

Redd Boggs'



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EXORDIUM

Some of this issue of Spirochete was originally prepared and stenciled between mid-December 1967 and mid-January 1968 for circulation in the OMPA bundle scheduled to go forth in March 1968. One thing and another, mostly ghastly forebodings about OMPA's future, deterred me from finishing up the issue, and by the time OMPA was galvanized into life again by Beryl Mercer, much of the material was out of date. Now in re-viving Spirochete, I find myself stuck with a small heap of useless stencils (the issue was originally projected as a 14-pager), of which I can salvage only a few. Pages 3, 4, and 5 of the present issue are stencils from 1967-8, and this explains the outdated references on the lower half of page 4: the gallimaufry titled "Midwinter Madness," and the small Rotsler cartoon. The latter was intended, when it was stenciled, as a mild joke, as if to say "Ron for TAFF (Once Again)," for it was an old, unpublished Rotsler cartoon drawn to help boost Ron Ellick's TAFF campaign of 1961. Now in the summer of 1969, alas, the cartoon has become only a bit of sad nostalgia, a wispy memorial to a Good Man.

SHANGHAI GESTURE: A PROZINE REVIEW

In the course of his "A Modest Manifesto," a rather overwhelming piece of fan commentary reprinted in the October 1969 Fantastic from Warhoon #26 (Richard Bergeron's peachy fanzine), Terry Carr hails "the cultural revolution [that is] taking place right before our eyes." It soon appears that among the major manifestations of this revolution, in Terry's opinion, are rock music, underground "comix," and Marshall McLuhan. These are things that make him happy and hopeful, it seems. Yet to me it's a trio of things of somewhat lower cultural attainments than the Three Little Pigs, who finally did build something that would last.

Marshall McLuhan? Yes, even so. Terry appreciates the way McLuhan -- who of course is really the Big Bad Wolf in Little Pig's clothing -- huffs and puffs and blows our house down. Terry sees as "almost a model of non-linear development" one of those tedious fanzine editorials -- so often found in apas -- that begins, "Well, here I am, sitting in front of the ol' typer, and I must fill eight pages of this drivel or I am out (spelled O*U*T!!!) of this apa," and continues page after page "on this and that subject...with no unifying theme." Of course no fugghead needs the touch of legitimacy bestowed by Terry and McLuhan to write pointless drivel; most fuggheads would write that way in any case, being devoid of ability and of respect for the art of writing. But the fact that Terry supposes that a god of the "cultural revolution" would really prefer drivel to precision in writing makes me wonder about the "cultural revolution." The McLuhanatics may soon cause me to rise to say a few

words in favor of the Establishment -- if by doing so I uphold Mozart in preference to the Incredible String Band; Walt Kelly in preference to R. Crumb; and of course Terry Carr editorials in preference to the fan editorials Terry professes to admire.

Terry takes some of the curse off his previous judgments by admitting, "I don't like the idea that plots are irrelevant, as the non-linearists would have it. I happen to like a well-plotted story," and he adds a qualification or two. Unfortunately, editor Ted White suffers no such aberration, at least on the basis of the stories he chose for this issue of Fantastic. As a result, aside from Terry's column itself, and one other item I'll mention in a moment, the magazine strikes me as one of the least entertaining prozines I've read since the Teck Amazing.

Fantastic contains "Ted White's Greatest New Short Novel," plus these three "New Short Stories": "A Guide to the City" by Lin Carter, "Ten Percent of Glory" by Verge Foray, and "Man Swings SF" by Richard Lupoff. None of the latter three is a short story at all, if one sticks with the musty notion that a short story is "a work of prose fiction."

