

IMPLOSION

Implosion #8 is the local monthly fanzine of Arnie Katz (330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107). It is produced for the 8th Distribution of Apa V, the Las Vegas apa, which has as this month's theme "Jokes, Put-on, and Hoaxes." Today is June 4, 1994, **Implosion**: The Fanzine that proves anyone can publish a fanzine.

Member fwa, AFAL.

The onset of summer, and the need to write something about the season for Apa V, reminded me of an aspect of my proto-fannish youth I neglected to cover in the first installment of "Fandom in Mind." (That those three chapters left out anything will shock anyone who read my memoirs in **Fanzine Dreams**. Those who didn't read "Fandom in Mind" in **Fanzine Dreams** should be aware that Copies Are Available in the Lobby.)

I speak of my 15th summer. It may have been the true turning point that converted me into a fan. It may be just the maudlin meanderings of someone whose short-term memory is not what it *was*. It could be a third alternative. That's the wonderful thing about fandom, you just never know.

So there I was 15 years old, chest hair sprouting promisingly, exit from junior high school accomplished, and glittering mystery of High School still months in the future.

In the spring the young fan-to-be's fancy turns to

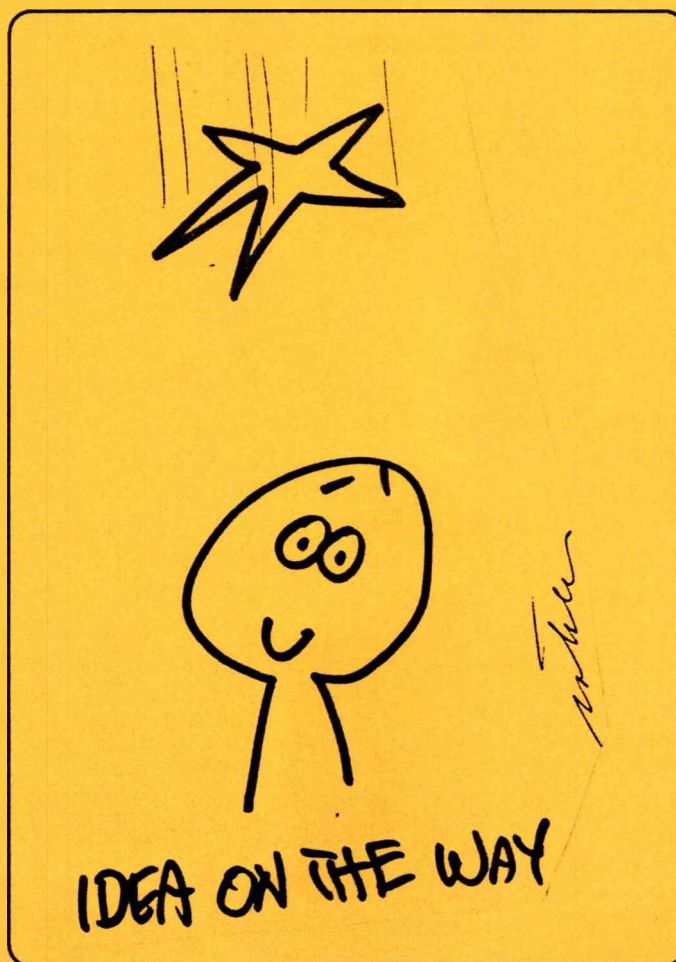
thoughts of... reading. It might've been thoughts of love, just like the poem, if the 15-year-old Arnie Katz had had his druthers. I didn't.

Not much was happening on the romance front at that time. I had enjoyed a brief vogue, but it passed all too quickly. One day, the two most popular girls in the sixth grade were battling for my attention, the next, they'd realized that neither of them needed me enough to justify such demeaning effort.

I'd never seriously considered summer camp, either as camper or counsellor. Other parents dangled summer camp as a carrot to coerce my friends into good behavior, but that wouldn't work with me. I'd have considered a summer at camp a punishment.

It was philosophy, not finances. My parents could've -- and would've -- afforded it if I'd shown any inclination to frolic among the rocks and spiders beside some muddy-bottomed sinkhole of pollution.

As the perceptive will infer from the tone of the preceding paragraph, there were aspects of the camping experience I didn't relish. I wasn't much of an outdoorsman, not with those coke-bottle glasses, but the telling point was the regimentation. I didn't



want anyone telling me when to get up and when to eat lunch and when to have some goofy social director's idea of Group Fun. To a kid already on the course toward being a loner and maverick, camp sounded like a foretaste of the army. And that was another place I didn't particularly want to go. As long as Camp Watchamacallit couldn't draft me, I saw no reason to volunteer.

Usually a model of cooperation, I proved unexpectedly recalcitrant whenever mom or dad broached the idea of shipping me to the woods for a month or two. Since I wasn't much trouble to have around, my parents surrendered to my wishes without a fight.

Camp thinned the ranks of my friends in July and August of 1961, but I didn't care. I had Cousin Brucie and Murray the K pumping out the forbidden rock and roll music on the radio and more time to indulge the Solitary Vice -- reading.

Every day, I went to the corner of Patton Boulevard, turned left down Haddon Road and then, at the bottom of the long hill, turned right and walked the final block. After the 15-minute hike, I'd enter the hushed mustiness of the Lakeville Branch of the Great Neck Library System.

