

The Fossil



Organized May 28, 1904

Official Publication of *The Fossils*,
The Historians of Amateur Journalism

AAPA's Golden Year

by Dave Tribby

BOXES of correspondence sat in the back of my closet for years, and a jay bundles in an old chest of drawers. I recently went digging through them to remember how the American Amateur Press Association celebrated its fiftieth anniversary forty years ago.

In the mid-1980s things were going well for the AAPA, with around 350 members and bundles that averaged thirty journals. I had joined 15 years earlier in the first of several recruiting drives led by Les Boyer directed at Kelsey press owners that brought membership and activity to record levels. (See "Kelsey Recruiting Transformed NAPA, AAPA" in *THE FOSSIL* No. 382 for January 2020.) In 1970 I was a high school student in the Tampa Bay Area and soon got to know members of the Suncoast Amateur Press Society, led by Leland M. Hawes, Jr. Lee had joined AAPA at age 12 in 1942, quickly establishing himself as an active publisher and office holder. He chose journalism as his career, working as reporter, editor, and writer for the Tampa newspapers.



Les Boyer

Jack Bond was my closest AAPA neighbor; we both were Pinellas County residents, living to the west of Tampa Bay. He had joined the National APA as a teenager in the 1930s and would still publish an occasional paper. Lee got him to join AAPA in 1966.

Another prominent Tampa amateur was Fred Liddle, a native New Yorker who joined AAPA as an adult in 1969. After he was laid off from his job as an engraver,

Lee got him an interview at the *Tampa Tribune*, so his family left Long Island for Davis Island in 1972. The



Official Editor Fred Liddle and President Dave Tribby at the 1986 AAPA convention

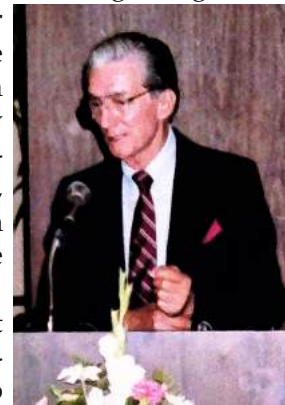
two Tampans provided quite a contrast. Lee was the consummate Southern gentleman, a gentle soul who had the ability to connect with all sorts of people. Fred, on the other hand, was a gregarious, life of the party sort of person always eager to share a joke or discuss baseball and perhaps do a bit of good-natured needling. They both enjoyed getting to know people, and worked hard to keep AAPA going.

Fred had been elected official editor in 1984. He previously served three terms in 1973-76,

but this term was different because our long-time printer, Russ Paxton, gave up the job after finding the tasks increasingly difficult. For volume 49 Fred stayed with letterpress, having the copy Linotyped at a shop in Tampa, then printing the copies at home on his 8 by 12 C&P press – an amazing amount of work that saved the organization quite a bit of money.

In the mid-1980s a few amateurs were beginning to use computers to produce their journals. High quality printers were quite expensive, and results from dot-matrix printers were barely legible. The majority of AAPA papers were printed letterpress, mainly on Kelsey presses. Back then the bundles were sent via bulk rate and delivery required weeks.

In 1985 I was a software project manager working for Hewlett-Packard Co. in the San Francisco Bay Area. A February college re-



Jack Bond

cruiting trip to Atlanta was close enough to allow a side trip to Florida to visit family and friends. I could call Jack toll-free from my folks' phone, and see both Lee and Fred during their weekly lunch at the Tapper Pub. During that meal, conversation turned to filling AAPA offices. Bob Weigel, in his third year as president, was ineligible for another term and they suggested I should be AAPA's next president.

I knew that president was not the most vital AAPA office. To have a successful term, a president needs a strong slate of supporting officers – particularly mailer, secretary-treasurer, and official editor. Afterward, I wrote to Fred:

It sure was good to see you and Lee, and enjoy the Tapper Pub. I've been thinking about your arm twisting regarding the AAPA presidency. As I mentioned earlier, this is a particularly busy time at work. It should be over by October, but there's no guarantee. On the other hand, I don't see anyone else stepping forward as a candidate. So, I'll make a deal with you. If you will stay on as Official Editor I will run for President. Let me know your decision so I can make my plans accordingly.

My gambit was successful. Fred wrote on April 1st:

Although I'd like to weasel out of the OE job as soon as possible, if staying on is the only way to get you to accept the post of president, I'll do it.

I sent letters (no e-mail available in '85) to all incumbent officers, urging them to run again, and received positive replies from everyone: 1st VP Les Boyer, 2nd VP Ted Conover, Secretary-Treasurer Jack Bond, Mailer Linda Donaldson, Manuscript Manager Yvonne Huntress, and Directors Harold Clark and Roger Merryman. Bob Weigel replaced me as the third director. With no additional candidates, the election results were nearly a foregone conclusion.

