



The  
Sphere

*The Sphere*, vol. 48 #1, is published for the 77th Mailing of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance by Don Markstein, 2533 Gen. Pershing St., New Orleans, La. 70115. Demented Turkish Dwarf Press publication #338. 4/13/77. Printed in Occupied CSA.

It's interesting, if not particularly flattering, to see myself compared to a used prophylactic twice in the same mailing. And "scumbag" is such an unusual insult, too, to appear in the same context in two "independent" zines whose editors *insist* that their hatreds of me are quite individual affairs, unaffected by any other opinion, and, in fact, each of them was hating me before the other. This merely stands as a rather blatant demonstration of something I've been saying for years--that the group they both belong to, once vibrant and outward-looking, is now extremely inbred and getting worse all the time...and doesn't even give much evidence of having found any new topics of conversation since I left it. Which is no skin off of *my* nose, of course, since I moved on to greener pastures as soon as I realized this.

But I wonder if the same might be said of SFPA. As Dave Hulan points out, there hasn't been a whole lot of membership turnover since he joined, going on four years ago. We have people joining and dropping out all the time, but that's on the periphery. The core of SFPA, which comprises about 80% of the roster, just hangs on and on and on.

It's kind of hard for me to talk about this, being Part Of The Problem myself, but as one or two of you might have noticed if you've stopped shouting long enough, I've been doing some heavy thinking lately about me and SFPA and fandom and life in general, and the conclusions thus far elude me, I do find myself moving in certain directions. One of them is taking me away from SFPA, apparently, so look for less from me henceforth.

Two zines in the last mailing hit me right in the gut--those of Stven Carlberg and George Inzer. Maybe Stven, George and I tend to reinforce one another's head trips since we're always talking with one another on the phone, but it does seem like we're going through fairly analogous traumas right now. In fact...well, here's a parable.

Once there was a man who...

Nah, that's ridiculous. I'll tell it straight. I've made up my mind about a couple of things. First off, I'm tired of having to go to someone else whenever I need a cartoon drawn, so I'm going to learn to draw. I may not be the most talented artist in the world, but I am a human being with all of the latent capabilities accruing thereto. I am not limited by what I've done before; in fact, my potentialities are endless, just like everyone else's, and there's no reason I can't learn something just because I've spent 30 years not knowing it.

But more important, I'm going to learn to sing. Maybe I'll never sing with the Metropolitan (or any other insurance company, for that matter), but there's no reason I can't at least learn to carry a tune.

Stven came by Easter weekend. He carried with him the 76th Mailing, uncollated (I wound up mailing it myself, nearly two weeks after the deadline), and a whole shitload of insecurities, uncertainties, mindfucks of all shape and description. We didn't get very deep into each other's psyches, but we talked around a lot of stuff. I mentioned the two decisions above, kind of proud of myself for having come to them. At the second, he laughed. I shut up.

A few days later, just before he left, I asked him why he'd laughed. He said it was because he's known me all these years, and I've *never* been able to carry a tune. I *love* to sing, and apologizing beforehand for grating on everybody's ears has become a regular schtick with me. Everyone expects it. It's one of my trademarks.

Well, I'm tired of living up to an image. It's about time I started living up to my own hopes and expectations. Learning to carry a tune may seem like a little thing to everyone else--especially those who never had to learn--but to me, it's a kind of declaration of independence from the accumulated shit of three decades.



A couple of days after Stven left, George phoned. We started talking about pretty much the same thing, and I told him about the incident, including particularly the bit about being tired of living for an image and wanting to live for myself.

Then, just after hanging up, I read George's zine.

Jesus Christ, he was saying the same thing I was!

Living up to an image! You know, I very nearly skipped this mailing. More than likely I *will* skip one sometime in the future, if I keep feeling the way I do now about SFPA. You see, I've entertained thoughts of dropping out--just like Stven and George--because I'm just *sick to death* of fighting the same fights over and over and over. I want to *screeeeeeeam*, it's ... never mind; if I get started on this I'll never say anything else.

But it's the part about living up to an image that bothers me, and I'm not talking about the image of the Eternal Vendettas and Turning On Friends because that's just the image I have with a small bunch of people who haven't actually sat down and talked with me in years, if ever. No, it's the image of the Dedicated Apan, the Staunch and Dependable Faned that I'm talking about, that I may want to chuck.

I think about dropping out of SFPA, right? You know what keeps me in? Oh, sure, I think about Lon and Ned and Gary and Alan and all of the good people and good times and how I wouldn't want to give all that up just for a few rotten apples, but that's not all I think about.

