

If you will be good enough to peer carefully into the pile of deadwood over there, you will discern a minor wriggling that indicates yet one more nick-of-time appearance of

THE VINEGAR WORM.

This is Vol. II, No. 12, and it is intended for FAPA 129. It will have an additional small circulation among certain persons whom I believe to be discreet and responsible citizens possessed of refined and exacting tastes.

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This writing finds me a year older than when we last communed, but I take a certain comfort in the fact that all of you are a year older too. (And, by God, some of you look it.) It appears that this issue will be composed of mailing comments, which is something of a new departure for me, but which I propose to carry off with panache and élan. We will begin at a promising point of entry, viz:

GRUE - Grennell

Greetings, there, old colleague. The cover is a sort of small time machine carrying me back to the days when I was a new fan. Grue was where new fans learned how to fan. Inside it's not quite the Grue of yore, but this can be ascribed to the long years in FAPA, an experience which has a debilitating and enervating effect on all of us, and leads, alas, in the end to total inactivity. One would certainly not have expected to find a Grue printed on only one side of the paper in the golden past. Sic transit. ++ The astrology bit was V. good, v. good indeed. We haven't been getting enough funny stuff around here, and this is funny. I have repaid my overshoes against the day of need.

OF CABBAGES ETC. - PAVLAT (P.R.)

Congratulations on the new house. You sound very pleased with it, and when the female of the menage is pleased with her house it makes for happy living. I speak as one who has had considerable experience in hunting, buying and selling houses. For a good many years I was transferred hither and yon at the pleasure of a soulless corporation, and we learned the hard way the fine points of domestic realty. One difficulty we had was that the transfers were invariably effective on September first, and I was seldom given more than a couple of weeks' notice. This meant that if the girls were to start school on time, we had to have a residence by the first week in September. Our house-hunting was of course hasty and hectic, and as a rule the house we'd buy would have

a number of undesirable features, but we always felt the pressure of time. When I was sent to Denver it was with the understanding that I'd be there a long time--perhaps permanently--so we decided to take plenty of time to find the right house. We did, eventually, but it meant living in a motel for six weeks and entering the girls in a private school, since we couldn't be sure of the school district until we'd settled on a house. And as it turned out, we were in Denver for exactly two years. The incident had one fortunate aspect, though: the school the girls were in was an exceptionally good one (and grievously costly) and they had a couple of years of education that enabled them to stay well in advance of their peers from then on.

KING BISCUIT TIME - Lichtman

What in the world is "The Lost Ike Hayman Letters" all about? I don't recollect anything in FAPA or elsewhere that would make this matter something for a FAPA mailing. You should, I believe, set about immediately to prepare a word of explanation for the next mailing. ++ The way you found your job demonstrates pretty plainly that you're an alert ambitious young man, a real credit to the business community. I find that fact hard to reconcile with your fondness for rattle and rock music. (If that's the word.) One usually visualizes a rattle and rock lover as a hairy lout wearing peculiar clothing, and here you are, shaven, shorn and starched, forging ahead in the Junior Chamber of Commerce. On some future day, when you have risen to the top, as you so clearly intend to do, we will all be proud to say We Knew You When.

SYNAPSE - Speer

You mention a Boy's Life SF series about Elmer the telepathic worm. Is this current stuff or does it hark back to your own Boy's Life days? It's been many a year indeed since I read Boy's Life; and at the time I preferred American Boy, which is, of course, long since defunct. There was a third boys' magazine at the time, The Open Road for Boys. It was never as good as the other two. American Boy, back in those remote days, published as serials the science fiction of Carl H. Claudy, most of which, if my recollection is correct, was pretty directly cribbed from H.G. Wells. There was one Claudy novel, however, that was more original and--to me--much more impressive. It was called The Land of No Shadow, and it had to do with the fourth dimension. In this one one of the heroes was left behind in the fourth dimension, presumably to die. This was quite a departure for a boys' book. Does anyone know whether there have ever been any reprints of Claudy? And did he appear anywhere but in American Boy? There must be a scholar out there who can tell me all about the man and his SF. He was quite a bright spot in my boyhood.

