

SAM #16: A Fanzine For Corflu

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Every once in a while I lose it and turn people into Smurfs!



1/6/14: The previous issue of this fanzine started out with “Nine years; that’s not too many,” which was how many years between the 14th and 15th issues. With time comes experience and sometimes wisdom, and I’m modestly going to avoid how that applies to *me*, but I will say that I certainly am not going to repeat myself in that way for the opener here because I’m sure we’ll agree that **thirty one years** *is* too god damned many! Let’s hope that we won’t have to wait that long to read SAM #17 because Ouija boards will no doubt be hard to find by then.

Or will they? Just now I checked on the internet (to look up how “Ouija” was spelled) and I find that there are now online Ouija boards! Some rely on use of the mouse as pointers, while the Online Ouija Board, hiddeninfluences.com, just requires that I speak my question out loud so that the spirits can hear me. Here goes:

“Do midgets have night vision?”

Answer: *“New York felt plant I promise makes State House crumble.”*

Well, we’ll just have wait to see about that one, but I’m guessing that this New York felt plant is involved with corrupt activity with N.Y. state legislators, which actually sometimes happens with business and politicians. Still, nothing about my actual question, so I’ll try another site with another question:

“Is it okay to boil my headphones?”

Answer: *“Yes.”*

So it would seem that there are dead who are assholes.

Or maybe I got a soul from some previous century, a spirit very unaware of the huge technological advances we now enjoy in the 21st century. You know, if I can get stfnal for a moment, way back as a youngster in 1956 I can remember standing outside on the sidewalk and staring up at all the stars I could see in New York’s night sky (two) and staring up at those stars and thinking:

“Someday we will have moving concrete sidewalks!”

And now we do! In airports and possibly Disneyland. (Although they’re not concrete. Oh well.)

MORE THOUGHTS ABOUT THE WORLD OF THE FUTURE WE NOW LIVE IN FOR THE TIME BEING:

We now have access to more typefaces.

There are also new forms of fanac in this shiny new world: there’ve been some judgments and comparisons made vis-à-vis the merits and liabilities of two of the newer fanac outlets in the microcosm, namely Facebook and the e groups. I certainly appreciate the fine job Yahoo has done with latter (and I’m sure you all do too),

and while the e groups have enlarged my imagination in that I can hear the crickets chirping in an empty auditorium whenever I post something, I must admit that my preference leans towards FB; not only is the snarking almost instantaneous but there's also a wealth of variety in items of interest. Just running through Facebook today, I see that Gardner Dozois has announced that today (1/7) is National Old Rock Day (not in the music sense) and National Pass Gas Day (1/6 was National Eat Beans Day). Gardner urges that we get busy and do so—ha, Tuesday is hot dogs and beans night in the Stiles household!

Every once in awhile in FB I'll get a favorable comment from some favorite cartoonist of mine, which is also a gas. FB is addictive and probably chews up too much of my time but, hey, I'm old and retired!

I'm keeping contact with lot of old friends and acquaintances. Looking over today's FB pages, I see that old time N.Y. fan Marty Jukovsky has just retired from "the best job of my life." I first met Marty when I was a teenager and he was this older beatnik type.

Other items in Facebook: News that a Pizza Hut manager was fired for giving his workers the day off for Thanksgiving --great rants against corporate greed and much damning the 1%. #Cute picture of chipmunks dressed as pilgrims. #Photo of lady in fantastic 1930s s.f. costume. #Photo of giant turkey destroying Gold Gate Bridge posted by **Bruce Townley!** #Rant against Ted Cruz. #Cute kitten playing with bongos. #Rant against Rand Paul. #Satanists want to erect a statue in Oklahoma of Bapohomet the Sabbatic Goat conversing with little children. It will also be interactive! #And I posted of a video of a pretty lady keeping perfect time with Beethoven's 5th Symphony with her bare left and right buttocks --I thought the concept and audacity was hilarious and "a jaw-dropping feat" (I can't even wiggle my ears!), but somebody tsk-tsked me for being the male chauvinist pig that I am.... Maybe I'll just post that YouTube video of the two foxes jumping up and down on a trampoline, plus throw in a rant against Sen. Chris McDaniel-s (R., Mississippi), who charges that increasing crime in Canada is a consequence

of the "culture" of hip-hop! That might take the heat off.

SAM #1 was published in 1960. I was seventeen years old at the time, which may excuse the execrable mimeography of the first few issues, causing both Shelby Vick and Bob Jennings to thoughtfully offer to help on the printing for later issues.