I think about forty-seven consecutive mailings. 48, now. I mean, gee, *The Sphere* hasn't missed a SFPA mailing since it started, in November, 1968. I have the 9th-longest current string of apa mailings hit in the entire world--the *entire world*, I mean, like, you can go to Nome and Oshkosh and Odessa and Moose Jaw and anywhere in the world you like, and you'll only find eight people who have been hitting every single mailing of an apa without fail longer than I've been hitting SFPA mailings. I can't let a string like that fall by the wayside, can I?

Like hell I can't! I am a free man; I can do anything I like.

I keep telling myself.

Someday soon, I think I'm going to have to prove to myself that that's not what's keeping me in SFPA. Maybe I'll just go to #50; that's a nice round number. After that, I don't know. It may be that this thing is just too heavy for me to carry around with me. I've got a lot of stuff like that, and I think someday I may chuck it all.

Someday.

Meanwhile, Howdy do, SFPA. I'm a different man from what I was two months ago, but that's nothing new or unique with me. It's just that I'm taking the trouble to say so right now, not that I was the same two months ago as four, or that any of you are the same. It's just--well, maybe I'm just now reaching out to grab a plateau.

Or maybe part of the problem is that everything *is* the same. Maybe that *is* the problem. More and more, I find myself glad Stven went and increased the membership. We could use some new blood, new topics, new directions. We could also stand to get rid of some old.

While he was here, Stven expressed the opinion that what SFPA needs right now more than anything else in the world is a massive shakeup. If about five or six Core members dropped out, he opines, the shock would snap us out of the rut we're in and get us going somewhere else. I'm not sure I agree, but it's an interesting thought.

Who wants to be first?

I suppose you think we're not in a rut. Well, chew on this for awhile. Do you realize

Charles Korbas has been gone for a whole year? When was the last time anyone said anything *new* about him? When was the last time anyone said anything about him that was of even the slightest interest, even to himself? We've got ourselves a nice new supply of in-jokes about him, and maybe someday they'll get to be funny. But right now, man, we are really in a rut.

Got a proposal for you. This is just something we can think about, maybe chew around and modify, and I hope something comes of it.

In CAPA-alpha a few years ago, a proposal was made that members be allowed to take sabbaticals, just to rest up and not have to produce anything for the apa for a little while. I don't remember all the details, but the idea did suddenly pop into my head, possibly put there by a few conversations at Stven&Don'sCon and triggered by Stven's visit and the few snippets of the mailing I read while he was here, that a variation on that might not do SFPA any harm.

George put his finger on it when he said (yes, I know he was quoting me and Beth, but he's still the one who printed it) that he'd like to drop out for a little while, but the waitlist, unfortunately, makes it impossible to drop for a *little* while. And I doubt he's the only one who could stand to get away from the tensions and irritations that have been building in SFPA, especially among the Core members, for all the years we've been continuously sharing one another's company.

Maybe it wouldn't hurt *any* of us to drop out for six months or a year, and then come back fresh, a little better able to deal with things.

Unfortunately, there *is* that waitlist.

So I propose--let someone else draw it up in legal language, if that's necessary (the new OE could probably think of a way to do it by fiat within the Constitution as it now stands--and if he can't, I could suggest a half dozen ways)--that we allow long-standing members, say those who have held continuing membership for at least, oh, four years, to declare themselves on a leave of absence. They would have no activity requirements, no spot on the roster, and no mailings. The only difference between that and dropping out completely would be that when they declare the leave of absence over, they go to the top of the waitlist and get the next invitation in.

I suppose I can be accused of elitism. In fact, I was--Kevin Smith and JoAnn Montalbano were over when I mentioned the idea to Stven and "elitism" is exactly the word Kevin used. But the seniority is necessary because we don't want someone getting to the top of the waitlist, joining, then dropping right back out because he knows he can get in again any time he likes. This is just for people who have been around for awhile, are "dedicated," if you don't mind too heavy a word, to SFPA, but want to get away from it for awhile. We all have to get away from people, but that doesn't mean we don't love them.

We discussed the matter. One variation Stven proposed is to allow *anyone* who has held continuous membership that long to come in at the top of the wl if he wants to rejoin, whether or not he took the leave of absence per se. Another--this one will get shouted down, but it's at least worth kicking around--is that SFPA might take a leave of absence. That is, pass a self-destructing Constitutional amendment that there will be no mailings during the next year. After something like that, we may all find that the stuff we've been carrying on about for so long just isn't worth talking about. And maybe we'd find that the group means something different to us than we thought.

Whatever.

I'm going to be kind of low key for awhile. No more Coffin Scores, no more one-sheeters to grotch those who comment on every zine in every mailing (I mean, why bother?), and to detach myself somewhat from the personalities, my mailing comments will be free-form, without headings. Good luck figuring out when I'm talking to you.