BLUSH and TRANQUILLITY BASE - Foyster

Welcome. You'll like it here in FAPA. It's a quiet, peaceful place where doddering oldsters nod and doze and rouse themselves sufficiently once annually to submit the minimum activity to retain membership. I speak as the worst offender. I have every intention of mending my ways, however, and I will shortly be appearing in every mailing with at least twenty-five pages, and what do you think of that, Harry Warner?

SERCON'S BANE - Busby, F.M.

When you wrote "Like nowhere, man" I thought you were just giving the cant-speakers a little jab, but, reading on, I find "bringdown" and "anti-high" and "cooled". This is a regrettable departure from the usual lucid Busby prose, and I hope it will not become habitual. At this

time it may seem as though we can't lick 'em, but joining 'em is to aid and abet the degradation of the language. And I don't mean simply that these usages vulgarize--although that's true too, of course; I mean that using and writing this jargon reduces communication, which is of course what language is for. When words are arbitrarily given new meanings they lose their effectiveness to communicate except with those who have mutually agreed upon the new meaning. Thus drug-users and rattle musicians are perhaps more or less getting across to each other when they speak their cant, but when they speak it to the rank and file they're not communicating. And when members of the rank and file begin to use the cant, having an imperfect idea of the intended meaning to begin with, language becomes fuzzy beyond the point of meaning. The users of this corrupt language communicate imperfectly, and they are aware of it, and because of it they become only semi-articulate. The protest generation seems to have made a fad--or at least a habit--of possessing a very spare vocabulary and making do with all-purpose words and pregnant silences. A while back a local radio station had a "hippie day" on one of its telephone shows. For three or four hours a procession of hippies (that's what the announcer called them; some of them objected to the word) answered the phone and talked to listeners and attempted to justify their positions on Viet Nam and drugs and long hair etcetera. At least one of these characters was a college instructor, and there were a number of graduate students and undergraduates along with the dropouts. But they had in common a halting, stammering fashion of speaking, caused, it would appear, by a lack of equipment for communicating with anyone but like-minded people who presumably are able to take the part for the whole. The common denominator in the speech of the whole lot was "Y'know, he was I mean eating a like sandwich." It was a melancholy thing to hear them attempt to communicate ideas about which they felt quite passionately. Like the "poets" of whom they are fond, they simply lacked the resources to convey what they thought and felt. As time goes on I become more and more convinced that McLuhan is right.

SNICKERSNEE - Silverberg

I'd say you were pretty fortunate with your insurance coverage--or perhaps with your adjustor. You say the insurance company paid for the cost of replacing all the personal possessions lost. When we had our catastrophe they didn't do anything of the kind. In 1957 I was transferred from Tulsa, Oklahoma to Denver, and the furniture van went off the road somewhere in Northern Oklahoma and rolled down an embankment, to the detriment of our possessions. Almost everything we owned was demolished--except, oddly enough, the china and glassware, which the movers had packed so carefully that it survived being rolled about with a loose refrigerator and piano and other heavy household gear. The movers loaded the debris into another truck and brought it to Denver. The insurance adjustor was there for the unloading, and he immediately agreed to throw out about half the stuff as total loss. Why he wanted to keep the rest was not immediately apparent, but it was hauled out to our house and piled in the garage. Then began a long, exasperating wrangle with the insurance adjustor.

Now in the first place, the stuff had been insured for almost double its cost, I having had the foolish notion that that would cover the expense of replacement should a loss be suffered. I couldn't have been more wrong. The man immediately showed me the clause that obligated the insurance company only to the extent of "the fair market value" of

the destroyed property. Now the "fair market value" is a far cry from the cost of replacement. A used stove or refrigerator has a very small market value indeed, but replacement is expensive. We were doomed from the beginning to receive a bad gouging.

The adjustor's first requirement was a list showing every item lost, together with its date of purchase, condition and original cost. Since most of the stuff had been carted off to the junkyard, we had to make our list from memory. Our system was to take the house room by room, putting down on an accounting sheet every item in the room that we could remember, and then going over the list racking our memories for cost, age undsoweiter. If you'll try this some time, you'll be astonished at how difficult it is. Try, for example, to list the contents of any particular drawer after the piece of furniture and its contents have been reduced to shards and tatters.