Why "SAM"? For years the late SaM Moskowitz thought that I had named my fanzine after him, and, what the hell, I let him think so; he was involved with the frozen food industry! But the real truth is that I named my fanzine after the dog that I never had.

(Keeping a dog in a NYC apartment building is difficult. It's probably a good thing I never had a dog back then; I probably would've just let ol' Sam regularly bomb the bowl out on the fire escape. Which wouldn't have been too great in case of an actual fire.)

My activity in fandom certainly helped me to become an artist and writer, but it also had *sensible* benefits as well; specifically, SAM helped me to get a scholarship to The School of Visual Arts because my interviewer was tremendously impressed with the creativity of a self-publishing teenager. I had been very interested in going to SVA because some of my favorite comic book illustrators and editors had gone there, as they had to my high school, Music and Art. It was their work that had gotten me seriously interested in both art (all kinds) and science fiction. I refer of course to E.C. comics, and it became one of my driving desires to emulate my comic book artist heroes.

Unfortunately this was quite unrealistic of me: comic books had been emasculated by the Prudery Police years earlier. One of the few surviving comic book publishers, DC Comics was pretty much of a closed shop and published uninspiring offerings that featured fat Supermen, green Supermen, old Supermen, baby Supermen, Pa Kent Supermen, super apes, super chimps, super dogs, super cats, super horses and, if they had gotten around to it, super pot bellied pigs. "Great Krypton! Alan Funt's caught me

switching into my Superman uniform!” “Great Krypton! Jimmy Olson’s turned into a werewolf and only the kiss from a pretty girl can save him!”, “Great Krypton! Lois Lane has acquired supernatural powers –and they may be more powerful than mine!”, “Great Krypton! Buddy Holly’s thick black eyeglass frames are radiating great krypton!”.

And so on. Another defanged and much smaller comic book company, Atlas, featured stories about gigantic monsters with names like Gorgo and Fin Fang Foom. A little later Stan Lee and Jack Kirby began producing titles like Spider Man and The Fantastic Four. I thought those were more original and interesting comics but I knew they’d never last, a mere flash in the pan, so I got into advertising instead.

I guess my powers of prediction were pretty anemic. (I really wish I hadn’t used some of those comics as coasters for my coffee mugs.)

But maybe those powers have grown since then. I’m an agnostic when it comes to psi, and I think that a lot of precognitive experience can be chalked up to chance. Coincidence can sometimes be extraordinarily improbable, like the time I ran into Fred A Levy Haskell on the streets of Paris, the time, unbeknownst to me, that I fired an M-60 machine gun over the head of one of my first pen pals, Paul Singleton, and the very great fluke that had me winding up in the same army barracks as my west coast fan artist equivalent, Colin Cameron.

But....

Amazing Stories: A few years ago I was driving home from work and a random thought popped into my mind: “*Gee, wouldn’t it be nice if we could see a live performance by Steve (Mandell, my brother in law)?*” (Years ago, Steve was a professional bluegrass/folk musician, best known today for his *Dueling Banjos*.)

But for various reasons, including a very disillusioning experience involving royalties, Steve hadn’t performed regularly for years, and

when he has, it’s been out of town. And while I appreciate good bluegrass music, my main interest in music leans towards prog rock and indie pop. So it was kind of unusual for me to suddenly have that thought.

About twenty minutes later I arrived home: “*Steve is going to be performing at Temple Emanuel on the 14th. Want to go?*” Elaine asked.

Earlier that year I had stared across a six-lane traffic intersection, staring in annoyance at a large diamond shaped orange sign, Men At Work; that sign had been protruding into my lane for over a week, forcing me to swerve into the oncoming lane to avoid scratching the right side of my Honda Civic every time I made the crossing. A minor thing maybe, but it annoyed me and as I sat waiting for the traffic light to change I found myself wishing that somebody would move the sign.

The light turned green. As my car rolled forward two men stepped out of the bushes and removed the sign.

Last Friday afternoon I was complaining that we never seem to get houseguests out here in fabulous Baltimore County. As I noted earlier in a LoC to Banana Wings, “any potential visitors to our digs are invariably swept away from any remote possibility of visiting us by the nearby cultural black holes in Washington D.C., not to mention a fannish black hole in Falls Church. You can practically hear the sucking sounds from here.” So three hours later we got a request from some friends whose furnace had broken down to crash here.

