

A while back, I discovered that I was the same height and weight as Mr. Roscoe Fatty Arbuckle. This was troubling. I'm a big guy and I seldom spend much time working out or anything. When my car started over-heating, I had to do a couple of long walks between the Service Station and the Museum (about 4 miles) and between my house and the Budget Rent-A-Car (about 7 miles). I thought it was gonna be a big deal. I rarely walk that much anymore. I used to go a couple of miles a day. That was before I started watching Evelyn. I'd get back from work and then I'd go out for a walk for an hour or so with my tennis racket and ball. I'd bounce the ball as I walked because it gave my hands something to do. I used to do that every day. Now, the time is short to do stuff like that. I used to do that stuff every day. I miss it and I figured I'd make a bit of the walk and then call to the Yellow Cab Company.

But I made it there in a little over two hours.

I should try and walk more because it's a good way to keep in a bit of shape and because it gives me something to do that doesn't require money. Money is always tight, but walking is free. I gotta make that happen somehow.

The walk wasn't bad at all, but I'm gonna cheat and have someone drive me back from the Budget place. Cheating is OK...sometimes.

So, what else have I been doing? Well, working on the Handicapping the Hugos issue has been a big thing. It's gonna be a different issue in that it's gonna have a lot of content around one subject, but it's also gonna talk some Hugo politics (which is a big deal to about

three of my readers) and get some words from folks who are much better than me at judging quality. Niall Harrison is one guy who gave me his opinions. He's great. he's like a Sercon Dave Langford in that there's no one better than him at what he writes. I really think if someone gave him a monthly space in his fanzine, good stuff could happen. Now if only some massive number of people would tell him that he should do it! He has insights that I'd never come up with. If you've got a thought on the matter. Give me an eMail.

OK, what's next? This issue is one with a little Chris Garcia, but it also features Mr. Martin Young, a wit unmatched by man or God, and of course, there's Steve Green and the return of Leigh Ann Hildebrand! Let's get to it, shall we?



The Foolkiller 'Worm. By Martin Young, Ph.D.

Memo.

***To: Dr. Blas Themy
Chair, Department of Philosophy
Ashlar College
Larch, CA***

***From: Dr. Martin Young
Adjunct Professor
Department of Philosophy
Ashlar College
Larch, CA***

Re: Internet based plagiarism schemes.

Dear Blas,

As you know, numerous websites exist that generate income for their owners by providing low-quality academic papers that may be used by students as a substitute for their own written work. Although the owners of these websites insist that the papers are not provided for the purpose of facilitating plagiarism, they are unable to prevent dishonest use of their product, and thus have "inadvertently" contributed to an explosion of plagiarism.

In my view, the present administration policy for dealing with those plagiarists

we happen to catch is adequate and effective. However, the proliferation and financial success of “research paper” sites (second only to that of the infinitely more socially responsible pornography sites) indicates that untold thousands, perhaps millions of plagiarisms go utterly undetected.

In response to the overwhelming volume and scope of modern internet plagiarism, the administrations of most colleges have instituted two policies.

1. Suggesting that instructors threaten students with ineffective anti-plagiarism software that no-one knows how to use.
2. Forcefully and forthrightly pretending that the problem does not exist.

The fact that the websites in question have experienced no diminution of income suggests that these two policies have not been quite as completely successful as you and I might desire.

Given that the federal government continues to ignore my repeated suggestion that these people be burned at the stake, I think that it falls to us to do something about the situation.

My view is that we should take a “meme” approach to the problem, using the properties of the “memes” identified by the Sociobiologist Richard Dawkins. I propose we create and propagate an urban legend that may discourage internet based plagiarists, or at least allow us to have a laugh at their expense.

The urban legend I have in mind is summarized in the following fictional press release.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Cupertino, CA.

Investigators working for a consortium of internet security companies have revealed the existence of a remarkable new computer virus. Created at the behest of a community college philosophy professor and science fiction fan who was incensed by what he saw as an epidemic of internet based plagiarism, the virus attacks internet sites that provide what they describe as “research papers” to college and high school students.

The unnamed professor is reported to have used his contacts in the science fiction and scientific communities to assemble a team of specialists to create and disseminate the virus. This team reportedly includes several computer programmers and security specialists, two former hackers, a future astronaut and, for some reason, an ex-Hell’s Angel and travelling musi-

cian.