Carter's "story" conveys a vague impression of a megalopolis so gigantical big that the people engulfed by it have no inkling of its extent and complexity, but Lin doesn't bother with either characters or incident, let alone plot (outmoded concepts, all of them); he writes what purports to be an excerpt from a stuffy treatise on the city, and makes it suitably soporific -- but is this entertainment? Lupoff's "story" is a satire, not in fictional form. It quotes, among some other things, the schmaltzando lyrics from something called "God Bless Tiny Tim," if you can imagine it. The lyrics are certainly inane, and the Lupoff parody of a New Wave yarn, as by "Ova Hamlet," is even more trying than the real article. So who wants to read such stuff? Foray's "story" is done in the form of a silly monolog by a publicity agent who has passed to the Other World and is still finding clients -- like Mark Twain and Ludwig van Beethoven. It's just as dreary and drag-assed as you would expect. These stories, to use the term with careless abandon, brilliantly succeed in being properly pedantic, inane, and silly, respectively, and ought to be shunned by anybody who dislikes such.

The Ted White story, "It Could Be Anywhere," is the only item among the new material that offers the reader even a smidgin of cake and pie. Ted tosses two people, his "seedy detective" Ron Archer and a stereotyped female named Robin -- yes, the story has characters! -- into a New York City that resembles a movie set, with "two-dimensional trees" and "perfect, unreal houses" -- yes, the story has a dramatic setting! The two characters stumble here and there in this fantasy world -- yes, the story has incident! -- and finally emerge again without much developing. No, the story doesn't really have a plot (sorry, Terry), but Ted keeps things moving, and the yarn is a minor, but genuine, pleasure to read.

ENCOUNTER ON THE ROAD

Driving home from the El Cerrito Co-op one night, I stopped for a red traffic signal at the corner of Eastshore and Potrero. A car pulled up behind me and, when the light turned green, the driver blared his horn at me. One-sixteenth of a second intervened between the change of the signal and the honk of the horn.

NOT-VERY-GHOSTLY STORY

In 1787 Terence Hanford, an English sailor, was hanged for striking the face of a line officer engaged in beating him aboard an English man-of-war.

Just before the rope was tautened from the yardarm, Seaman Hanford placed a curse on the head of the captain, Sims Curlorham, saying that he would return to haunt him.

On July 23, 1819, in the midst of a dark, stormy night, while shutters banged against window frames and wind moaned about the eaves, Sims Curlorham, fat, wealthy, and with gilded waistcoat discarded, collapsed atop his bed and died. He had married a wealthy woman, become the landlord of some 18 moldering slum houses rented at exorbitant fees, managed to ruin six men's business careers, and had an ex-mistress strangled, along with bastard child -- but he had never, once, seen a ghost.

— PAUL KALIN

I glanced over at Gretchen and remarked, "I think I'll have a little talk with this guy." Ignoring her sudden look of consternation, I popped out of the car and shambled eagerly to the car pulled up just behind. The driver was staring out of the windshield at me with the same look of puzzlement and alarm that had appeared on Gretchen's face. I flashed him a friendly, foolish grin and said helpfully, "Do you want something? I heard you honk your horn. Something the matter? Do you need help?"

The driver, a small dark fellow who looked part Japanese, swallowed his alarm with some effort, and looked at me narrowly. "Yeah, buddy, I want you to move ahead. The light has turned green."

Out of the corner of my eye, I noted that the light had just turned red again. I objected, "Oh no! It's red. Look!" The man groaned.

I started to chatter inanely, saying whatever came into my head, intent only on delaying this impatient chap as long as possible. I did not know quite what we were talking about, and certainly he did not. Somehow he got the idea that I was trying to enter onto the freeway. "Listen, buddy," he said wearily, "the only way to get onto the freeway is to turn right, get it, right, and go under the freeway and then go up that ramp there. See?"

"But I'm sure I can get on the freeway by going up there," I said, pointing. The Potrero exit was dead ahead of us.

"But then you'll be going down the freeway in the wrong direction!" the man said in a rather desperate tone of voice.