Andruschak appeals to "common sense" to counteract the five (count 'em) libertarians in his apa. All this says to me is that he's found himself up against a brick wall rationally, and is therefore using a set of meaningless magic words to invoke a nonexistent god. Most of what is called "common sense" is in reality the programming done on the human brain in its earliest formative stages, usually by statisticians who don't know any better. If you examine the "common sense" that tells you governments are necessary *very* closely, with an open mind (extremely rare, especially in this context), you'll usually follow a path of reasoning that takes you right back where you started. For example, "common sense" tells us that if there were no government, gangs would arise to take away our property, commit violent acts endangering our lives, and force us to do things against our own interests and desires. In short, we'd be in danger of having a government imposed on us. When beset by a dragon, your best bet is to slay it--not call in a bigger dragon to drive it away. Free your own mind, Andy, and then maybe you'll find that the libertarians you despise as having no common sense have in reality discarded it voluntarily in favor of clear thinking. (Not that I'm trying to coerce you into coming around to my way of thinking, of course--just asking you to *examine* your postulates; don't just label them "common sense."

Basically, in my opinion, the idea of having a meal function at something like HalfaCon is a little silly. The New Orleans one was an exception, but only because faanish imagination was used in it. The requirements of economics were such that there had to be a banquet of some sort, and it was really an effort to come up with one that fit HalfaCon. But a banquet just for the sake of having a banquet seems like too big a deal for a small party con. I guess they all get bigger as time goes on, and add more of the trappings of a con...all except Stven&Don'sCon, of course, which will be an anarchy no matter how many times we put it on (and which, since it won't attract the kind of nurds who come just to gaze at the panelists, will probably never get too big to be a well run one).

The LASFS minutes were fun for awhile. Now they're boring. I suppose they'll continue to clutter up SFFA mailings for a long time, but I guess I can't complain *too* loudly or someone might bring up a schtick or two of my own that I carried on long after it was fun (like Coffin Scores). It could be worse--in fact, it is; *Ignite* still pops up occasionally, even tho most people stopped laughing four or five years ago.

I'll be interested to see the responses to Mike Weber's thing on the "death" of rock music. I'm not, uh, hep enough (pardon me, dude, the word is "hip") to comment myself, but since I've got the stuff in my own home now, I'm listening with an open mind. Time will tell if this actually leads me anywhere, of course, but meanwhile, I'm interested.

I outgrew AM Top 40 music a good while before The Beatles came along, and somehow never progressed to more sophisticated forms of the stuff, as most of my contemporaries have done. I don't know if that can be corrected or not, or whether I want to, but what the hell, like I say, it's right here in the house with me, so I might as well come to an understanding with it.

The Eternal Spectre of the treasury George Inzer is supposed to have helped me steal (vice versa in some versions) appears to have manifest itself again, this time in a zine done by the same Public Spirited Citizen who originally made up the story. Since he's back in SFFA now, I guess it's worth noting that the charges were originally made the same month as the 1974 DeepSouthCon, and that said Public Spirited Citizen handled the money for that con, and that a fairly large number of people seem to think there may have been some financial irregularities connected with that con. Just a thought... one that I plan to express every time that subject happens to come up from now on. One of the *many* things around here that I'm sick and tired of is living in infamy for a \$30 theft that I didn't even commit, because Celko needed a red herring across the trail of his three grand.

The State of Utah didn't "murder" Gary Gilmore, Ned. It assisted in his suicide.

For the benefit of future indexers, in the unlikely event that there should ever be any, I present a list of credits to all zines issuing from Stven&Don'sCon (and we got them *all* in the mailing, I'm almost positive), compiled by Mitch Thornhill with some gaps filled in by me. The rest of you will just have to suffer through it.



