

CATCHPENNY GAZETTE

This is Catchpenny Gazette, No. #1 for February 2004. Published quarterly by David Burton for FAPA and a small personal mailing list at 5227 Emma Drive, Indianapolis IN 46236-2742. E-mail address is: dburton@mw.net CPG is available in a printed version on request (at \$1.50 per copy) and free via mail as a PDF file. Contents © 2004 by David Burton. A Noah Count Press Publication.

“Credentials?” We Don’t Need No Stinking Credentials

I recently sent an e-mail message to Robert Lichtman, asking if he'd be so kind as to photocopy from his collection a copy of the last issue of *microcosm* that I published circa 1970. I mentioned that I was interested in publishing a fanzine again, thought that an APA would be a good place to test the waters, and asked if he had any information about FAPA.

He wrote back and very graciously answered my questions. He'd be happy to xerox my fanzine. And yes, indeed, he had the scoop on FAPA; in fact, he told me, he's the Secretary-Treasurer. Now, up to this point, I was under the impression that Mr. Lichtman was a real swell guy. I've got to admit, though, that the following passage from him caused my heart to race and my temples to pound. (My left eyelid twitched repeatedly as well, but that turned out to be completely unrelated.)

"The rules as set forth in the FAPA constitution still require "credentials" in order to qualify for membership, and you may fall short in that category."

Good Lord, I thought, where has this guy *been*? "Credentials," he says? "Fall short"? Doesn't he realize who he's dealing with here? I mean, let's face it, I was voted the "Best New Fan of 1970" in the *EgoBoo* Poll, sponsored by John D. Berry's fanzine of the same name. Yes indeed, 5 (count 'em, *five*) separate and unique individuals elected me as "Best New Fan" in the year of Our Lord nineteen and seventy. You could look it up.

Never mind that I've been *totally* GAFIA for 30+ years. A minor little detail, hardly worth a second thought. I clearly remember John D. Berry (publisher of *EgoBoo*) telling me, at one of the

room parties at the following Midwestcon, that this would insure my fannish immortality; fans through the ages would whisper my name with something akin to awe. Okay, maybe it *wasn't* John D. Berry, but *somebody* told me that, and I'm going to be awfully disillusioned if my leg was being pulled. I mean, I've been going through life for the past 30-odd years, with absolutely no contact with fandom, but confident that I'm remembered by fans far and wide, only to discover that maybe I'm *not!* Say it ain't so....

Regaining his senses, Mr. Lichtman also left himself a way out, as if in the back of his mind, even as he wrote the intemperate remarks quoted above, a little voice told him that he *might* be dealing with someone voted "Best New Fan" of some year in John D. Berry's *EgoBoo* Poll.

"However, I have permitted a few people to join with the proviso that they produce a fanzine for the first mailing of membership to satisfy the "credentials" requirement."

Aha, I thought. (I did, really.) Since Mr. Lichtman obviously slept through the entire year of 1970 and didn't realize that 5 *people* out of all of fandom voted for me as "Best New Fan" of 1970 in John D. Berry's *EgoBoo* Poll (one wonders how such a tremendous outpouring of fan support on that momentous occasion could be so lightly passed over or easily forgotten), I decided that that's just what I'd do.

One thing still bothers me, though. How can Robert Lichtman read at least *one* issue of my fanzine, think enough of it to keep it in his extensive archived collection for years, and not remember *me*, winner of the "Best New Fan" category in John D. Berry's *EgoBoo* poll in 1970? He may be a voluminous reader, but his retention leaves something to be desired, I'll tell you.



Not only did I go gafia shortly after that Poll, but I think Frank Lunney, publisher of a mammoth genzine called *Beabohema* (rivaling the Pittsburgh phone book in size) and who I "beat" by one single vote, did the same. Maybe it's a "good thing" there's no more *EgoBoo* poll...

(Neither John D. Berry nor *EgoBoo* have paid any promotional fees for the preceding message.)

My History In Fandom (Sort Of)

I started publishing *microcosm* when I was 16 years old -- the age at which, I'm now learning from one of my nephews, one knows everything and is not shy about letting everyone else know it!

My recollection is a little hazy about the beginnings of the fanzine -- I lost my file of *micro*s



Your Humble Correspondent and one of his faithful companions, Ritz. (Me on the left...)

sometime during a move in the late 70s, hence my request of Robert -- but I believe the first issue was printed on a little hecto postcard printer that I'd bought for just that purpose. At any rate, I the distinct memory of publishing *something* with that printer during a late summer afternoon while listening to the then-popular *Matchstick Men* song. If it wasn't *microcosm*, I don't know what it would have been,

although I did make one or two preliminary stabs at publishing a fanzine before *micro*.