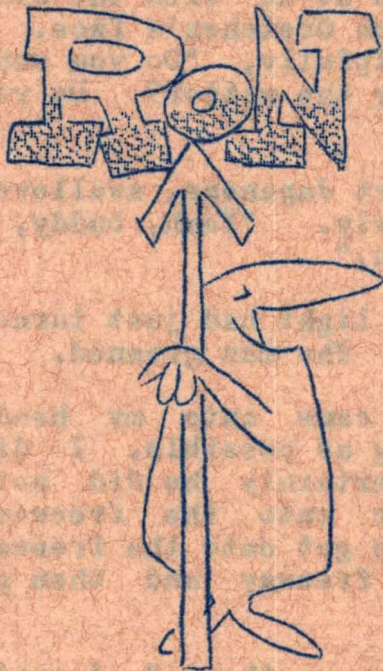
"That's the way I want to go," I said, smiling at him reassuringly. "I want to go to Berkeley, and Berkeley is in that direction." The man stared at me in horror, evidently imagining me merrily automobiling south on the northbound lane.

While I was chattering on, cars kept coming up behind us, then, seeing our conference, veering off and going around us. I toyed with the notion -- if one of the cars pulled up behind us and stopped -- of rushing back and waving at the driver excitedly, "Hey, the guy up ahead is stalled with a dead battery. Can you give him a push?" Then, having accomplished a fascinating encounter between two strangers who, except for me, might never have met, and certainly never under such circumstances, I would stroll away and get out of there. Romance at short notice is my specialty. But no car stopped behind us.

Finally, after the traffic signal had changed numerous times, and I had delayed the man for five or six minutes, the frustrated fellow sighed heavily and grimly put his car in reverse so that he could go around my car directly ahead. As he backed away from me, I waved pleasantly at him, moseyed back to my car, and got in. Before he could turn around me, I zoomed away. But when it was safe, he passed me, going in a roaring hurry. He looked back at me, his face full of the most curious mixture of amazement, puzzlement, and confusion that I have ever seen.

Does he ever toot his damned horn at any other motorist who doesn't take off from a traffic signal without burning rubber? At any rate, he must have had something exciting to tell his wife when he got home.