It was almost six months before I got a settlement out of them. The adjustor was ready to dicker and haggle over almost every item on the list--and there were hundreds. One very sticky matter was the antiques, which required an independent appraisal, with a subsequent quarrel over who was going to pay the appraiser. I did score one minor triumph, though: a volume of the Britannica had been lost (most of the rest had suffered varying degrees of damage) and I contended that I should be paid for the entire encyclopaedia. The man showed me the fine print that provided that, if one item of a set was lost, payment would be made for only the lost piece, even though the set lost all of its value through the absence of the piece. I countered with the contention that an encyclopaedia is a book (albeit in a number of volumes) and not a set at all. I was ready to fight it out on that line if it took all summer, and the adjustor, who perhaps at that point was catching glimpses of madness faintly piping behind my reasonably business-like facade, gave in--with ill grace, to be sure, but he gave in.

He was a sour and suspicious man, that adjustor, and before the thing was over I had come to hate him as much as I've ever hated anybody. It is a hard thing to try to be scrupulously honest and to find yourself treated as if you were a not particularly clever con man. I suppose it's a part of the technique of claims-adjusting, but it's mighty hard on the ulcers of the claimant.

DAMBALLA - Hansen

I'm sorry to hear that you Denver people aren't planning to bid for a convention. I'm not a great convention-goer (three worldcons in all these years) but a second Denver con would be one that I'd hate to miss. You wouldn't really have to lay on anything: just being in Denver ought to bring happiness enough to the fans who attend.

Your essay on music you like (in your comments on MOONSHINE) has scratched my perennial grotch about the state of radio. I spend a lot of time in the car, and it would be a comfort and pleasure to find on the radio some matter worth listening to, but the situation is dire. Up and down the dial one finds the same desert--hysterical disc-jockeys and rattle-and-rock music. It has by now been well established, I believe, that the current difficulties with the younger generation stem directly from this music. Prolonged exposure to it--especially at high volume--has the effect of poaching and curdling the brain, so that the unfortunate adolescent is left with mental machinery that operates fitfully and in a fashion contrary to reason and logic.

Pittsburgh now has an all-talk station (WJAS) and this provides a welcome relief from normal radio fare. It has mostly telephone programs, which are frequently exceptionally interesting. Some really

delightful nuts manage to get themselves on the air. Music, though, is in short supply, as apparently it is almost everywhere. The FM stations have either decided to join 'em or have compromised and play Muzak-type stuff, Mantovani and the like. There are certain exceptions, though. I'm writing this in Lansing, Michigan, and I want to enter a word of praise for WKAR, the Michigan State University station, which plays good music most of the time on its FM broadcast. They run a bit too much to modern stuff for my taste, but it's music.

Somebody once said that Dorothy L. Sayers was a good mystery writer until she fell in love with her detective. I think the two books you mention--The Nine Tailors and Busman's Honeymoon--are the two that the critic had in mind.

DESCANT - Clarkes

You and Raeburn deserve thanks for the Norman G. Browne information, and no doubt Harry Warner has by now typed this on a page for inclusion in one of the famous loose-leaf books that will become the second volume of the history. You wouldn't happen to have information on any others among the many many fans who came and splashed and disappeared, would you? Such matter would be uncommonly interesting, and perhaps cautionary. It chances that I have a little scoop here at hand, and I'll set it down for your use, in case you plan further essays along this line:

Dean Grennell, after serving a term in a federal penitentiary for defacing currency (it appears that he was in the habit of applying adhesives to coins) has settled down in Washington as a lobbyist for the anti-gun interests. Robert ("Bob") Silverberg is the editor of a health-food magazine whose motto is "Never mind how it tastes-- is it good for you?" Len Moffatt is an invalid, having suffered a terrible beating at the hands of a mad pulp-writer who had come to believe that he was one of his own characters, an adventurer named McGee or something of the sort. Sam Moskowitz is an avant garde poet. Howard DeVore heads a firm that manufactures a patent hair-restorer. Rick Sneary is a lexicographer at Merriam-Webster.

HORIZONS - Warner

From page 2336: "But from this it follows that I refuse to take a firm stand on most issues of the day, theorizing that I can't possibly know enough about them to take an intelligent stand, for this very withdrawal from the course of current events."

From page 2337: "...the way the nation is going makes me fairly sure that I'll have to spend my last years thousands of miles from the people and scenery I've always known, simply because we're approaching a far right sweep to power that will make the Old South seem like a symbol of man's proudest hour."