1. Program Booklet. Cover by Alan Hutchinson and Freff. Seven interior pages by Don; five by Stven. 2. DQ vol. 1 #1, all by Stven. 3. DQ vol. 1 #1, logo by Alan, text by Don. DQ vol. 1 #2, logo by Freff, text by Stven. DQ vol. 1 #2, logo by Delmonte, text by Don. DQ 1st in unnumbered series, logo by P.L. Craig, text by Tom Longo. Earsplittenloudenboomer, by Delmonte, JoAnn Montalbano, Kevin Smith, Mitch Thornhill, Lillian. Q vol. 1 #54,639, by Rick Norwood. DQ vol. 1 #2.5, by Delmonte & Don. 10. Yet Another DQ, by Delmonte, Thornhill, ?. 11. DQ vol. 1 #3, logo Kenneth Smith, text Stven, letters from Teri, Mike Walls, Don, "Harry Warner" (Mitch Thornhill), Lester Boutillier, "King Kong" (Stven); DQ vol. 1 #3, Delmonte, Don. DQ, second in an unnumbered series, Craig & Longo. The Last Q, Delmonte, JoAnn. The 666 Q, Delmonte, Boutillier, Walls, Larry Epke. 16. The Annish Quack, Delmonte, JoAnn, Thornhill, Gueldner, Shiela Strickland. 17. Quack vol. ) no. nothing, Norwood. 18. The Lamb of God, Craig, Longo, Norwood, ?. The Illustrated Quack, Delmonte, Markstein, Epke, Thornhill, Craig, Hutchinson, Caruthers, Longo, Walls, and undoubtedly others whose signatures I can't decipher on this copy. Quack Zero, Norwood (printed by smearing ink on a whiskey bottle so as to get around the rule that all Quacks printed on my machine (Tom Longo made the same rule for his) had to go through SFFPA--less than a half dozen copies were printed; the ones in SFFPA are counterfeit). 21. The Non-existent Quack, Norwood, Delmonte (this is that blank page you found in the mailing). 22. The 666 Quack, Norwood. Burnt Quackerings, Longo. The Exotic Quack, Craig, Norwood. 24. The Annotated Quack, Delmonte, Norwood (?), Smith. Up Your Quack, Delmonte. The Quick Quack, Delmonte, Janet Thornhill. The Very Last True Blue Daily Quack, Delmonte, Thornhill. \* - Also Shiela Strickland, "Mike Glicksohn (Thornhill)", "Don Markstein" (Stven), "Kong", Dean Sweatman, Freff, "Richard Nixon" (Mike Walls), Stven. Tho I numbered them sporadically (and sometimes incorrectly), that's a total of 28, which isn't bad for a 64-member convention. I wonder what we're going to do for an encore.

Incidentally, there's a cute story in there, that you really ought to read, if you can work up the energy to wade through the stuff around it.

The news about Caz gafiating and selling off his collection comes from John Guidry, who, alas, is less than 100% reliable but sounds like he knows what he's talking about this time. I'd check with Caz himself if I were interested in anything in particular. And in response to a query (Spanier's, I think), I know of only one Caz, and that's Camille Cazedessus Jr. He wound up in Louisiana by the simple expedient of going home. He's originally from Baton Rouge, which I'm told his family owns half of.

What science fiction story used Dutch Schultz's last words as part of the plot? *Illuminatus*, of course. Everyone knows that. In fact, everyone, deep in his heart, knows *everything* in *Illuminatus*.

It kind of croggles me that anyone would want to use the title and numbering of my *Testing All Systems*, when there are so many fanzine titles in the world that people haven't thought of yet. But if anyone does want to, he's welcome, I guess.

It appears I won't be going to the WorldCon after all, even if it is the first one in the South in 26 years, and even if it is convenient from the DSC, and even if I would like to go to Gary Brown's party. I mean, some things just look like too much of a hassle to mess with. I'm trying to talk Jim Mule into abandoning his 1979 bid in favor of a 1977 one. At this point, a good PR campaign could probably convince everyone that the site had been changed again, this time to New Orleans. And even if it failed, there's a chance it might at least upset Don Lundry to the point where he'll answer his mail.

Jack Kirby is an excellent storyteller and a pretty damn good continuity artist, but his faults are rather rife, and he seems to insist on displaying them. If I were to do a complete overview of his current work, it would have to include my utter fatigue with Nazis in *Captain America* and my extreme weariness with his habit of piling device upon device and character upon character without any apparent intention of ever doing anything at all iwth them, as exemplified by *The Eternals*. But the subject of *2001: A Space Odyssey* has been broached, so I shall mention only his absolute innumeracy (the scientific equivalent, for anyone but the oldtimers who comprise about 80% of the readers of this zine, of illiteracy) and his



abysmal ignorance of science fiction. This seems to faze him not at all, as he continues to second-guess--of *all* people--Arthur C. Clarke, in a field in which he isn't worthy to change Clarke's typewriter ribbon. I'm getting sort of a kick out of his 2001--the latest issue, where he introduces a superhero, thus getting it into a groove that he's qualified to run in, is actually pretty good--but I wish Marvel had given the 2001 assignment to someone else, who understands sf, and that Kirby had called his "amplification" of it, or whatever he says he's doing, by a different title. (I do reluctantly admit, however, that it's the best of Marvel's movie "adaptations"--which says a *lot* about the rest.)

The idea of someone doing something as off the wall as an apa devoted to indexes rather coggles me. I'd like to see a mailing or two of it, just to see what one looked like. Could I get one if I reprinted the index to *Hoopair* for it?

I'm very sorry to hear that no mere physical demonstration can do justice to Chuck Spanier's sin. I wanted to see him face south and draw the name of Jefferson Davis a hundred times over, paing his back blue, read *Gone with the Wind* one time fast, stuff his mouth full of peanuts, volunteer to change George Wallace's underwear, and dunk his head in the Swanee Riber.