AAPA mailed its first bundle in September 1936, so celebrating the golden anniversary would be a top priority of my term. Such commemorations help us remember our history, and also stir up activity. Twenty-five years earlier, Lee and Les spearheaded the "Silver Spur" campaign that brought vitality to the group after some lean years, and I hoped we might duplicate some of those benefits. Several seasoned members were thinking along the same lines. In June, Fred shared an interesting idea:

Our golden anniversary year is really something to think about! I'm concentrating on getting out a decent volume of *AAJ* and won't be able to offer you too many suggestions about how to do your job. One idea I did have, however, is for you to name an honorary slate of officers to co-exist with the official board. They would be picked from the charter members or real old-timers, such as Karl X. Williams, Martin Keffer, Elliott Ruben, etc.

Les Boyer wrote on June 11:

Yes, this will be an important AAPA history year. Fred and I have already discussed some thots – particularly a history updating by Lee, if he has time to do it. A search for former members, as you've indicated, would be a natural, also. That would be a good project for the First VP.



Ivan Snyder and Linda Donaldson

Lee agreed to update the exhaustive history of AAPA's first 25 years he wrote for *THE FOSSIL* in 1961:

Fred evidently has settled on the idea of five articles beginning in January—one on each decade. Since I've already done the first 25 years, the first two will be largely rewrites and boildowns (he wants to hold them to about 800 words). So it looks as if this will be a busy year.

Fred would make production changes to the *AAJ* for volume 50, switching the Linotyped material to cold type and learning how to do paste-up on a grid sheet. A recent amendment changed the page size from 6 by 9 inches to 5½ by 8½, allowing it to be offset printed at Quick-Print. Fred hand set and letterpress-printed the nameplate on the front cover and material on the inside front and back covers.

It's important to encourage newer members to take a role in the organization. Ivan Snyder from Portland,

Active Members

The following members won laureate awards during the 1985-86 year:

Journal of Overall Excellence: James F. Deane, *New Towne Press*

Letterpress Printed Journal: John Horn, *Leadstacker*; Honorable Mention: Helen and Sheldon Wesson, *Siamese Standpipe*

Prose Non-Fiction: Joseph A. Diachenko, "Smoker's Heart Attack"

Art: Lucy Stovall Douglas, for wood engraving "Christmas Card"; Honorable Mention: James F. Deane, "River Scene," *New Towne Press* 10, August 1985

Historian John Horn called out these prolific publishers: Robert Orbach, *Flexible Voice*; Russell & Delores Miller, various titles; Lauren Geringer, *People Watcher*; Marianna Sturgeon, *Vignettes*; George Stallings, *New Mexico Cougar*; J. Ed Newman, *Jed's Jernl-ette* and *Web*; Walter Brovald, *The Gryphon*; Ralph Babcock, *Weaker Moments*; Charlie Bush, *Arrow Amateur*; and Fred Liddle, *Flimsie Excuse*. He should have also included his own *Leadstacker*. ♦



John Horn

willingness to help AAPA:

I shall be happy to attempt to fill the position you described in your letter, provided that you understand that, at present, I know almost nothing about it. I know, a good way to learn is to do it. I've learned through my work that it doesn't pay to panic when you don't understand everything right away – work on what you do understand, and gradually the rest of what you need will come.

Ivan had been appointed historian for the previous year, and to replace him I asked an even newer member, John Horn of Little Rock, Arkansas. His response had the same flavor as Ivan's:

I must say that I'm very busy at this time but if I want AAPA to prosper then I'm going to have to do my part to support the organization. Yes, I'll take the job and hopefully, will be able to continue the fine job done by Ivan.

Golden Anniversary Celebration Committee

The Golden Anniversary Celebration Committee was made up of two groups of long-term members:

Honorary Officers

Office	Member	Term
President	Helen Vivarttas Wesson	1940
Official Editor	Karl X. Williams	1937
First Vice President	Bruce W. Smith	1941
Second Vice President	Ray A. Albert	1945-46
Secretary	Marion Snyder	1955-56
Treasurer	Martin B. Keffer	1945-46
Mailer	Michael J. O'Connor	1960-61
Manuscript Manager	Leslie W. Boyer	1944-45
Historian	Leland M. Hawes, Jr.	1945-46
Director	Theodore E. Conover	1943
Director	Dean Rea	1944-45
Director	Russell L. Paxton	1948-49
Director	Joseph W. Curran	1958-59
Director	Roger V. Ralphe	1959-60

Additional Ex-Presidents

Charles L. Bush, Lauren R. Geringer, J. Hill Hamon, James C. Lamanna, Frederick J. Liddle, and Robert D. Weigel. ♦

Fred and Lee agreed to co-host the annual convention in Tampa. Lee had first hosted in 1966, proving that air conditioning made such a southern destination possible even in summer, and Florida had gotten the nod every five years since then. The Floridians always did a great job of finding a venue, creating an interesting program, and promoting the event. I knew we were in good hands.