They left Monday. Then Kip Williams called and asked if he could sleep over on this Wednesday evening.

Ooo-Eee-Ooo, as they say. Prediction: this year I will be nominated for the Fan Artist Hugo *and I won’t win!*

(The tendrils haven’t grown in yet.)

BUT SERIOUSLY:

One thing I never expected back in 1960 was that here in the future the government would hate the government. These are certainly strange times to be an American.

As far back as my teenage years I've had a degree of skepticism about authority, perhaps because I grew up in a working class New York neighborhood where one was closer to the reality of how things really are: that is, the main ambition of authority, whatever the label, is to stay in authority –everything else is superfluous. As I grew older my skepticism about the system grew with me; I wish it were otherwise: there are many things I admire about this country but Captain America's America it aint. It is in fact a Potemkin village masquerading as a testament to high principles and a functioning responsive democracy.

The 1960s were particularly revealing even if one just read the papers and watched television. Remembering those times makes Edward Snowden's revelations all the more disquieting if we're thinking in terms of trust and ethics in government.

I got drafted in the summer of 1967. You can thank me that we're not speaking in Vietnamese. I must say that a lot of my time in the army, although horribly chaste, was a lot of fun; I got to run around shooting all sorts of guns and I made many new friends.

Some of my new friends were African Americans and one of them, Preston Lay, was good enough to pick me up and drive

me back home to New York when I was discharged in July. Two months later I picked up the family paper, The Daily News, and there, on page 3, was the headline "**BLACK MURDER RING SMASHED!**" with a photograph of Preston being led away in handcuffs.

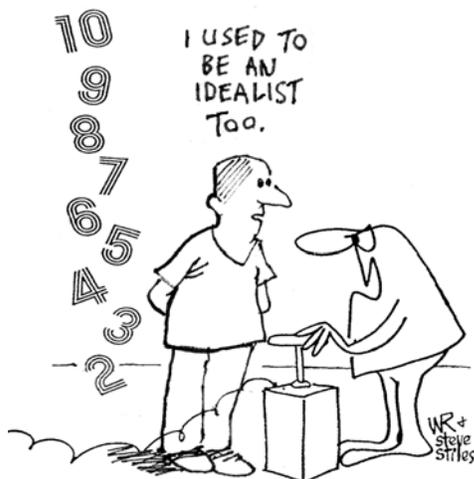
For those who knew Preston, a very gentle person, that would be astonishing. My parents were outraged. The real story was that there was a group of black activists who were photographing and getting badge numbers of

police on the take from drug dealers in Harlem. At some point these people met somebody at a black nightclub who proposed that they all break into a police armory, steal guns and then shoot up some white cops in the ghetto-- who in turn would brutalize the black community, which would then spark race riots leading to The Black Revolution. And these kids are all going "*Right on! Right on!*" and he, the advocator of this plan, is taping them going "*Right on,*" since, by George (surprise!), he was an undercover police officer, the mother fucker!

(As I recall, in the 1960s there was a lot of "*Right On!s*" from white kids as well, with, say, proposals to blow up the Pentagon or Wall Street rather common. I might've well done some of that Righting On myself.)

Preston got arrested as a member of this Murder Gang because he happened to be having dinner with one of the activists and his mother --the police just knocked down the door and collared the two of them. Preston spent 10 months in The Tombs before his family was able to raise the \$75,000 in bail money, his father selling off his property, his brother dropping out of college, to help pay for legal expences. When their money ran out, so did the group's lawyer --William Kunstler then took over and worked pro bono. Their case was finally thrown out of court when the agent provocateur's actions were revealed. It took Preston three years to get a job after that; prospective employers kept getting anonymous phone calls. I'm guessing that there was no more taking of police badge numbers.





I don't know if the furor over the issue of NSA surveillance will have faded away by now, or has been buried by whatever political scandal may have surfaced by this May, but although I personally am as clean as the pure driven snow, I feel far from comfortable over the idea of a bunch of strangers monitoring me in any way, especially strangers from the intelligence community.

I was questioned by one of those when I was in the army: the man was from Military Intelligence and he was an idiot. He wanted to know what my connections were with that dangerous I.W.W. member, Dick Ellington, Sec/Treas. of FAPA, and would I be willing to take a lie detector test?