The Great Neck Public Library system had all the literary riches an affluent, literate Great Neck citizenry could bestow upon it. Its crown jewels were two impressive, multi-story buildings, but they were in rich folks' territory, Great Neck itself. Middle class New Hyde Park, it was felt by those who looked out at us through Cadillac windows, could make due with considerably fewer books.

At this time, the Lakeville Branch consisted of two former classrooms in the little grey school house where I attended kindergarten, first and second grades. They hadn't even removed the cloakroom where an eight-year-old giantess named Patty Leverage had offered to teach me the facts of life. The librarian's desk was in the room with the children and young adult collections, so adult patrons were on their honor not to take a book from the adult section in the other room and exit through the clock room without checking it out.

Maybe it was the library's modest size that hooked me. Years of collecting baseball cards had made me a completist. There were many more books than even a voracious

reader could finish in a week or a summer, but there weren't so many that I couldn't aspire to reading them all eventually. (I didn't do that, because my tastes widened. I could've accomplished the goal had I persevered.)

I'd walk to the library every day and trudge back up the long, sloping hill with the maximum six books tucked under my arms. Then I'd sit in my room or out in the sun and read them to the accompaniment of baseball on the radio.

Science fiction was the chief component of my reading diet that 12th summer. Lenny Bailes -- he was "Lenny" back then, too, if I remember correctly -- was crazy about SF, too, and we vied with each other to be first to the handful of new releases the library grudgingly bought to augment the science fiction and fantasy section.

I was joyous when Lenny became addicted to Andre Norton. I didn't even feel a pang of jealousy when she started corresponding with him. Reading a couple of her novels convinced me I didn't want to read more, and her prolific output sometimes diverted Lenny from titles of more interest to me.

Lenny, my best friend, prodded me to venture outside this daily routine for items which the library didn't deign to put on its shelves. He coaxed me, already developing the lazy habits that have made life a siesta, to go with him on marathon tours of several-square-mile-area of Long Island. We knew the location and every candy, stationary store and luncheonette with a newsstand. Our goal: the latest science fiction magazines and comic books. (I also had some interests in sports magazines and didn't mind sneaking a look at pocket-size mags with names like **Stare** and **Quick** that featured cheesecake poses of semi-famous starlets and unknown models.)

We knew the periodical distribution pattern in our area better than any newsstand distributor. When he got really ambitious, we could spend most of a day prowling the racks, and the rest reading our lately acquired haul.

It was the summer we started going to New York City, to then-decrepit Sixth Avenue. A down-at-the-heel thoroughfare blighted forever by the Sixth Avenue Elevated Train. The train and the mammoth constructions that supported the tracks were history by 1959, but a half-century in the shadow of that smoky, dirty train had blasted poverty and

shabbiness into Sixth Avenue.

It was a wonderful street. We'd start from 42nd Street and Sixth, near the famous New York Public Library. That's where the F Train of the IRT Subway stopped. We'd saunter past the adult book stores that clung to the corner, though not without a vague spark of longing on my part, and head down Sixth Avenue.

At that time, the street now called The Avenue of the Americas had the low rents so dear to operators of used book and magazine stores. Most had at least one table of one-to-five-year-old prozines. It was at these troughs that Lenny and I fed our ravenous appetites for SF.

You don't run into a lot of vintage **Astoundings** and **Unknowns** in the 25¢-a-pop bin. We tried the various digest magazines, discovering which titles we liked. That was when I first came to appreciate the editor's contribution (and Now I Are One). Some prozines obviously had tiny budgets, yet they sustained remarkably high interest, a feat that eluded some better-financed publications.

As I doled out the precious quarters of my meagre allowance, I put my faith in the taste of Robert Lowndes (**Future**) and Larry Shaw (**Infinity**), and the outrageousness of Ray Palmer (**Other Worlds**). They always produced an interesting magazine, even if the specific stories weren't top grade all the time.

Other Worlds' lurid Shaver-inspired semi-pornography and chattily fannish editorials captured my attention and prozine budget. I suspected that Ray didn't live in the same reality as the rest of us, but **Other Worlds** was a pugnacious publication impossible for me to ignore. I meticulously passed over the issues devoted to: "facts" about flying saucers, but epics like "The Metamorphs" held my pubescent hormones in thrall.

Another singular failing of taste was my fascination with mid-1950s **Amazing** and **Fantastic**. I knew they were crap, but I didn't care. They were a window into the world of emotionally immature and blatantly provocative sexuality that seemed so alluring that year. (I like it pretty well now, too, if you're shopping for a birthday present.)

I devoured those endless Walter Mitty fantasies presented by editors Howard

Browne and Paul W. Fairman. Most starred milktoasts who find a pill that makes them invisible and described their visits to YWCA locker rooms in their home town.

Their cheapness was another point in their favor. The book store owners knew **Amazing** and **Fantastic** were pretty bad and they priced them accordingly. And since no one else in that city of seven million people wanted them, there were always stacks to be had at bargain rates.

I bought stacks.

I got bored with the stories long before I exhausted my supply of the Ziff-Davis twins, as they were called. I didn't want to waste those magazines, wretched as they were, so I started reading the departments. That's when I discovered "The Club House" and "The Revolving Fan," columns of fanzine reviews.

The rest, as they say, is history.

Copies of **Fanzine Dreams** are still available in the lobby.

The
Next
Vegrants
Meeting
Will Be Held
Saturday
July 2, 1994
2:00 pm