteen years ago this month, my first FAPA mailing -- the 49th -- arrived. It was an experience that made me sick.

Of course, I got sick easily that year. I was in my early teens, somewhat frail, and still loopy from the effects of going from five feet three to five feet ten in a single twelve-month period without gaining any weight. (For a while I thought I was going to be a giant -- but after that one burst of growth I never added another millimeter.) I was sick a good deal the winter of 1949-50, with various stomach ailments and one mysterious debility that left me so headaching I couldn't even read, a miserable kind of sickness for someone like me to have.

The day the mailing arrived, I was in bed suffering from, I think, a bad cold, which got a lot worse as I came under the fever-inducing influence of my first FAPA mailing. It was a snowy, slushy Saturday in November that the bundle arrived -- less than 200 pages, most of it in the purple dittoing that was the Walter Coslet hallmark. (He was the Ted White of that distant era, a born griper who also did publishing work for pay.) Another memorable item came in the same mail: a coverless copy of the October 1929 Science Wonder Stories, for which I had paid 50¢ to Claude Held, the Buffalo dealer. Later that same winter, I was destined to come across a treasure-trove of old Gernsback publications in a musty antique shop in downtown Brooklyn, and was able to fill in my files of ancient prozines at a token price, but I didn't know then that that was on the docket.

So I pawed in awe over my Science Wonder, the first large-size prozine I had ever seen, and then I turned to the mailing. And read it and read it a few more times, over and over that long

weekend. My temperature kept going up, too. But it was glorious to be in FAPA, all the same. I had joined the waiting list in May, as (I think) Number Six, and it had taken all of four months to get admitted; early that fall had come the word from Redd Boggs, and I had had time to get a magazine into my first mailing. It was SPACESHIP, a poorly-mimeographed half-sized job filled mostly with my own stories, and those of my co-editor, a neighborhood friend named Saul Diskin. (At the Oakland convention this last year, I met Redd Boggs for the first time, and as we stood staring at each other with the uneasiness of long-time correspondents who hardly know how to begin a conversation so long deferred, he said, "What ever happened to Saul Diskin?" I told him that I didn't know, that I hadn't had any contact with him for ten years. So, of course, when I got back to New York after the convention, there was a letter waiting for me from Saul Diskin. He had seen one of my paperback s-f books on the newsstand, had picked it up out of curiosity, and had written to me c/o the publisher. Seems he had settled in Phoenix after a stint in the Merchant Marine, and was now a real estate broker with three kids.)

Saul and I had collaborated on some fiction and sent it to the pro editors of the day -- Ray Palmer at Amazing, Sam Merwin at TWS and SS, Paul Payne at Planet, and, of course, John W. Campbell, Jr. I was seething with the desire to be a professional science fiction writer -- to sell one story, at least, before I died. My first fiction check was five years off, that day, and I didn't know that either. (And what would I have said if someone had shown me a peek into 1964 -- a bearded Silverberg, master of an imposing mansion, with a lovely wife and hundreds of books and stories in print? That sickly boy of 1949 would have snickered, I think. Often in my own daydreams I conjured up my future then, and it looked very much the way it really turned out. But who expects adolescent daydreams to come true?)

Fifteen years, then. Redd Boggs is still in FAPA. So is Harry Warner, and that sly devil Rotsler, whose naked ladies unsettled my virginal libido a decade and a half ago. (They still do, though both he and I have changed a bit since 1949.) But fans who now seem Old Guard had not yet arrived on the scene then. Where are you in the 49th mailing, Boyd? Gregg? Buz? Ron Ellick was in grade school. Les Gerber had no front teeth. Lee Hoffman, busy with amateur theatricals, was unknown to fandom. The heyday of Willis had yet to come, though SLANT was already appearing. Eney was an obstreperous neofan; Ellison, unknown; Randy Garrett a slim young man. And I lay sniffing and feverish in my Brooklyn bed, staring at the purpled pages, stumbling into the brave new world of FAPA, as awed as the stout conquistadore silent on that peak in Darien.

Today I felt some of that same excitement when the mailing arrived. Fifteen years! O, Tempora! Oh, my god!

MR. MOSES' PROMISED LAND

So we went to the World's Fair. Twice, in fact, and had a good time. And we plan to go a lot more often when the Fair opens again next April.

When I tell my friends that, they're invariably astonished -- because as everyone knows the World's Fair is just a gigantic Walt Disney operation, fit only for the sneers of the sophisticated, and everyone says it's out of character for me to be enthusiastic about something so utterly cornball. "What, Bob Silverberg liked the World's Fair?" one type asked, as though I'd just testified to my undying affection for Lawrence Welk or Doris Day.