MIDWINTER MADNESS

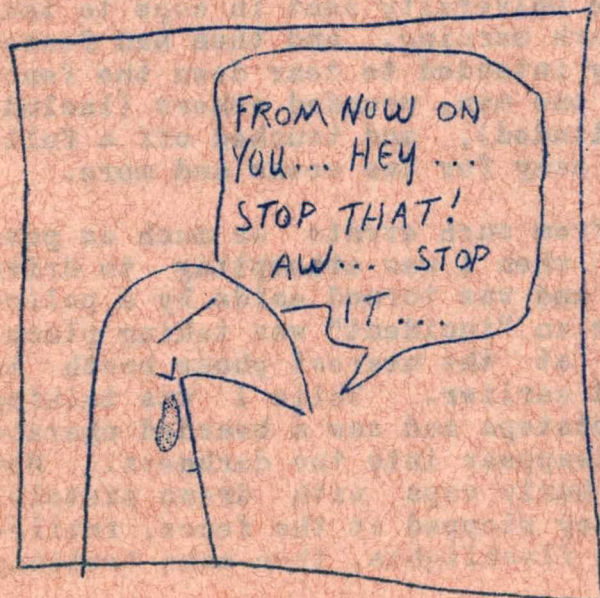
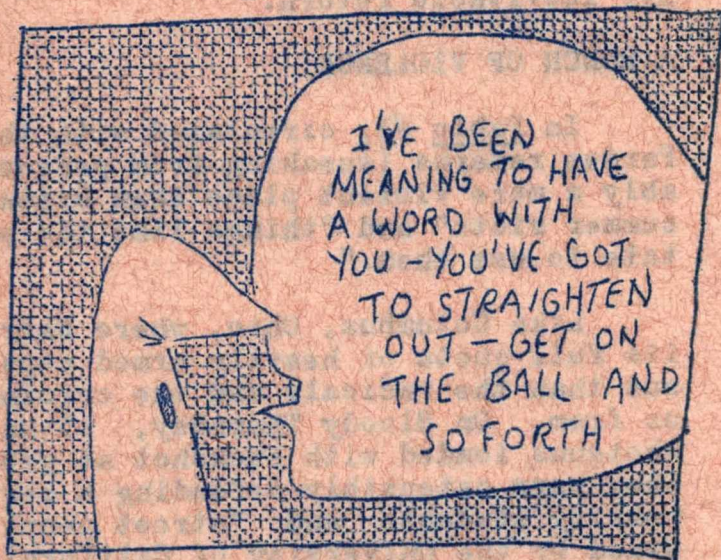
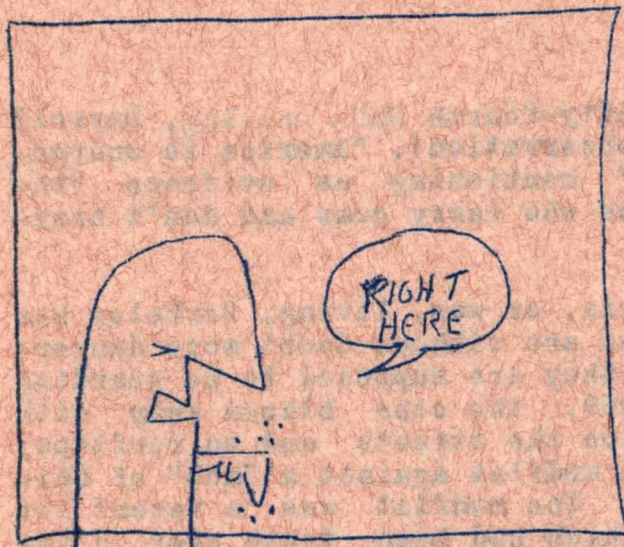
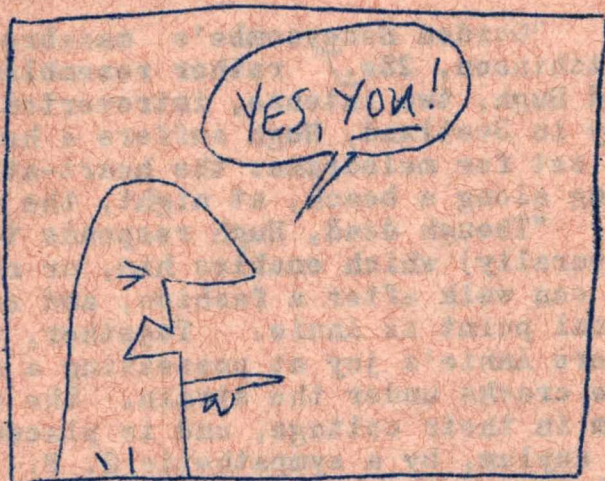


FOR TAFF

Inspiring thought for the day: Kingsley Amis (according to Freedom of London) assures us that "the Vietnamese are being roasted in a good cause." # A San Francisco motorcycle cop, 6 foot 5 inches tall, weighing 235 pounds, told the retirement board that he is suffering from "acute anxiety and depression" because of "racial strife as well as the hippies." The board authorized payment of \$364.20 for treatment of his condition, deciding that the cop "has had to exercise great restraint even when the law was being flagrantly broken" and this broke him down. The poor chap hasn't been allowed to charge into demonstrators, swinging his billyclub, cracking heads, you see. # 50 employees of Young and Rubicam, Inc., an ad agency, threw a "Hippie Christmas" party at Laguna Honda hospital this year. They wore fright wigs and hippie costumes and paraded through the hospital wards barefoot. One person carried a sign that said "PEACE" in big letters, "on earth" in small letters. At first you think he is one of those commie weirdos who advocate peace in Vietnam. Then you suddenly realize his message is just one of those Christian mottoes that doesn't mean a thing.