This team obtained massive covert access to government supercomputers at an unnamed university, and used their supercomputer time to build a virtual internet environment that would allow them to “evolve” their software through so-called “genetic programming.” Darwinian pressures in this vast virtual environment produced a number of different versions of the virus that are characterized by highly variable, highly idiosyncratic computer code that “mutates” quickly to produce “descendants” that accomplish the same tasks as and yet are extremely different from their “ancestral” viruses. The family of viruses thus created are thus considered to be a new generation of viruses, and are virtually unstoppable by any present firewall or anti-virus software.

Fortunately, the new family of viruses, known collectively as the “Foolkiller Worm,” carries a very low threat value. The worms do



not attack operating systems or attempt to obtain personal or proprietary information. Rather they seek out sites providing “research papers” to college and high school students, and subtly alter the text of these papers.

Once a version of the worm has become ensconced in a “research paper” site, it produces and sends out at least two differently coded versions of itself, and then settles down to altering papers.

Possibly the most sophisticated virus ever created, Foolkiller worms incorporate neural net software based on the neurophysiological study of St. Gilles de Tourette’s Syndrome. These “Tourette’s” subroutines generate random obscene and otherwise offensive phrases that are randomly inserted into various places in the chosen essays. Although a single worm can infect nearly a thousand papers in an hour, later versions of the worm monitor the sites’s internal search engines to infect precisely those papers sought by students visiting the sites.

Other versions of the worm have developed the facility of using the “macro” features common to most word processing programs to insert “stealth” obscenities into several thousand papers. These macros are set up to only insert the offensive language into the text when the paper is retransmitted or printed by the student. Plagiarizing students who only check their papers on their computer screens, or who email their papers directly to their professors thus deliver papers that are very different from those they think they are turning in.

In Kenosha, Washington, a student turned in a paper as her own work that read, in part “... and that’s why fuel efficient vehicles I

AM GAY are good for our environment.”

In Beloit, Wisconsin, a student turned in a paper containing the paragraph: “My professor is hot. Really hot. Hot, hot, hot. I’d like to sleep with him. Or at least one of his pets.”

In Duluth, Minnesota, a graduate student submitted a paper containing several pages devoted to repeating slanders against the Welsh.

And in Santa Cruz, California, a Physics student turned in a paper containing the immortal phrase: “Before class, I always anoint my genitals with taco sauce. It tingles.”

In the seven months it has been active, the Foolkiller Worm has been responsible for at least seven hundred failing grades, thirty nine expulsions, eight restraining orders and one happy marriage.

Students who genuinely purchase these papers for research purposes, if any such students exist, are not affected by the activities of the Foolkiller Worm, simply because they never turn these papers in as their own work.

Spokesmen for the internet security consortium added that they have created a special unit to deal with this threat. They do not anticipate a quick solution however, particularly since the unit is staffed with persons who were heavy consumers of “research papers” during their college careers.

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Well, that’s my proposal. Funding shouldn’t be a problem, since it doesn’t cost me anything to sit around and think this stuff up. Of course, it might be argued that only a complete and utter moron would ever take such a bizarre

urban legend as fact. To this I would reply that complete and utter morons are precisely my target audience.

Fin.



I was trying to get a few new Lightbulb jokes just in case I need them for the Science Fiction and Fantasy Masquerade at Costume-Con. It’s muy importante to come up with a lot of different ways to buy time, since something will require at least a moment of filler. The folks at work came up with these...

What do you call a Light Bulb that a Woman can not change? A Husband.

What do you call a Light Bulb that can’t keep its mouth shut? I dunno, but if it knows what’s good for ‘em...

Fannish Memory Syndrome

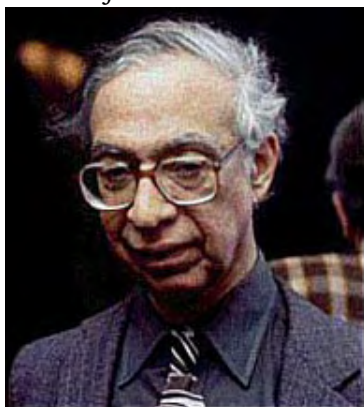
by Steve Green

Fannish Memory Syndrome

Steve Green

The esteemed editor of this fanzine and I have much in common, not least our devotion to the Bearded Lifestyle and our deep appreciation of my wife Ann's French Onion Soup (cf. Chris' TAFF report *Rockets Across the Water*). One rather more scientific distinction we share is our membership of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, founded back in 1937 by then-fan Donald A Wollheim, later to court controversy in the mid-1960s by releasing an unauthorised mass-market paperback edition of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

His earlier project, it must be said, had loftier ambitions, outlined by Wollheim in its first mailing: "There are many fans desiring to put out a voice who dare not, for fear of being obliged to keep it up, and for the worry and time taken by subscriptions and advertising. It is for them and for the fan



who admits it is his hobby and not his business that we formed the FAPA."