But I did like it. So did Barbara. We stayed away until early in September, when I finally brought myself to take a day off and go out there just from sheer curiosity. We were there when the gates opened at ten in the morning, and we left something like thirteen hours later -- so we got our fill, you might say. Then we went back on a fine October afternoon, getting there about three o'clock and staying till eleven. That proved to be a better arrangement for seeing the Fair, easier on the feet and a whole lot less expensive earningswise, since I was able to do a full day's stint at the typewriter before going.

A lot of the Fair is awful, of course -- vulgar, horrid, absurd. Much of the architecture is abhorrent, so that the place looks like nothing so much as Los Angeles without the palm trees. And much that goes on in the pavilions is dreadful. (I think particularly of the Tower of Light, sponsored by the utility industry, in which the unhappy visitors are trapped standing up on a rotating platform sealed at both ends that carries them through half an hour of pseudo-Disney exhibits of stupefying unsubtlety.) It's also pretty crowded most of the time, and what they say about waiting on lines is true, though we found ways of beating the game. (IBM, for instance, lets you reserve a seat hours ahead of time. Most of the people who go to the Fair aren't capable of thinking ahead more than six or seven minutes, which is to say as far as their next hot dog. And by going to the Fair after the tourist season and on a day when school was in session we had a relatively private time.)

Despite all the predictable dreadfulness, there's more than enough of high interest, even for suave, worldly types like us, who have been around the world many times and seen such wonders as Ackerman's garage, the garbage pickup on the Venice canals, and the fabulous guarapo bars of San Juan. Several of the pavilions were impressive for their design and richness of texture, so much so that it seems criminal that they're going to be torn down next year. The Spanish pavilion, of course, is the most widely praised, and justly so. The IBM pavilion is noteworthy both for its novel and striking design and for the wholly ingenious way that people are moved through it. I

liked some of the African pavilions, and even the U.S. government pavilion was imposing from a distance, sitting on top of its infinity of steps like some potentate's tomb.

The entertainment was also worthwhile, in many cases. Bright, sprightly, rarely engaging the mind but always appealing to the senses, clever in a good way. The longest lines surrounded the Johnson's Wax Pavilion, which was showing a superb film called TO BE ALIVE, done in one of the multi-screen processes, and captivating enough to wring whoops of pleasure from at least one hardened cynic. Eastman Kodak had a very similar film, nearly as good. IBM put on a show for Sturgeon people, for you needed six or seven linked minds to watch what was happening on all the screens at once; I was disappointed that the content was so lightweight, but IBM made up for it with the secondary sideshows around the pavilion, including a first-rate demonstration of computer translation from Russian to English and back. General Motors provided a relaxing sitting-down tour through the Future, which looks like a bunch of old Paul covers. Dupont has another slick show -- one long commercial for Dupont, but done so engagingly that I wasn't bothered a bit by the hard sell, and people who know me will find that a remarkable statement.

And then there were the restaurants.

We had heard a lot about the Spanish restaurants -- particularly the prices. So we looked. Two rooms, both as elegant as can be. One, the Toledo, seemed astonishingly expensive (seven and eight bucks for a la carte main dishes) and so we ate in the adjoining Granada, where we had a first-class high-style Spanish dinner with wine, drinks, and tip, all for \$23 for two -- not exorbitant, I felt, considering the quality and novelty of the food. On the second trip we ate at the Mexican restaurant, which is not a tamale joint at all, but a superb haute-cuisine place that has no equal in New York's Mexican restaurants. I particularly remember the appetizers: cebiche, a spicy raw fish for me, and marinated abalone for Barbara. Main dishes were just as good. Tab here was \$21 for two, wine and cocktails and tip included, and again not excessive for what was delivered.

For lunch we ate everywhere. Jordan, Lebanon, and other Near Eastern and African countries have excellent little snack bars serving local specialties, and we hummed from one to the next. I'd describe some of the foods if I had another stencil on hand. On our next trip, we look forward to the Indonesian restaurant, though we hear it's been diluted for American palates, and to the Malaysian, Guinean, and half a dozen others on later trips. Lee Jacobs, are you there? It's possible to buy just about any kind of beer on the premises, and I did. (Though what passed for a British pub was selling Schaefer beer -- one example of the shoddiness that lurked here and there.)

We had a ball. We mean to go back often next year. If this be treason, make the most of it.