Which page of HORIZONS d' ya read?

The reprints from Rothman are interesting and are appreciated, although by and large I think I'd rather have had a Hagarstown Journal. If the reprints are at all representative of the FAPA of the time, the organization has indeed changed enormously. I haven't seen soul-baring like this in my time in FAPA, except, perhaps, Janke's farewell performance. I incline to think the change is for the better.

I have some more nit-pickery: page 2334: "Most of us with near-complete collections are approaching, at, or beyond the age when death could come quite suddenly. . ." That's what I'm aiming at--to get beyond that age.

RAMBLING FAP- Calkins

Number 45 is one of the finest fanzines to come to my attention for many years. I cannot praise too highly this most superior contribution to the literature of fandom, and there is no doubt in my mind that this issue will eventually come to be considered canonical. The over-all conception is flawless, and this conception is admirably realized in prose of great structural integrity and lapidary style. All in all, a triumph for you, and a boon to the membership.

Another interesting feature of it is that it's the only zine in the mailing that mentions The Vinegar Worm.

Let me enter a fervent Amen to your remarks to Andy Main. I was astonished to hear that your sixth-grader is being pressured to use marijuana. I had no idea that the use of the stuff was common among children that young. I'm practically certain that that wasn't the case here when my children were in school, but of course that was some time ago. They're both in college now, and what they do is to a considerable degree out of my control, except for moral suasion and whatever backbone their rearing may have inculcated. It appears to me that they both have enough spine and spirit to grapple with the world and not run from it, but it's a wise father etc. I can't imagine that they'll drop out. The world has never been a perfect place, nor will it ever be, but the majority of people have managed to cope with it and some few have even managed to improve it. Simply to drop out of it is a kind of death, as the dropouts discover sooner or later, sometimes when it's too late.

One hopes that by the time you read this your late surgery will have been forgotten and that you will have the Master's safely tucked away. You're a geologist by trade, aren't you? Some time I'll tell you about all the sorrows and difficulties I've had with geologists. I can go on for hours.

Football has replaced baseball as The National Pastime because the ball is larger.

MOONSHINE - Group

Moffatt: "...that has to heaven went." Lovely. Tell us more. What's it from, and why not publish whatever it was? VOM was before my time; for what were you recruiting in your "evangelical letters"? ++ Vote-by-mail for comics has my vote. Can I mail it in? ++ Delighted to hear that Fawcett is using the JDM Master Checklist. Will this be printed in regular paperback format? ++ I haven't seen The Armchair Detective, but I hope it's not as stuffy as its editor apparently is, him and his sneers at the word "fanzine". "Amateur journal", indeed! Mystery fandom seems already to be headed down the wrong track and will no doubt founder unless you point out to them the proper route to take--and perhaps lead the way. Sorry to saddle you with that responsibility, but as far as I know you're the only person qualified on all counts. ++ Hub in, it seems to me, is an inferior reviewer. Perhaps it's just that anybody who followed Boucher would seem pedestrian and colorless, but for whatever reason, I do not take to Hubin. I know that for years I turned first in TNYTBR to Boucher every Sunday, and now I only glance through "Criminals at Large." It may be that Hubin has faultless judgment about the quality of a mystery; I seldom find out because his reviews are not very readable. I suppose it's unfair to compare him with Boucher the incomparable.

MOONSHINE - ctd.

Sneary: I hope other fans with supplementary information and minor corrections will do what you've done here, amplifying and commenting on parts of the Fan History that fall within your competence. Warner may want such matter for the second edition, and if there is no second edition from Harry, future scholars will find this sort of thing invaluable in annotating their own editions of The Collected Works of Harry Warner, Jr.

Woolston: The NFFF story contest fascinates me, and I'd give a pretty to get a look at the entries. Perhaps things have changed since I was briefly a member of the NFFF, but the stories that the membership of the time would probably have written just don't bear thinking about. Evidently the new breed is different. The contest's having turned up a story that sold to a magazine certainly makes it appear so. NFFF back then seemed to be no more than a pen-pals affair, and most of the pals were at best somewhat dull. Hooray for the good new days. Maybe I'll re-up, if they'll ahve me. I have a hell of a good yarn here, about ghouls who seize a faster-than-light ship that a nobleman is building in the basement of his castle. Little do the ghouls realize that the nobleman is a vampire as well as the world's greatest scientist. You can well imagine the excitement that ensues. There's a lot of nifty new-wave stuff, too. That's because I couldn't get the plot to come out. Try to imagine an amalgam of George O. Smith, H.P. Lovecraft and J.G. Ballard. Do you think Pohl would go for something like that?