By the way, in case anyone is curious, I'm not commenting on the mailing in order, or even in anything resembling a coherent style (you *noticed!*). To remove the immediacy of seeing a thing that demands response, and to give me a chance to think over whether or not a comment is *really* necessary, I'm not commenting on the mailing as I go through it, really. On the first reading--I'm also not going through it a second time, looking for comment hooks--I'm keeping a notepad handy. On it I'm jotting down words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs that I think might be interesting to write about, usually suggested by things I read. I'm tossing the pages into an envelope (loose) and then pulling them out one by one. If a note makes me feel like writing something onto the stencil, I write it. If not, I thow it away. I guess that makes about as much sense as doing it any other way.

The Greater Fool Theory, which has been gone into before, has existed since about three or four minutes after the beginning of time, but not under that name and seldom in so precise a formulation. It's called "Markstein's Greater Fool Theory" by the person who so named and formulated it, but I have never claimed to be that person, nor do I claim to have had it named after me. Read your mailings a little more carefully, Meade.

I noticed flipping through the S&DC Program Booklet that I used the word "origamic." Gotta hand it to myself, that's a pretty good word. A Latin ending added to a Japanese root to make an English word. Only in America!

In response to a query, yes, I do know of a place in New Orleans that has a Rex-Rotary D-270 (mine is a 280) that hasn't been used in a number of years and is just sitting under its dust cover, apparently in excellent condition. Several years ago, they said it was for sale, for something in the neighborhood of \$35, and tho that conversation is probably forgotten, I'm sure negotiations of that sort could be reopened. Personally, I wouldn't take a Rex if anything else were available. The company no longer exists as a distinct entity, and I suspect it's about to phase itself out of existence entirely. Since a Rex requires rather specific supplies (a *certain* type of stencil, a *certain* package for the ink...) I wouldn't bet on their being usable at all five or so years from now. My Rex has deteriorated to the point where even a hand-cranked Gestetner (the Rex is electric) is less trouble, so I just let it run out of ink and switched. The Gestetner is cheaper to operate anyway.

I notice Meade Frierson says "Hope that this is the end of the title games", while elsewhere in the mailing, the *Quacks* just quack along. Pretty good juxtaposition.

I recall exactly one story where the words Mary Jane used to grow were given. They were identical to the ones she used to shrink, which everybody and his brother correctly gave last mailing or the one before, except that the last line, instead of "Make me just as small as Sniffles," were "Make me fifty times as big as Sniffles." It doesn't scan, of course, but what do you want in a funnybook, Walt Kelly?



I see another star has been added to the firmament of the neverending feud. Dave Locke wants nothing but peace and harmony and good fellowship...just as soon as he explains one more time what a shit I am. Go ahead, Locke. You can have the Last Word. You can have the Last Word as many times as you like. Then you can go to hell.

And speaking of Dave, I see Dave Hulan is telling us the same stuff about Dean Grennell as Locke, but at greater length and more damagingly. I guess I could give quotes from the younger FAPans on the subject of the outburst that originally set off this discussion here, but hell, I quit *Stobcler* to get away from this shit, a fact which seems not to have penetrated either of their skulls. If they're just going to follow me with it until the end of my days, what the hell, I'll just dredge up all those inky stencils (I only throw the things away once every three or four years) and run all of my *Stobzines* through SFPA, so everyone will have more of the story than just what they want to reprint. Then we can feud and feud and feud about the same stuff forever and ever and ever, and we'll be so happy.

I must, however, thank him for his brilliant analysis of the entire affair in 25 words or less, and his encouraging note that at the rate I'm going, nobody on the West Coast will be on speaking terms with me. By this, of course, he means his friends, since I doubt very much he's even heard the names of most of today's active West Coast fans, with whom I get along just fine, thank you. Frankly, Dave, I can't figure out why I'd want to get along with most of your friends. From all I can see, they don't call 'em "petards" for nothing.

Before getting off of this subject once and for all (and I mean for all--if they want to continue the discussion, they're simply going to have to do so without me), let me request that Messrs. Locke, Hulan, Boutillier and anyone else of their common ilk who wishes to fantasize that I picked a fight with Grennell go back and reread Alan Hutchinson's first zine for *Stobcler*, paying particular attention to the paragraph of mine Alan printed. Then read Grennell's first comment to me. If this causes you to change your way of thinking about the subject, don't tell me about it, because I'm already bored to tears by this entire line of discussion.