With a start like that, there could be only two options -- onward and upward, or quit in disgust -- and whether for good or ill, *micro* went the first route. What started as a personalzine became a small genzine, then a personalzine, then a genzine.... I changed the publishing schedule just about every issue; first from monthly to bi-weekly, then some sort of bizarre "tri-weekly" schedule, and even *I* got confused about exactly *when* an issue was due. Those who received those issues must have wondered what was next; my answer after 14 issues was to stop publishing altogether!

I look back on the couple of years that I was active in fandom with a lot of fondness. The first

convention I attended was the 1969 WorldCon in St. Louis. I wish I could remember how I talked my parents into letting me go by myself, but somehow I did. I hadn't met any fans face-to-face, and mostly wandered around the con by myself. I do have some pretty vivid memories -- a 20 story free-fall in one of the Chase-Park elevators; eating a hamburger with Tom Digby (didn't know who much he was until later); admiring the Vaughn Bodé artwork and wishing I could afford to buy a piece; and a couple of room parties.

I can't recall (again!) exactly how I happened to meet some local fans -- probably through the offices of Buck and Juanita Coulson and *Yandro*. Several of us "kids" managed to get together with some of the older folks and revive fandom in Indianapolis, which had been dormant since the 50s. We had an unofficial club (I don't think it ever had any sort of name) which, though small, was very active. Jim and Lee Lavell, Buck and Juanita, John and Sandra Miesel, Dave Lewton, Dave Gorman, me (the Three Daves), Jerry Hunter, plus a few other people.

Jim and Lee were the linchpins of the group, and when they spent the (then and *still*) enormous sum of \$2000 to buy a multicolor Roneo electric mimeograph, things really took off. Out of that small group, we published something like 5 different and distinctive fanzines (Buck and Juanita's *Yandro* - although of course it had been published for *years and years*), Jim and Lee's *Embelyon*, Gorman's *Gorbett* and a couple of other titles, *microcosm*, and Lewton's *Infinitem*.

It wasn't unusual for there to be at least *one* of us "Daves" at their house nearly every day, and it was most likely to be me since I lived very close to them. (In addition to the fact that Jim and Lee were wonderful people, had an *extensive* collection of SF -paperbacks, hardbacks, and pulps, and the spiffy new mimeo, it didn't hurt that they also had a swimming pool.)

Jim unfortunately died of a heart attack in the late 70's, and the last time I talked to Lee was 20 or more years ago. I run across the work of Sandra Miesel on the Web frequently, since we have some of the same interests (medieval studies and Catholicism), but I've tried in vain to find some of the others through the Web.

There's now a new group of fans in Indy with no relation to the 50's and 70-'s group -- shucks, they even hold *conventions*; we were happy just to get together "officially" every month for some fun,

and I don't recall that we ever really *promoted* the group at all. While I have no contact with the new group, my impression is that they're more "sercon" than we were.

What Else I've Been Up To The Last 30+ Years

Well, for starters, like a like of people, I've moved around quite a bit. From my "homebase" here in Indianapolis I've moved to Phoenix, Arizona; Moline, Illinois; Davenport, Iowa; Carmel, Indiana; Noblesville, Indiana; Ft. Lauderdale, Florida; and finally back here to Indianapolis and the neon cornfields, as we used to call them. (Although "technically" I've lived in Lawrence, Indiana - a 'burb of Indy - for the past ten years.) I've been in Love several times. I was engaged in the middle-70s, but that didn't work out. I had a long-term relationship with the same woman twice, but *that* didn't work out either. I've been "unattached" for several years now (with no inclination to *become* attached) and that *does* seem to be working out.

During my early 30's I discovered a deep need for God in my life, and found it through some (to me) surprisingly traditional avenues. I initially became a member of the Episcopal Church, and when I became uncomfortable with the more liberal tendencies of ECUSA, I joined the Anglican Catholic Church, and am an Extern Oblate of a Benedictine monastery in Lexington, Kentucky.

Computers entered my life about 1980, when I bought a "powerhouse" Timex-Sinclair 1000. From there I graduated to several Commodores and finally made the switch to IBM-compatibles about 1988. I ran several locally popular bulletin boards (BBS) on both the Commodore and PC called, you guessed it, *microcosm!* During my last stint with the flexo plate maker I was trained on several high end computer graphics systems -- a DuPont VASTER system and on the Contex system that uses Sun workstations. While there, I also maintained a small network of Mac Quadras that were used for some pre-press work and DTP. A never-ending source of amusement for me today is that the friends who saw me as some sort of geek in the 80s are now the ones who come to me for help with their computers and software. Okay, so I'm easily amused...

Over the years I've supported myself in a variety of fields; for the most part they've tended to be in

the "creative" arena. In no particular chronological order, I've worked as a graphic artist for an advertising agency and a flexographic plate maker (twice); record store manager; as a typesetter; in retail loss prevention management; and as a delivery driver for a pizza chain and a dental lab (my current part-time job).

