

SPENT BRASS

The frequent fanzine that heard shots from the grassy knoll. Published by Andy Hooper and Carrie Root, 4228 Francis Ave. N. #103 Seattle, WA 98103, members fwa. It's available for the usual. This is Drag Bunt Press Production #149, 1/10/93. Material this time comes from Andy, Carrie and Ted White. Title by Pat Virzi, Art by Dan Steffan (pages 1 and 2).

This issue printed by Mark Manning, trufan.

Mandrake gestures hypnotically....

ASSORTED NOTES FROM RAINY TOWN

by Andy



Two ghosts presumed swallowed in the maelstrom that is New York have come to the surface recently. First, Gary Farber gave us a call to prove that he is still alive, and that the six page letter we had from him last fall was not a hoax. While Gary is still dogged by persistent penury, he is feeling better than he has in years, and would love it if people would send him their fanzines again. He says he'll try to write back, but his printer was melted when his apartment burned down. Fan fund anyone?.....Also back in the light was Victor Gonzalez, visiting Seattle between semesters. We saw him both at the Berry/Gunn New Year's soiree and last Saturday's Vanguard. His beard and tweed jacket combined to suggest a new Victor formed from equal measures of John Jarrod and Flinders Petrie. Still a generous man with sercon tendencies, he told me that he has almost no contact with fandom now, which

situation fan publishers should feel welcome to remedy. We'll run his address and Gary's for in the COA column at the back.....I must apologize for mis-reporting the proposed title of the proposed new SF3 genzine. The actual proposed title is Badger Roulette. The proposed editor, Nevenah Smith, would happily accept your proposed contributions at Box 1624, Madison, WI, 53701-1624.....Recent scientific study has confirmed the existence of a fault-line running directly under the Seattle Kingdome, prompting many to note that things actually could be worse for the Seattle Mariners. It is believed that we could suffer any or all of three disasters any time now, violent earthquake, massive tsunami, or cataclysmic volcanic eruption. In all three cases, our apartment would end up in the ship canal. I suppose if I plan on standing for TAFF, I ought to think about doing it soon.....Don't forget the DUFF Deadline, on February 1st. All the candidates seem like fine emissaries to send down under.....Whining from points south seems to indicate that some people now believe that the Corflu committee is somehow obligated to publish a fanthology of material four years past, in time for the annual fanzine confab. Amazing how quickly an immense pain in the ass can become a tradition, yes? And yet, the Corflu committee is willing to foot the bill anyway, if someone is willing to be the editor. Don't all raise your hands at once.....It's depressing, isn't it, how much better Langford does this sort of thing.....Sincere and joyful congratulations to Brian Earl and Denice Brown, whose daughter Sarah Bethany was born October 25th last. Little Sarah B. is featured on the front page of the new STICKY QUARTERS, and has a remarkable resemblance to her daddy, without the beard of course. I always suspected that Brian was capable of higher quality reproduction.....Luke McGuff has started an Apa designated as being, at least temporarily, For Men Only, matching the two or three apas with all-female rosters. He wants prospective members to know they won't have to get in touch with the grief of the warrior-king if they don't want to. All inquiries to Mr. McGuff, please. -- aph

This fanzine is a U.N. mandated No-Fly zone.

UFFISH THOTS



A WEALTH OF FABLES: by Ted White

Early in 1992 — at Corflu to be exact — Dick Lynch handed me a huge loose leaf binder and said, "Here, Ted. Why don't you read this and vet it for me." The binder held a proof copy of the new, typeset edition of Harry Warner's *A Wealth of Fable*, his history of fandom in the fifties. Each page was printed on a single side of a sheet: 4/5 of a ream of paper, contained in this one huge white plastic binder.

I read it. I found 27 errors worth remarking on to Dick: errors of provable fact (like relocating the Nunnery on a side street in Manhattan, rather than on Cooper Square), most of which were subsequently corrected. But I also found 35 items with which I disagreed as to emphasis or import — matters of interpretation rather than out-and-out errors of fact. This may be inevitable when you face off two people in a discussion of events thirty to forty years in the past. On the other hand, Terry Carr went on record with the statement that there was an average of at least one error per page in the original mimeographed edition of the book. Some may have been typist's errors, but others were clearly errors of understanding and interpretation.

The fact is that Harry Warner was less active in fandom in the fifties than in any other decade of his fannish career (which goes back to the late thirties). He had retreated into FAPA in the late forties, to emerge therefrom only gradually in the latter fifties.

"All information is contained in fanzines" is an old motto of the LA Insurgents — and fanzines are what Harry depended on for his history. But he didn't get a lot of those fanzines published in the first half of the fifties, and those he got were sometimes bearers of misinformation. (I blush to admit that I may be responsible for the misinformation that rich brown got into fandom from EC/comics fandom; I recently came across a letter of mine in a 1961 fanzine that made such a claim. I was wrong. The misinformation was printed as fact in the first edition of *A Wealth of Fable*; rich and I both corrected it and it does not appear in the new edition.)