I implemented Fred's idea of an honorary list of officers by identifying the current member who had served in each office the earliest. When someone qualified for an additional office, I found the next-earliest member.

I asked Lee if he would like to head up a Golden Anniversary committee, but in an early November letter he demurred: "I expect to have my hands full just writing those articles Fred wants for AAJ." In mentioning alternatives, he offered an intriguing possibility: "Fred mentioned that maybe we could round up as many of the ex-presidents as possible for the committee." I decided to name the honorary officers and additional ex-presidents who were still members as the Golden Anniversary committee, hoping that enough would be interested to come up with ideas to celebrate the occasion, to get former members to rejoin, and to encourage more publications in the bundle. Ten ex-presidents were already included on the honorary list. Bruce Smith, who joined AAPA in its first year and had served in many offices, agreed to be chairman.

Reaction from the appointees was generally positive. For example, Minnesotan Mike O'Connor replied that he was "honored to be among such a distinguished group" but wondered, "Does that mean I'm actually going to have to mail something...I'm out of practice!"

My Nevada neighbor Ted Conover: "Wow! Honorary director! Thanks very much and that's the kind of position I like – no duties, etc. I'll do my best to serve in the position in a way that will make you proud."

Virginia's Ray Albert, a charter member and president a couple of times in the 1940s, brought an interesting perspective: "I think AAPA is still the leading Ajay group from the standpoint of spirit and enthusiasm, and practically free from inner clashes. BUT, I am older now than when we struggled with AAPA's problems, and look upon it in a more mellow light."

Upon reflection, managing a group of 20 was challenging in an era of typewriters, carbon paper copies, and postal correspondence that required days for a reply. But despite a busy travel schedule, Bruce mailed a group letter in



Lee Hawes and Helen Wesson

January with suggested assignments for each committee member, but recognizing limitations.

We're all volunteers, not draftees. Thus, my request is that each of you evaluate the assignment you have been given; if you think it has merit, carry it out; if you think it is impossible, please so advise me, with copy to Dave Tribby. But, please do not ignore your assignment. A golden anniversary occurs only once.

Helen Wesson soon replied. She reported that husband Sheldon was already at work on a 50th Anniversary issue of *Siamese Standpipe* (a 16 page multi-color piece in the April bundle), and she shared ideas for additional projects.

As incumbent First VP in charge of recruiting, Les Boyer worked up a list of former members and their last known addresses. Over the following months the secretary-treasurer reports included 22 reinstatements including former actives such as Marge Adams Petrone, Ed Wall, Ken Weiser, Jane Shaw Schubert, and David Wesson.

Reminiscences from Ray Albert, Russ Paxton, Joe Curran, Mike O'Connor, and Charlie Bush soon appeared in the *AAJ*.

Some committee members sent their regrets. Jim Lamanna pointed to "a job that is very demanding" and felt "getting involved in the kind of project you are suggesting is too much like work." Joe Curran begged off writing about the suggested topic of smooth and difficult transitions of officers "as I do not have the memory or material for it," but suggested other activities.

Fred suggested some sort of special recognition should be given to Lee Hawes for all of his efforts to keep AAPA going as publisher, officer, recruiter, and

in many other ways. A second name surfaced: Les Boyer, another longtime multi-faceted stalwart, had been instrumental in reviving AAPA; over half the current membership could be traced to the three Kelsey recruiting campaigns he led. A subcommittee decided to make them co-winners of the Ajay of the Half Century award, each receiving a plaque presented by Fred at the convention.

The convention was the highlight of the year. Held in Tampa over August 15 - 17, it drew 79 members and friends. Former president Pam Wesson traveled the furthest, flying in from Paris, France, and there were members from 21 states. You can see pictures from the convention in *THE FOSSIL* No. 392 (July 2022) and in a Google Photos album found at tinyurl.com/aapa1986

Some long-missing members turned up for the event: Marge Adams Petrone, a leader of the "Youngstown Girls" in the 1950s; Joe Gudonis, publisher of *The Lost Chord* in AAPA's earliest days; Ed Wall, a professional Miami newspaperman and AAPA president during the 1940s; and Texan John Vaglianti, active as a publisher and officer in the 1940s. All four of these would continue to be active in the coming years, Marge even serving as official editor in 1999-2001.

The convention chairmen put together an interesting mix of panels and discussion sessions that had members recall various aspects of AAPA history, discuss skills needed by amateur journalists today, and think about what might happen to the hobby in the next fifty years. And, as always at AAPA conventions, there was plenty of time for socializing.