WHAT ROTSLER!

by WILLIAM ROTSLER



THE VERY LAST FANTASY NOVEL I'D WANT TO READ DEPARTMENT

(from a review in the Times Literary Supplement, 29 May 1969)

"Gordon Honeycombe's macabre tale Neither the Sea nor the Sand, Hutchinson, 28s./ rather resembles a romantic novel gone sick. Annie and Hugh, two intense, introverted people, fall in love. During a holiday in Scotland, Hugh suffers a heart-attack and dies. Already the scene is set for melodrama: the heart-attack occurs while the lovers are running along a beach, at night, the wind ominously lulled....

"Though dead, Hugh responds to a force stronger than death (love, naturally) which enables him, or rather his corpse, to remain animate. He can walk after a fashion, and responds to instructions, but his sole focal point is Annie. Together, they return to their home in Jersey where Annie's joy at possessing a devoted cadaver turns to revulsion as she cracks under the strain. She attacks him (it?), runs off, leaving him in their cottage, and is placed in an old persons' home, rather than an asylum, by a sympathetic G. P. who refuses to accept her catatonic silence as true madness. Meanwhile, Hugh rots quietly away and awaits her inevitable return."

A BUNCH OF VIOLENCE

In Pablo #1, circulated with the fifty-fourth OMPA mailing, Darroll Pardoe remarks (speaking from personal observation), "America is unarguably a more violent place than Britain," mentioning as evidence "the summer riots" and "things like the police who carry guns and don't hesitate to use them."

Like Columbus, Ohio, where Darroll is, or was, living, Berkeley has its full quota of heavily armed cops, who are without doubt more dangerous than the radicals and the criminals they are supposed to be guarding us from. On Bloody Thursday, 15 May 1969, the cops blazed away with shotguns loaded with buckshot at people on the streets and on rooftops; they were ostensibly defending a certain mudflat against a "mob" of University students and "street people." The mudflat was a vacant lot owned by the University of California, which had been taken over a few weeks before as a "People's Park," wherein the squatters had planted trees, bushes, grass, and flowers. The University sent in cops to take back the land, about 0400 o'clock one dark morning, and then had fenced in their property. The "mob" presumably intended to tear down the fence and reclaim the Park. Buckshot killed one man, wounded others (including one onlooker, who was permanently blinded), and touched off a full-scale "insurrection" that firecracked away for two weeks and more.

Valuing my hide, I have kept away from such events as much as possible, but I had a close call one night when I was attempting to drive to the University campus via Ellsworth and was turned aside by a police barricade into, not out of, a zone where an "incident" was taking place. I got out of there safely, but stopped at the nearest phone booth to call Gretchen Schwenn, as I had promised earlier. While I was talking to her on the phone I heard running footsteps and saw a bearded character sprint past, vault a fence, and disappear into the darkness. Hot on his flying heels came three or four burly cops with drawn pistols, hollering, "There he goes! Get 'im!" They stopped at the fence, futilely stabbed the night here and there with flashlights, then came trotting

back, paying no heed to me, still standing in the phone booth. They had pursued the poor hippie as viciously as if he were a bank bandit getting away with \$1,000,000.

On another occasion, driving along Telegraph avenue when no "riots" were taking place, I beheld two men jogging grimly along the street with pistols in their hands, looking like a scene out of a gangster movie. I learned later that they were plainclothes cops on the trail of a man who a few minutes earlier had allegedly shot down an undercover agent investigating the illicit drug traffic in town.

A couple of months ago, Gretchen was attacked at night by a man on the street incongruously wearing athlete's garb, white jersey with monogram, white shorts, and white socks and shoes. The man seemed intent on murdering her or at least maiming her. After several futile attempts he felled her with a karate kick and tried to pounce on her, yelling that he would break her glasses and grind the pieces into her eyes. Fortunately, she was able to leap up and escape. She called me, and we cruised the neighborhood in the Volkswagen, looking for the maniac, but never found him, which may have been lucky for him -- or for me.