By far the most interesting (and longest lasting) job was the 10 years I spent working for Ziff-Davis Publishing as a full-time software reviewer. I lucked into that job by answering a message on a local BBS for an Indianapolis-based company called Public Brand Software (PBS) - one of the largest shareware disk vendors in the pre-WWW days. The day I started in 1991, PBS finalized its sale to Ziff-Davis. Looking back on it, Ziff was very prescient about what was to come in the online world - they bought PBS to have a library of reviewed and rated shareware to put online (initially for their proprietary system, later for the Internet), and had no real interest in the catalog end of the business, which they managed to drive smack dab into the ground and close after a couple of years.

Reviewing software full-time was great fun for the first couple of years. Ziff retained the reviewing staff from PBS, and since initially we all lived in Indianapolis and worked from home, we got together once a week or so at the PBS offices. It was an interesting and diverse group of people, and included some *real* nuts -- some of whom were just wacky enough to be fans!

I started out reviewing mainly graphics programs, system utilities (for both DOS and Windows), and communications programs (which in those days were terminal programs and were much more varied than the comparable browsers of today). By the mid-90s, as use of the Internet and Web became more widespread, I moved to doing mostly Internet-related programs: browsers, e-mail clients, HTML editors and utilities, and FTP clients.



My other Faithful Companion, Ellie.

Ziff was an interesting place to work. (I always thought it was a little cool to be working for Ziff because of its past connection to science fiction

magazines.) As I recall, the company was bought and sold 4 times during that 10-year period, once to a Korean who had a *300-year business plan!* (visionary or nutcase: you make the call). The last sale was to archrival C/Net in 2000. Shortly after being told that we were "indispensable" and a critical part of the organization, the entire reviewing staff (plus "back room" support personnel) was, of course, let go in February of 2001.

After that, I developed my own commercial site for software reviews, "supported" by advertising. At Ziff, because of certain constraints, our reviews were stringently limited in length. And I was expected to crank out a substantial number each week -- I wrote completely new reviews or updated existing reviews to the tune of 1,000 per year. Having my own site allowed me to spend more time with programs before reviewing them, and to write at whatever length I needed to do justice to a program. An additional bonus was not having to write about the really *awful* programs unless I felt like it. The site was *very* well received by software authors and was gaining a following among the public.

Unfortunately, as is often the case, Reality reared its ugly head. I started the site just as the bottom was falling out of the Web advertising market, and after making very little money in 6 months, decided that I needed to be doing something *else*. Since then I've been working at a couple of different part-time jobs and doing some freelance tech writing -- mostly documentation "localization" and editing for foreign software companies, although I've done some articles for a newsletter and other odds and ends.



One of the disadvantages of being out of touch with fandom for so long, of course, is that I haven't been aware of the passing of so many people.

I just recently learned that Harry Warner Jr. died nearly a year ago. Even when I was a smart-assed teenager who wouldn't dream of believing anything anyone over 30 said, I was willing to make exceptions for fans. Harry was definitely one of them.

Although I wouldn't have phrased it as such back then, Harry seemed to be a gentleman in the truest sense of the word. He was very gracious to me when I was originally publishing *micro* -- and

he seemed to be that way, inherently, to everyone else. He sent a number of LoCs to me, some of which in my youthful arrogance I didn't even bother to publish.

As I look back on it, Harry would've been about my age now when I first published *micro*. Maybe I would be as charitable and civil now, as he was Then, to some brash (and often irritating) 16 or 17 year old faned. I hope I would, but I'm not sure...



At the risk of sounding a little *too* gosh-wow about it all, I can hardly believe I'm producing an apazine for FAPA. Back in those golden days of yesteryear when I was a neo-fan, Nixon's skullduggery was still unknown, you could drive for days on a dollar's worth of gas, and I only smoked half-a-pack of cigarettes a day, FAPA had a real aura of mystery about it for those of us on the "outside." My memory may be faulty, but it seemed like the waiting list was at least as long as the active roster and few people ever dropped out this side of the grave. Your position on the waiting list was something added to your will and (hopefully) your heirs would some day actually be able to contribute.

As I'm writing, I haven't even actually seen a FAPA mailing, although several samples should be winging their way to me. So, I'm not even certain who's *in* the APA these days. Certainly some people I'll remember (and who may remember me) from back then, and I'm sure there will be plenty of new faces -- to me at least -- to get to know.

At the last moment I decided to change the title of this FAPazine. I'd planned to use *microcosm* so I'd have some continuity with my past fanac. However, I learned that there'd been at least one other FAPazine with the same title. I had originally intended to use the title *Catchpenny Gazette* way back when after I stopped publishing *microcosm*, but I don't believe I ever did.



Errata:

By the way, if **you** happen to have issues of *microcosm* in your fanzine collection and would be willing to photocopy them for me, please let me know.

Many, many thanks to Robert Lichtman for his generous assistance, guidance, and patience above-and-beyond the call of duty with me as I reconnect with fandom.