Somebody asked for clarification of the dual member rule, using Beth's status on the waitlist as a peg. Of course, she doesn't have to languish there if she doesn't want to--she could have gotten in as an instant member on the basis of either her present or her former address, but she's of the opinion that that would constitute being someone's shadow. I have to admit, I don't have much evidence to the contrary to offer, especially in the face of one prominent member already having referred to her as such. She isn't anybody's Beth but her own, and around 1982 or whenever she gets in, she'll have her own spot on the roster to show to anyone who says otherwise. I hope my association with her and hers with me continues to that point and beyond, but whether it does or not, anybody who makes the mistake of considering her an extension of me or anybody else is in for some very frequent shocks.

With Larry Epke's help, I'm learning the names of the various members of Monty Python. He pointed them out when we saw *And Now for Something Completely Different* last week. Let's see--John Cleese was Sir Launcelot in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, Eric Idle was Sir Robin, Graham Chapman found his fork dirty, Michael Palin wanted to be a lumberjack, Terry Jones hit mice with a mallet...and in response to Alan's question about Terry Gilliam's fourth role in *MP&HG*, wasn't he the old man asking riddles at the bridge?

With the present turmoil in the OEship, perhaps discussion on the proposed Best of SFPA isn't exactly timely--the natural thing is to let the OE be at least a moderator in the discussion, if not set the rules down himself. But what the hell, that just means it'll be awhile longer before we actually do anything about it. The separate volume idea seems to be catching on. I favor 15-mailing volumes, as I've said, but won't kick if it's done some other way--mainly, tho, I like the idea of doing mailings 16-30 myself. If Bob Jennings' idea of 10-mailing volumes is adopted, I'd like mine to be #s 21-30, which contains most of the material I'd want to use anyway. Whatever, if fanac is sublimated sex, I'll be just about ready for a massive project right about when the new OE is settling in, which will work out fine.



As you can see I'm v' duc'd one" again to using this battered old relic of an IBM Executive for my stencil cutting activities. Nothing wrong with the Selectric this time --in fact, Beth apparently finds it quite satisfactory and refuses to relinquish it without a struggle. And since she happens to be the object of all my love and devotion, I didn't struggle.

Let me dispell rumors, confirm vague suspicions and do a little rooftop shouting on the side. Yes, Beth and I are living together. If this catches you by surprise, think how I feel. I'm also a bit surprised that I could get this far into the zine without carrying on interminably about the one subject uppermost in my mind. The move took place in time to get a COA zine into the last mailing (the previous COA to the same block of St. Charles Avenue I used to live in, was already outdated), but somehow we never got around to it.

So here I am, doing something I haven't done in seven years and thought I'd never do again, willingly living in the same house with another human being, and amazingly enough, I'm ecstatically happy with the arrangement.

No, to whoever made the remark, The Flash has never had much of a personality, but I don't see how that indicates lack of characterization. That is his characterization. No flamboyant personality quirks, no overwhelming problems, no little idiosyncracies... Barry Allen is married, has a little house in the suburbs, plays bridge in the evenings, had a crewcut in the 50s but gets his hair styled now... just a typical nice guy, the kind you can find millions of scattered all over the North American continent. He really has only one unusual activity, and wouldn't even do that if it weren't for that silly accident that could have happened to anybody, giving him super speed.

Hmm, carrying this thought a little further, I suppose super powers like his would tend to make a blah kind of guy like him want to use them to carry out Walter Mitty type daydreams. So here's this guy making news every day, an interstellar traveler, member of the legendary Justice League of America, going home to his cute little wife, having pot roast for supper, his neighbors never suspecting a thing as they watch him take out the garbage. He probably goes through life with a constant smirk on his face, chuckling to himself, "Hehehe... little do they know..."

I've noticed that the only people who brag about their IQs are those below 130 or above 170--the latter because they're the best and know it, and the former because they're not smart enough to know any better.

I'm getting very tired of hearing how one SFPAAn bounced a check on the DeepSouthCon committee a couple of years ago. In the first place, bouncing a check, while not an activity to be encouraged, is really not so big a thing that he deserves to have the story of it haunt him for the rest of his life, and in the second, the "victim" is pretty close to the same group that has been spreading lies about the SFPA treasury, and frankly, even if it mattered a whit to me, I'd need a lot more than their unsupported word before I'd even believe it.

I suppose it's possible that kids as a rule don't distinguish between Barks duck stories and off-brand ones, but I don't think that's likely--I certainly knew which ones I liked, and I don't think I was atypical (though I'll admit that perhaps continuing to like them into adulthood is less than a universal trait). And somebody--perhaps Mark Vanier--told me several years ago that Barks reprints do sell better than the others. I suspect the reason they're reprinting non-Barks stuff now is because the guy choosing the stories doesn't know any better. He's probably completely at a loss to explain why circulation on some issues soars while on others it plummets.