I told him no. He started to salivate at that point, but I went to explain that I had recently read an article in *The Readers Digest* that stated that lie detectors weren't all that accurate. "*For example,*" I said, "*I am the nervous type: suppose you'd ask me a question like 'When did you take an axe to your wife?' Even though I'm not married and hadn't used an axe, the very nature of that question might provoke a response.*"

My interrogator looked puzzled. "*But Specialist Stiles,*" he said, "*we're not going to ask you anything about axes!*"

Oy vey!

LAST NIGHT: I dreamed that due to the nearing extinction of polar bears, a leading U.S. zoo was indicted for counterfeiting polar bears by bleaching their grizzlys.

BTW, what would a Bipolar Bear be?

MASQUE: I was a big fan of Bill Rotsler and, back in the day, whenever I drew a cartoon I hoped that Bill would see it and appreciate it: if cartoonists have audiences, Bill would get a seat in front row center.

With that in mind, I really appreciated Robert Lichtman sending me a batch of *Masques* that had been published after WR had left us. I frequently go through them at random. Today I was doing just that and came across the following quote: "*Only the people who work at the Post Office wonder why the rest of us hate the P.O.*" With all due respect, I must beg to differ: I had a friend who worked at main branch of New York's Post Office and when he retired he wrote his memoirs describing all his experiences there. The title: "*ROAD KILL.*"

MY LETTER IN PLOTKA, Vol 10, No. 2,

August 2005: "I've been reading a lot in the media about the shameful toilet tossing, or flushing, of the Qur'an down the loo by Guantanamo prison guards, between their waterboarding and humiliation rituals. The press seems divided on this –was it tossing or flushing?"

"If the latter, that raises some questions. My copy of the Koran ("Qur'an") is somewhat smaller than the average New Testament, and Amazon advertises a copy at 192 pages, but of course Holy Books come in all sizes; typography often plays a big part in that. Still, at almost every place I've worked at, sooner or later someone tries to flush a tampon down the toilet with the result that the restroom floods –and a book certainly is much bigger than most tampons! (But then, I assume most tampons are more absorbent than most books.)

"I decided to try an experiment, but it certainly wouldn't be a good idea, or in good taste, to use the Qur'an, the Torah, or the King James Bible.

Since I didn't have Wiccan material on hand, I decided to go with more secular works.

"For the first try: "Being And Nothingness," Jean-Paul Sartre, 260 pages, hardcover. It didn't even get all the way down; the water just swirled around it. (Later it swelled up to almost twice its size. It looked a little like a phone book.) So we can forget about hardcovers.

"Next try: "Beyond the Gates of Perception," Aldous Huxley, 190 pgs., trade paperback: same deal, no go.

"Okay, so maybe the Guantanamo asshats had desecrated a pocketbook Koran. Assuming that, I had a little more luck with my next choice, a slim pb editon of "Zen For Summer Vacations" by Alan Watts. It got down to the narrowest part of the toilet but not the lower part, down through the bowl and into the siphon, commonly called the waste removal pipe. Not only that, but like some errant tampon it flooded our bathroom! (*Yikes! Elaine will kill me!*)

"Okay. Later. Cleaned up the mess. While I was doing that, it suddenly hit me: maybe those guards had torn up that Qur'an (Koran) one page at a time, flushing each page down the toilet individually!

"After the flooding incident, I decided not to try to do this with my copy of "Moby Dick," as I had originally planned but to just estimate the time necessary for the process. Say it takes me three seconds to tear out a page, wad it up, and then toss it in the john. The flushing and refilling of the tank takes thirty seconds. 33 x 192 pages= 6336 seconds divided by sixty equals 105.6 minutes: that's a *lot* of time: do young American soldiers really have that kind of patience? Don't these guards have anything better to do, any other kind of duties?

"Inquiring taxpayers want to know."

"Guys who wear porkpie hats are always, in my experience, up to no good." -D. Koontz

2014: I said I'd be doing much less fan art this

year because I wanted to and needed to get involved in other types of projects, so naturally between January and mid-February I've already done eleven pieces of fan art. I just can't seem to kick the Cartoon Monkey! It was the same way last January and February –in fact, two pieces of art were among the best covers I've ever done back then and they have *yet* to be published. Frustrating! Of the 83 of my cartoons and illustrations that were in circulation last year, a mere 29 have been published, so even if I don't come within spitting distance of my drawing board, odds are that I'll be visually present this year.

PROPOSED SATANIC MONUMENT FOR OKLAHOMA STATE HOUSE LAWN REJECTED. Designer Steve Stiles "Shocked and dejected." "These people wouldn't know the Devil from a hole in the ground!" Stiles claims.