I myself was attacked, more openly, on the street after a minor traffic mishap. An old car ahead of mine drifted backward while paused at a stop signal and walloped the VW's front fender. After I had followed the car till it finally stopped, several characters piled out, accusing me of hitting their car (!); one of them (not the driver) grew excited and struck me in the face. I tried to grapple with the fellow, took a vicious kick in the shin, but finally grabbed him and threw him down and fell heavily atop him in the middle of Haste street with a crash that was recorded by seismographs around the world as a major earthquake. The people in that car were so agitated that I decided later they were probably "holding" and were fearful they would get involved with the cops I called to report the traffic accident.

The most recent incident was to come home in broad daylight, about 1730 o'clock, to find a burglar in the apartment. He escaped from the front door a few moments after I had entered by the kitchen door, and I caught only a glimpse of him. He leaped the fence and dashed past the landlady and her daughter, who happened to be standing on the side porch at the moment. "What were you doing back there?" the girl shouted at him. He yelled over his shoulder, "None of your business! I'm running from the cops!" and disappeared up the street. Interrupted in the midst of his rifling of the place, he got away with nothing of great value: a 50-peso note and some other Mexican bills, worth in all about \$4, and some sticks of chewing gum (!).

The situation in Berkeley is aggravated by the fact that we live under conditions that are dangerous politically. The USA is in a state of potential revolution, and most of the violence hereabouts has some political overtone. The national headquarters of the much-publicized "black power" group, the Black Panthers, is just around the corner from here, and this naturally attracts to this vicinity their enemies: racists, militarists, and fascists of other stripe. Gretchen's assailant might have been one of these people, for he yelled military commands at her, and mouthed anti-hippie sentiments (although she is not a hippie). I have had no trouble at all with the Black Panthers.

Organized crime seems not very important in Berkeley, nor indeed in most of the United States, despite the lurid statistics the FBI publishes every year. There is little bonafide crime in the streets, few holdups, almost no pickpocketing, and even few instances of the petty thievery that makes countries like Mexico such hell for people accustomed to leaving their possessions around unprotected. The VW is parked on the street every night, and once had the license plates stolen, but in Mexico the car would have been completely stripped if I were so unwary as to leave it parked unattended just a few minutes at high noon.

PARADISE LOST

To the LASFS Halloween costume party of 31 October 1964 I came as a grizzled beachcomber, Grey Boggs, stepping out of a future world in which Barry Goldwater of the right-wing Republican party's right wing had won the presidency of the United States. I took along to the party a fanzine I had published (dated Autumn 1976), which was intended to validate my identity: it purportedly was done in exile, on the beach at San Clemente, California, where I had been forced to seclude myself during the Goldwater oppression.

The presidential election of the following week, in November 1964, relieved my fears of a Goldwater victory. Lyndon Johnson swamped Barry Goldwater 43,126,506 to 27,176,799 in popular votes. And now, from this distance in the future along this branch of probability, my lighthearted faith that exile at San Clemente would protect me from right-wing goons seems almost as naive as my premonitions of a Goldwater triumph.

Of course I was not altogether serious in either case. I didn't seriously think Goldwater would win, and my choice of San Clemente as a hideaway was born of my admiration for the long, white, uncrowded beach there, which I had visited several times that autumn. San Clemente is about 50 miles down the coast from Los Angeles, and has not yet been overrun by the exploding metropolis. But suddenly, in 1969, this lovely place has been overshadowed by a presence almost as distressing as Goldwater's might have been. President Nixon has bought "a ten-room Spanish-style villa" at San Clemente and has already begun to use it as a "summer White House."

Now San Clemente swarms with VIPs, secret service agents, and other "security guards" when Nixon is in residence. Searchlights blaze out over the ocean at night, and the public beach is closed, at least at times, for reasons of "security." One is almost tempted to barter with fate: Let's switch to the other world of probability that I imagined. Let Barry Goldwater be president, and I will live on the beach. Let all this happen, but don't let San Clemente be spoiled by a Richard Nixon!

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