I don't care what anybody says, I enjoyed the Superman/Spider-Man crossover. They didn't try to do anything spectacular with the story, but then, what do you want, flashing lights? It was a standard story, but well done, filling its 2 pages (probably the longest non-continued story in American comics history) without seeming either padded or crammed, combining the best of the Marvel and DC styles. That's all that was really required--the subject matter supplied enough pyrotechnics. And there were loads of little touches that I thought were really nice, like J. Jonah Jameson running into Morgan Edge in a bar and both of them complaining about their employees just as if they've known each other for years, which, apparently, they have. The whole thing seems to have gone over sales-wise--at least, it disappeared fast in this area.

But somebody--Gary Brown, I think--brought up the subject of future teamups, noting that Superman and Spider-Man aren't really a natural pair. That may be, but it wasn't their personalities that dictated it--it was the fact that they're the top sellers in their respective lines. Personally, I thought the sound-of-mind-sound-of-body Superman was palyed off the brush, snot-nosed kid Spider-Man quite well, but that's obviously just my opinion. If Marvel and DC ever manage to get together again, perhaps they can have the Avengers meet the JLA, but getting a writer and an artist willing to handle a mob like that would be quite a trick. Sgt. Fury and Sgt. Rock have been suggested, but the sales appeal of that one would probably not be worth the hassle of figuring out who got too billing, and there are good reasons for that. Frankly, I think the idea is so dull that I probably wouldn't buy it myself.

I think it was also Gary who suggested a black and white Batman book, where the character--a fairly deep one--could be explored in an adult manner without the Comics Code Authority sticking its nose in. But, as he says, the freedom would probably be misused, and we'd see Batman getting laid every other page. It would be interesting, tho, to see whether or not he wore his mask in bed, and actually, I think that would be the most fascinating thing about the book--exploring the depths of his mind, which is rather kinky. I mean, here we have a guy who watched his parents shot to death about when he was 10 or 12, who swore a vendetta against all criminals from that moment on, but he can't carry out his oath without wearing a mask. There is something very strange about that personality, and it would be interesting to see it explored. This may someday turn into an article, if I ever get the energy.

I was struck by the comment in the last mailing that "The ability to tell someone to fuck off and then never think about it again is one that I do not possess, thank goodness." I note that the person who said that is a good deal younger than I. I don't possess that ability either, but I consider it a fault to correct, not something to thank goodness for. When I was his age, about the time I became OF or a couple of years earlier, I was a pretty tense, uptight character that I've been mellowing away from ever since, and the ability to tell people to fuck off and never think about them again, presently developing in me, is one of the goals that I see now I've been working toward. Let's face it, there are worthless people in the world, ones who are just such a damn penance to put up with that the only reasonable thing is to dismiss them entirely. In particular, you may notice that there are SFPAs who don't get mentioned in THE SPHERES anymore, and there are a couple who are getting their last notice from me in this issue. If I ever get to the point where I don't even think of them, I'll have achieved something worthwhile, but meanwhile, they don't need me to help them destroy their own credibility, and I don't need them for anything.

To dispell confusion about Mike Main, let me point out that the SFPA Constitution does not define, clarify or even mention the word "Yankee." What it defines is "Southerner," and if we speak loosely and call non-Southerners "Yankees," that doesn't mean somebody who doesn't fit either category is in some sort of limbo. While in Scotland, he's not a Southerner. If he's back in Alabama when he gets into SFPA, he is. It's pretty clear if you read the thing.



If, as Pich Morrissey maintains, the so-called Civil War (hereinafter referred to as The War for Southern Independence) was fought primarily to free the slaves, then it's the only war in the entire history of the human race ever fought for altruistic reasons. Fact is, except for a few wild-eyed fanatics, the only people who really gave a damn about freeing the slaves wanted them free to come up North and work in the factories -- as if they didn't already have enough Irishmen. Hardly a cause worth fighting about, tho it makes for good sloganeering and sounds nice in the history books.

The real reasons for the war are entirely too complex to fit into a mailing comment (besides, I don't understand them myself, and anybody who says he does is either a fool or God), but I don't mind looking at it from a number of different angles. From one of them, we have the big guys, the Northern states, telling the little guys that they don't like us.

So we wanted to go away and leave them alone, and they wouldn't let us. From another, we note that the seceding states had to be readmitted into the Union after conquest -- and make no mistake about it, it was sheer, outright conquest, never mind the fact that both sides spoke the same language and appeared on the surface to be the same people -- which indicates that the secession was valid but had been negated by the same means used to negate all the treaties with the Indians. From a third, we have a problem that tends to arise any time you have a bunch of little guys all getting together to fight a big guy -- what do you do when the fight is over? Let me expand.

Whenever a federation is formed (excuse me, let me yawn! ... de-expand), as ours was when we fought for our independence from Britain, the question of secession is going to be a rather difficult one. If you specifically allow it, you weaken the union. If you specifically don't, the weaker members are going to be a little leery about getting in. So you don't say anything. Eventually, the subject comes up, and you have to fight about it.

