

FANZINES 27

By Ted White

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UNCLE SMILEY'S BOOKCASE v.2 n.1, 01/20/2003 (Ray Nelson, 333 Ramona Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530; e-mail to RayFaradayNelson@AOL.com; available "in exchange for 'the usual,' in other words for letters of comment, articles, poems or artwork, or in exchange for other fanzines." No money will be accepted.)

Ray Nelson has become a legend in fandom. He has been a fan for more than half a century, and, as a cartoonist, it was he (circa 1949) who created the self-mocking image of fans wearing propeller beanies. A dedicated bohemian for most of his life, Ray moved to Paris in the '50s, where he met his wife, Kirsten and their son Walter was born. At the end of that decade Ray (and family) returned to the United States and he's been at the same address in El Cerrito ever since.

In the 1960s Ray began writing and selling science fiction professionally (his "Turn Off The Sky" in F&SF was bumped from the 1964 Hugo ballot by unfortunate politics) and in the '70s he was publishing SF novels. Over the years Ray has pursued many interests – and in the new millennium he has returned to doing fanzines.

Uncle Smiley's Bookcase is an 8-page fanzine which is mailed out in a letter-sized envelope for one-ounce first-class postage. It's moderately frequent and basically unpretentious, informal and newsletter-like – but that doesn't mean Ray doesn't use it as a vehicle for some serious thinking.

Six pages of the current issue (all but the front and back covers) are devoted to Ray's "Being God in Your Own Little Universe," in which he takes us through a relatively brief sketch of his evolving life as an existentialist. This "sketch" is "illustrated" with a series of poems, many of them quite short, which were written in the course of his philosophical travels. They tend to be paradoxically simple, but usually express complex emotions and insights.

The rest of the issue? In an opening-page "Editorial," Ray tells us that "the beanie has ventured forth into new realms, most notably the 'geek culture.' I have totally lost control of it & can no longer use it as a signature. With a sigh I release it to the universe." His replacement is the beret.

As usual, the issue closes with a brief, one-page letter column. The contributors to this one are Robert Lichtman (editor/publisher of *Trap Door*), Trina Robbins (long-time fan, well-known feminist and underground/overground cartoonist and artist) and Harry Warner, Jr. (fan historian and author of *All Our Yesterdays* and *A Wealth of Fable*) – which tells you something about Ray's current mailing list.

Write Ray and ask for a copy. This kind of personalized communication is what fanzines are all about.

–Ted White