Unlike Harry, I entered fandom in the fifties — in 1951 — and I was an intense participant in fifties fandom, as only a neofan of thirteen can be. This

does not qualify me to write a better history of fandom in the fifties, however. Indeed, any attempt on my part could be worse. I was too close to the trees to have any overall concept of the forest. To me fandom in the fifties was a particular and shifting group of people and how they interacted: I am qualified only to write a history of my involvement in fandom. Nor was the fifties a time in which I was a major player in fandom, in the sense that people like Lee Hoffman, Bob Tucker, Walt Willis, Shelby Vick, Greg Calkins, Vernon McCain and others were. My time to shine was the sixties — and it seems unlikely that Harry or anyone else will write that history.

But there are aspects of *A Wealth of Fable* that disappoint, dismay or disturb me.

The major one is that of tone and organization. This is one of the blandest things Harry — never known for controversy — has ever written. Even the tone is bland; even-paced, awarding the same significance to every factoid given, with no liveliness even in dealing with lively topics. There are no high and low points in this enormous book: just an ever-droning progression onward, a nearly endless recitation of names, fanzine titles, and location, with little spice either in the stories told or in the prose in which they are told. It's numbing. It's boring.

The way in which Harry has organized his history doesn't help. A quick glance at the table of contents — which lists twenty-four chapters with titles like "Where there's a Willis," "Tales of Hoffman," "Goon But Not Forgotten," etc. — might give you the impression that the book is actually organized into chapters devoted to specific topics. But this would be misleading. The "Willis" chapter, for example, devotes only the first six and half pages to Willis. The next five (the second half of the chapter) are devoted to John Berry (the English John Berry, then residing in Belfast). But the fanzine for which John is famous is not dealt with until five chapters later, in "Goon But Not Forgotten." Here the first two pages of the chapter are concerned with RETRIBUTION and Berry's Goon Defective Agency, but then Harry veers off in another direction: two pages are devoted to Dick Geis and his PSYCHOTIC, another two go to CRY OF THE NAMELESS, yet another two to the Coulsons and YANDRO, a page to Charles Lee Riddle's PEON... and eight more pages devoted, in turn, to Ron Smith's INSIDE, it's mutation under Jon White to RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY, and Leland Sapiro's takeover of that title, RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST, THE FANSCIENT, Bergeron & WARHOON, ORB, Bill Evans, best-ofs, indexes, and FANCYCLOPEDIA II.

Thus it becomes apparent that in fact individual chapters are rarely confined to the topics in which they begin, and for which they are titled.

In fact, *A Wealth of Fable* is only loosely and generally organized and is written more or less non-stop, arbitrarily divided after the fact into chapters.

I think that there is historical significance to be found in fandom. I think certain threads can be traced through fandom's history. There are warring ideologies -- sercon vs. fannish, for instance -- represented at different times in fanhistory by certain notable fans.

If I tried to write a fanhistory -- of any or all eras of fandom -- this is what I would concentrate upon. I would present a thesis for a point of fanhistorical review.

For instance, I might well concentrate on the relevance of humor (and a sense of humor) to fandom, both in terms of actual history - Bob Tucker pretty well introduced humor to fandom in the mid-thirties, paving the way for today's concept of "fannishness" - and it's importance in puncturing incipient pomposity, for instance, and keeping us from taking ourselves too seriously. such an overview would make sense of the Insurgents/LASFS clash of the late forties, it would demonstrate the genius of Irish Fandom in the fifties, and it would explain my incredible antipathy for the kind of fans, fandom and fanzines exemplified by LAN'S LANTERN.

And I would not be egalitarian in my fanhistory. All fans are not created equal in ability. Many are spear-carriers., and only a few are leaders. What is remarkable about fandom is that mundane status has no bearing on fannish status: We are seen and judged by our fellow fans based on what we do as fans. Those of great talent are recognized as such. Ours is a fannish meritocracy. Thus, the history of fandom is the history of a number of remarkable individuals: the ways in which they interacted and the fanzines they created. Had there been no Bob Tucker, no Charles Burbee, no Walt Willis, or no Terry Carr, the fandom we know today would be far different -- perhaps unrecognizable, maybe little more than just another hobby club.

But Harry Warner took a different approach. There is absolutely no overview to be found in his book. There is no thesis at all. Nor does Harry recognize the importance of any of the Decade's major fans more than peripherally. He attaches no importance to any of them. Some of them wrote or drew better than most, some put out good fanzines, some participated in a nifty hoax or two (like "Carl Brandon"), but Harry draws no significance from this, makes no attempt to trace influences handed down through the fan generations, and sees no patterns.

What he does do is to present a lot of information. It is, as I've said, largely unweighted as to its importance, but in a casual, modestly

anecdotal fashion Harry tells us a lot of superficial facts (rarely revealing and insight into the personalities of the fans being discussed) about fans and fandom in the fifties.