We were a little bit luckier, in that we didn't really have to fight -- the question wasn't specifically addressed in the beginning, but the Constitution does have an elastic clause allowing the so-called sovereign states to do anything that the Constitution itself doesn't specifically forbid. And I note that the Constitution doesn't specifically forbid secession. So eleven state legislatures met, repealed their ratification of the Constitution and passed perfectly valid acts of secession. If justice and goodness had prevailed, no war would ever have been fought.

And slavery was, of course, at the surface of some issues, and it's quite likely that the slaves wouldn't have been freed for another generation -- but that's only because of the ill feeling that would have lingered on. A new generation, however, would have noticed that slaves have to be fed and housed, even after they're too old to work, and that Irishmen would work for even less. Then along would come the automatic farming machinery, and there would be a de facto end to slavery. By the turn of the century, they'd start feeling humanitarian and expansive, and would legalize it. Like all expediencies of governments, which are not particularly benevolent, it would be cleverly disguised as a great and glorious thing to do, but its real effect would be to let the former slaves starve if they couldn't find work.

Even so, I'm not convinced that the integration of the blacks into the mainstream of American -- and Confederate -- society wouldn't have been shorter and less devastating without the memory of a devastating war crippling the entire Southern society (and not being particularly kind to the North) and a shameful period of looting ("Reconstruction") afterward giving it the death blow.

Does anybody seriously want to argue with any of this?



I think this is going to be the last page. I've got some notes left over, but they'll just have to be foregone if they won't fit. It's like a week or more since the last page, and somehow, I'm afraid the comp has gone out of this zine. Plus which, George Inzer will arrive tomorrow to be our houseguest for awhile, and somehow, I just don't think I'm going to have any more inclination to type stencils later than I do now.

Before I go, I guess I ought to mention that the mindfucks I said back there that Steven brought with him should not be construed as being of the type that make people cry out in anguish about how unhappy they are--as a matter of fact, he was looking great then and he sounds great over the phone now. He also writes happy-sounding letters. The term "mindfuck" might also be used to describe a few things I've got right now, and I think I've managed to convey the impression that if there's one thing I'm not right now, it's unhappy.

(Whole long train of thought describing current condition flashes through head. Since it doesn't convert very well to fanzine matter, one wonders why I even mentioned it.)

Progress report on things mentioned back in the beginning--it's been weeks now, y'know: I've been to two voice teachers. The first said I'm hopeless, which I don't need to be told, but recommended someone who has been known to work with such cases (I'm told the term for my condition is "tone-deaf," but I don't think that's really it because I can hear tones and even pick out simple tunes on a piano, but can't reproduce the things with my own voice with any accuracy). The second expressed hope but had to quit after two lessons due to overwhelming commitments elsewhere. I'm currently seeking out a third. The hard part, I think, is over--that's deciding to do something about the situation. Actually doing it is hard work, but fairly straightforward. As for the second thing I promised myself, I haven't been very successful in finding an art instructor willing to take on an adult student who draws worse than most kids, but the search continues.

I've been thinking, if I ever do manage to learn to sing, which I consider the more important of the two, I may get myself a guitar and learn to play it. Anything's possible.

On Steven's recommendation, I'm currently reading *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. It's got a hell of a lot to say, especially to me right now, but I recommend it to everyone. Particularly, I think Dave Hulak would find it interesting, and I'd say that even if I weren't somewhat peeved with him right now, because one of the major themes is something that he brought up in SFFPA about a year or two ago. (I won't say more about that particular aspect of it because I just don't want to discuss it again. It was nice to see a fresh point of view on the subject, but I've already heard everything most SFFPAs have to say on it.)

I'm in the middle of it right now, and thus far, one train of thought has progressed from a mild query as to whether the scientific method can be applied to itself to see if it is indeed such a useful tool for discovering truth (crudely stated--read the book), to the whole question of whether or not rational thought can be examined rationally or if it indeed has any independent existence. It skirts the edge of solipsism but very carefully refrains from falling in. Ultimately, I suppose the question it asks is whether or not the human mind can ever understand itself. No answers, of course--nobody ever does answer questions like that--but it does point out a path here and there in the dark, and occasionally tosses the reader a flashlight for finding his way through it.

Fascinating reading. Imponderables by a clear thinker.

Another book I highly recommend is *Lives of a Cell*, by Lewis Thomas. I have notes for a --well, I guess "review" is the best word, but it's not really that. I'll run it in the next *stikker* if I remember. (Most of you will get that, but not through SFFPA anymore.)

There were a couple of things I wanted to mention, clarifying something or other that came up earlier in the zine, but I can't remember what they were. Oh well.

Hoping you are the same...

Oh yeah, cover by John Carl.