

# APA-tizer #12

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FIJAGDH  
But what a hobby

by Ken Forman

When the phone rang that morning, six years ago, I wasn't prepared to talk, much less to embark on an adventure that will last the rest of my life.

Ring...ring...ring

Slowly I reached up, out of my slumber, to pick up the phone and stop that infernal ringing.

"Ah...hello?" I asked sluggishly.

"Hello. Is this Ken Forman from SNAFFU?" a deep but cheerful voice asked.

"Ah...yes," I answered, "how can I help you?"

"My name is Arnie Katz and I heard you are part of a local science fiction club."

"Ah...yes. Do you like science fiction?"

"Well, actually I publish fanzines, but I like science fiction, too."

My mind was racing laggardly, "I'm sure I've heard of that name, somewhere, and didn't he say 'publish'?"

"Hi Arnie. Your name sounds familiar to me. I'm sure I've read something by you in the past."

And thus started my journey into fanzine fandom. I'd heard of fanzines before, but I didn't really have a clue what they were or what fanzine fandom was all about.

My first real convention was IguanaCon, the Phoenix World Convention in 1978 that was so successfully screwed up by the Phoenix fans that a stigma still surrounds Phoenix fandom. (By the by, Pat Virzi once told me that it was her first convention, too.) I was just out of high school and just out of my parent's house. Oh, how I wish I had accidentally tripped over any of the fans that were there. Harlan Ellison was the guest of honor, but he was his old vitriolic self and

unapproachable. (Everyone has an Ellison story. Mine comes from this convention.) I'm sure that other fans must have been there, but I was so wide-eyed and wet behind the ears that I missed them all. I got to see Isaac Asimov auction an original, signed script for I, Robot (the movie) for \$2400. I got to meet A.E. van Vogt and Anne McCaffery, but I didn't get to meet any of the people I later came to know as friends.

Even though this convention was my first, it certainly wasn't my last. Phoenix' own CopperCon became my annual staple. I met Terry Carr at one of these conventions. Many years later, I've come to regret not falling to my knees before him and asking him to show me the way, but I didn't. Many conventions later, I had learned about masquerades, filking, gaming, meeting pros, consuites, all night drinking and smoking, but I somehow missed fanzines.

Throughout this time in my life, I always felt a loss, like something was missing from my life. No, fanzines weren't what was missing. What was missing was a peer group. I had good friends and interesting cohorts that I partied with. I roomed with two other guys with whom I had many shared interests, but I never really considered them my peers. I had met numerous people who I considered above or below me, but never a peer. These big name authors were just that: Big Named Authors. I, as a lowly reader, was only there to appreciate their work and efforts. I certainly wasn't their peer.

A number of years later, I met Aileen in the science fiction section of a bookstore. Just weeks later, we attended a science fiction convention together. Obviously this was the woman I needed to marry, so I did. She was the first person I considered a peer. But she's hardly a "group."

That first phone call from Arnie Katz didn't adequately prepare me for the future. My first meeting with Arnie and Joyce didn't do it, either. They showed up on my door step during a club meeting with a stack of "introduction" fanzines. Of course, since

Las Vegas fandom didn't have the slightest idea of what fanzines were about, we didn't quite know what to make of this wonderful and generous gift.

Even at Vegas' first convention, VegasCon, I didn't really meet fans. Arnie and Joyce were there, of course, but Bruce Pelz (the fan guest of honor) and I never crossed paths. It wasn't until SNAFFU's first convention, SilverCon 1, that I truly met fanzine fans. Robert Lichtman, Art Widner, Don Fitch and Jack Speer were the first four out of state fans I met. What a great start!

The first night of SilverCon 1, Arnie and Joyce hosted a FAPA party in their room. They invited me to attend. When I walked into their smoke filled hotel room, little did I know my life would change. Jack was sitting on the floor, collating his FAPA-zine, Robert and Arnie were chatting animatedly, Joyce was smiling broadly. Art and Don sat on the couch discussing some point of fan history.

I was welcomed warmly by everyone, those I knew and those I'd recently met. Someone, I think it was Joyce, handed me a beer and invited me to sit. My head was spinninóg! I sat next to Jack and offered to help him collate. He politely refused saying that he was almost done, but handed me a copy of Synapse to read.

Over the past four years, I've met numerous other fans, all of whom received me warmly and openly, Andy Hooper, Ted White, Matthias Hoffman, Mark Karnes, Janice Eisen, the list continues on for pages. Over the past four years, I've read hundreds of fanzines that entertain me, interest me, or bore me. The authors' names are familiar to me, many of their thoughts and ideas are open to me.

I don't agree with all of them, I don't want to. What I do share with all of these people is a willingness to exchange and discuss ideas. I'll keep attending the parties, and asking the questions. I'll keep challenging

ideas I disagree with and expect others to do the same for me. All I ever needed was a peer group.

Fandom Is Just A God Damned Hobby, but what a hobby.

APA-tizer is, as always, brought to you by the blue and trampled mind of

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