These facts are drawn from fanzines which Harry has exhaustively collected and read. They are as accurate as their sources, which is to say, not always very.

In his "Pro Loc" (prologue) Harry discusses how very much he had to omit. "I hope nobody feels to disappointed by the other kinds of omissions from this book," he says, after describing how he "linker(ed) with the precise facts," in the name of "expediency." "It's size would have tripled if I had included everything which instinct and reasoning indicate should be there." This, he says, is "why I wrote little or nothing about municipal fandoms which had minimal impact on fandom at large during these years; why I've broken my own heart by failing to spend a page or two on personal favorites like APCORRHETA, Jean Young, and a hundred other fanzines and fans." despite this disclaimer, *A Wealth of Fable* is bloated with extraneous facts and factoids, many of them of absolutely no relevance at all to fandom at large.

For example, in a wandering survey of fandom in other countries, Harry takes half a page - starting with "One curious circumstance was the difficulty of finding signs of fandom in Italy during the 1950s" and concluding with "still there was no real fandom in Italy while signs of it were bobbing up in smaller or remoter nations" - to tell us just that: that there was no fandom in Italy in the 1950s. A single sentence or two would have sufficed, had Harry really cared about the size of his history. (Another example occurs earlier, on p. 245, when Harry describes how "a group of high school and college students in Lincoln, Nebraska had built a mock-up of a spaceship," and by another concerning "a bunch of junior college students at Mason City, Iowa" and their pranks. Talk about "minimal impact on fandom at large"! These people weren't even fans. Why do they rate even a single sentence in this book?)

Be that as it may, Harry left out all the juice, and gave us a heavy dose of pulp. So I propose to do a little fanhistorical reconstitution. In following columns I will try to flesh out, add significance to, and sometimes rebut sections of Harry's book. This is not being done in a critical fashion, but simply using Harry's book as a jumping off point from which to present some fanhistories of my own.

-- tw

What is it, are people afraid to review this fanzine?

I'm getting a little verklempt here....

THE WANT LIST

by Andy

In the process of preparing the Arkadian Bookshop fanzine auction, I have had occasion to read an awful lot of old fanzines, from the forties and fifties. Some were great, some were dreadful, but in general they didn't seem all that different from fanzines today. One thing that was very common then that you almost never see now were "want lists," notices of books, pulps, promags and fanzines which the publisher sought to buy or trade for. The practice was far more prevalent in the days when SF retailers were few and far between, but it still seems like a good idea when you're looking for stuff only other fans are likely to be able to provide -- like fanzines, for instance.

I'm not a completist, and I haven't any unrealistic hopes of collecting a run of all my favorite titles from sixth fandom. But there are some fanzines from more recent years that I wish I had, and I would be interested in buying or trading for them. If you own duplicates, or you would be willing to part with some of these for a reasonable sum of cash, drop me a line and I'll make you an insulting offer: all ABBATOIR but # 5, ANSIBLE 1 - 4, 7, 9 - 35, 37 - 38, 42 - 50, BLATANT 1 - 7, 9, FILE 770 2 - 8, 10 - 21, 23, 29 - 30, 33, 35 - 37, 40, 43 - 46, 48 - 50, 52, 54 - 62, 64 - 68, 70 - 72, 78 - 79, 81, 83, IZZARD 3 - 5, 7, MAINSTREAM 1 - 4, 6, 8, 10, PONG 25, 33 -- 35, 39, PREVERT 1 - 14, PULP 4 - 5, 7 - 9, 15, 18, SIDNEY SUPPEY'S QUARTERLY & CONFUSED PET MONTHLY prior to Volume 5, no. 3, TAPPEN 3 - 4, 6+, TELOS 3 - 4, 6+, TRAP DOOR 5 - 6 and WING WINDOW 5 - 6, 8. If I manage to find all of these, perhaps someone will be able to recommend a larger apartment to us. -- aph

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

Lee Hoffman,
3290 Sunrise Trail
Port Charlotte, FL 33952

Mike DuCharme
3222 69th St. # 48
Galveston, TX 77551-2007

Victor Gonzalez
204 W. 108th St. # 44
New York, NY 10025

Woody Bernardi
6363 Clarice Ave. # 108
Las Vegas, NV 89107-1343

Wendell Joost
14741 NE 31st St. Apt. 1C
Bellevue, WA 98007-3651

Gary Farber
495 W. 186th St. Apt. 5E
New York, NY 10033

Happy New Year to all you bitter, crawling, ex-Clarion suck-ups.

SPENT BRASS # 16
C/O Mark Manning
1709 South Holgate
Seattle, WA 98144 USA

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BULK MAIL
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PERMIT NO. 765

Kate Schaefer & Glen Hackney
4012 Interlake N.
Seattle, WA 98103