SELF-PRESERVATION - Hoffman

The FA puts Aug 0 after your name. Above, the Sec-Treas says, "A the number of standard pages indicated following the renewal month must be published before or in the next mailing to make you eligible to renew." I have been taking this to mean that the 0 means that zero pages are required in the next mailing. Is that wrong? It must be, since you say this is for self-preservation. But I wish someone would elucidate this for me. It's a little late in the game, perhaps, but I shudder to think about the number of times I must have been in awful jeopardy through failure to understand what the symbols on the roster really mean.

Speaking of which, I'm right now in a bad sweat about getting this off to the OE on time, and your comments on the vagaries of the P.O. offer no comfort at all. Is there any speedy way of mailing a package, short of sending it first class? Answers to these hard questions are welcomed from the entire membership, as well as their friends and relatives.

KIM CHI - Ellington

Appalachia: I have had occasion to do some travelling into several forgotten corners of West Virginia, and the people there are in about as nasty a corner as it's possible for people to get into. They're victims of geography. The country was settled long ago--well before the revolution--and at the time a living could be gotten from farming and/or whiskey-making. The people settled the valleys, of course, and they were able to scratch out a living on what land there was there and on the hillsides. But for a long time now such a farm has not been capable of producing a living,

and the farms have gone to brush and brambles. Whiskey making is somewhat dangerous and not too lucrative, so there's really no way to get a living except from the public welfare dole. As a consequence the ambitious and able-bodied and lively-minded have gone elsewhere--to Akron and Cleveland and Detroit, where they need muscle in the plants, and where the hill billies live in their own enclaves--in ghettos of their own choice and making. Those who have stayed in the holler are a wretched lot.

Among their miseries is the extremely high incidence of defective people. This again is attributable to geography. When a mountain boy needed a wife he took one from his own valley; to go elsewhere meant going over or around the ridges, an almost impossible situation for courting. A good many generations of inbreeding has resulted in what is surely the highest rate of occurrence in the nation of mental and physical cripples and freaks. It is fashionable nowadays to praise the notion of preserving ethnic cultures and to deride the melting-pot ideal, but a close look at some Appalachian hamlets of my acquaintance might be a pretty persuasive argument in favor of the melting pot. Unless you're a Ptolemy, unchecked inbreeding can produce some real horrors.

I don't think you should poke fun at poor Ira Mendlewitz. His "Requiem for a Bathtub" sounds fully as sensible and interesting and esthetically pleasing as at least half the matter now being seen and heard on Broadway, off Broadway, underground, in art museums and--God help us--at symphony concerts. "Requiem for a Bathtub" is not more daft than, say, "Hair" or John Cage's music or the paintings and movies of Andy Warhol. This kind of inanity is typical of what is called avant garde nowadays, yet another useful phrase having become hopelessly corrupted. It seems a terrible miscarriage of justice that a playing of Mendlewitz's solemn fatuities should have resulted in his failing his doctorate. Perhaps you should use your influence to get this thing performed. You have the composer's word that it left the audience joyous.

STUPEFYING STORIES - Eney

What does "underground" mean nowadays? Underground newspapers are hawked on the streetcorners, and the other day I heard a disc jockey refer to his program as "underground radio". The word has obviously changed its meaning since revolutionary groups had newspapers which were death-warrants for their publishers. One might think that it now means simply "amateur", but I hardly think FAPA would be called "underground". A couple of years ago I'd have said that four-letter words and pubic hair made your paper or play or movie "underground", but nothing is now more aboveground than those things. Explain, please.

What was the counter-inaugural?

I don't think you can call your movie underground. You've got a plot there, and a snapper. It's my understanding that these are bourgeois conventions that are strengstens verboten in underground films.

That's all. I forgot to mention (first time I've done that) that this is from Bob Leman, 2615 Broad Street, Bethel Park, Pa. 15102.