Seven decades forward, his dream lives on, albeit in a somewhat diminished form. When I first joined, in the late 1980s, FAPA had a roster of sixty-five members and a healthy waitlist; as of the February 2008 mailing (#282), we were down to thirty-five, eight of whom (myself among them) were due for renewal.

It's difficult to fully pin down the roots of FAPA's decline, but it's not alone: worldwide, the paper fanzine is fast becoming an endangered species. The majority of those reading this column will do so on-screen,

rather than off a slice of dead tree, and whilst it can be argued that *The Drink Tank* wouldn't exist if Chris had to depend upon "traditional" methods of printing and distribution, I can't help but wonder what we might lose in the shuffle. One of the joys of rummaging through old fanzines is stumbling across the unexpected anecdote

or historical footnote; in a purely electronic zineverse, such serendipity may become rare indeed.

[Anyone interested in becoming a member of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association should contact Robert Lichtman via robertlichtman (at) yahoo (dot) com.]

Talking of Rockets Across the World,

I trust *Drink Tank* regulars are already mailing their donations to Sunnyvale in exchange for access to this mammoth account of the 2008 TAFF tour. It's not without the occasional oddity – Ann and I have never referred to this house as "Green Acres", bacon sandwiches are known as "butties" not "buddies", and the journey from Solihull into central Birmingham takes barely one-third of the claimed ninety minutes – but it's quite a tome, and full marks to Chris for getting it together so swiftly after his return to California. It'll be a tough act to follow for next year's ambassador to Montreal.

The managaement apologizes for these sins, as well as many committed against Mark and Claire in the thing!



Photos from Steve Green

Letter Graded Mail

sent to Garcia@computerhistory.org
by my gentle Readers

I'm probably missing a bunch of eMail and haven't been able to publish at least one LoC I got and now can't find. My apologies, again. Here's one from a dude making his Drink Tank debut: former WorldCon Chair and all-around swell guy, Christian McGuire on a few issues that are a few months old!

Chris,

Just finished reading Drink Tank #'s 153 & 154. The Frank Wu interview of Taral Wayne was fantastic. Someone may have already thought about this, but has anyone offered the interview to '09 for their website or a PR? For all I know, the interview was conducted for just that reason. Just a thought.

And a good one! I should send a mail about it. It would probably be kinda useful. When's the Drink Tank ever been useful?

Congratulations on your triumphal trip to the Old Country. James Bacon said you made a smash hit. I'm looking forward to holding your Taff report in my grubby hands.

I had a blast and everyone was great over there! I'm hoping that a bunch of them will come across for WorldCon, though a lot of folks said they're shooting for Montreal. And anything else James said is a damn lie! I had nothing to do with the fiasco at Heathrow Terminal 5!

FYI, until recently I'd only read a couple of DT's, issue #1, the Steam Punk issue and the Corset Special. Now I am embarking on reading them all, backwards, five at a time. I just printed up # 151 thru 155 and read them in ascending order. Now I'll print up the previous 5 and read them. I'm passing the copies along to Chaz after I'm done, hopefully to give him inspiration to publish another issue of his own zine.

Indeed, though I note that both of y'all will be at CostumeCon in just a couple of days and I can put some pressure on too!

I prefer to print them because I do most of my reading for pleasure anywhere but in front of a computer. I do lose the color, but if that's the greatest loss I suffer in my life... I also enjoy reading James Bacon's stuff. I'd certainly have a better understanding of it if I knew all the players, but he's still fun to read. By luck and chance I will be at Costume Con 26, so I look forward to seeing you MC your ass off.

Well, Saturday is the night and I'm just now starting to freak out about it! I have to say that I wish James had gotten on the Hugo ballot. He was everywhere last year with some really top-notch stuff. I talk about that in the Handicapping the Hugos issue that's a week or so away.

Later,
Christian

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Oh, my. Not another attack by the Space Weasels. Eeeck.



I want to thank Steve Green, Mike Beneviste, Jennifer Luto, Al Caseman, and a couple of other folks who sent me art so long ago, I can't find the info.

The next issue is going to be the Handicapping the Hugos!!!