At the Saturday night banquet, I announced the annual laureate awards and handed out certificates to those who were present. I also had special presidential



Friday, August 15	
1:00 p.m.	: Registration begins, McKay Bay Room
2:00 p.m.	: Welcome — Fred Liddle, Lee Hawes Panel : Those Great Local Clubs—From Hempstead to Hastings, Suncoast to Youngstown.
3:30 p.m.	: Panel : What to write—Favorite subjects to go into print.
5:00 p.m.	: Break
6:45 p.m.	: Assemble for short walk (one block) to Brothers Too Restaurant at Austin Center West Building for a Welcome Buffet.
Saturday, August 16	
9:15 a.m.	: McKay Bay Room Panel : The next 50 years—Will letterpress give way to laser printers?
Saturday, cont'd.	
10:30 a.m.	: Panel : The War years—How AAPA fought the battles, homefront & overseas.
Noon	: Luncheon buffet, Flagship Room. (Dutch treat)
1:00 p.m.	: The Fossils, Dick Fleming presiding ; "Using Color" —J. Ed Newman (all delegates welcome)
2:30 p.m.	: McKay Bay Room : AAPA Auction Charles L. Bush, Auctioneer
4:30 p.m.	: Break
6:30 p.m.	: Conviviality hour, McKay Bay Room, cash bar; convention photo, 7:15 sharp
7:30 p.m.	: Banquet, McKay Bay Room Jack W. Bond, Master of Ceremonies Presidential message & laureate awards : David M. Tribby Speaker of the evening : Sheldon C. Wesson

The main banquet speaker, Sheldon C. Wesson, spoke on "AAPA in Youthful Maturity." As Les Boyer reported in the November 1986 *AAJ*:

Wes observed that one can look around the banquet room and notice a big change from the fledgling AAPA of the 1930s and '40s—the AAPA heralded itself as the association of youth in these early years but is now clearly mature in age and otherwise. On the other hand, Wes recognized that AAPA has not swayed from its tradition of doing certain things differently. It continues to conduct its affairs in a relaxed manner, without getting caught up in procedural issues. He felt AAPA strength and stability is also due to the efforts of many hard working members who “put their time and their talents to the service of others.”

There was one tragic note: four days before the convention, Fred and Betty Liddle's 31-year-old son, Thomas, died in an accident. Fred's participation in the convention was limited to the banquet. A planned



Sheldon C. Wesson

Observing from forty years later, I'm struck by how large AAPA was then and how many people were significantly involved in the group. Without e-mail and other internet tools, communication was more difficult than today, but somehow we got the job done. We had members from the earliest years who were still active, as well as new recruits who were eager to contribute to the bundle. I would label it a successful year because all the officers did their jobs and so many other members got involved—many of them spurred by the anniversary celebration. ♦



An Executive Decision, and an Oddity

by David Goudsward



President David Goudsward

FIRST, a note about the election, or lack thereof: the short version is that a health concern prevented the printing of the amendment and the mailing and return of ballots within the mandated timetable. No seats on the board were contested, which, under the bylaws, means no election of officers is needed. Rather than waste postage, mailing labels, and envelopes to mail an unnecessary ballot for unopposed officers without the amendment, I made an executive decision. The amendment is just clarifying a system that has worked for 20 years. It will keep working until we straighten out the bank signature cards, which currently list Tom Parson and several deceased officers. On a related note, I hate making decisions, executive or otherwise.



I picked up an oddity off a used book website. It is a bound volume of the amateur press journals (1881-1883) of Charles Elmer Wilson (1866-1935), the fifth president of the New England Amateur Press Association. His three sons donated it in 1936 to Edwin Hadley Smith for the Fossils Library. A letter from

Frank Wilson to Smith is pasted to the flyleaf, with Smith's stamp showing as part of the NAPA Library. The book consists of issues of *The Fortnightly Gazette*, which was renamed the *Garden City Gazette*. By the end of the year, it had changed its name again to *New England Gazette*, whose name and format seem to have been finalized; both remained constant through the end of the bound book, the May 1883 edition. A NEAPA issue appears at the back, but not from Wilson's presidency.

Wilson died July 9, 1935, in Melrose, Mass., at the age of 77. His editorial and journalism interests led him to a lateral move into music. He taught music and served as a church organist, composing patriotic and sacred music.

As fascinating as it is to stroll through a NAPA journal, the question remains as to how a Fossil library item from Edwin Hadley Smith's collection ended up on an Oregon bookseller's shelves.



Charles E. Wilson, 1882



Charles E. Wilson, 1905

An overlooked area of amateur journalism

Fannish APAs

by Michael R. Brown

WHEN most people think of amateur journalism and amateur press associations (APAs), they think of mainstream national groups like NAPA, UAPA, and AAPA, or various regional groups. But often overlooked are the many APAs that arose among various fan-based communities, first with science fiction/fantasy fandom in the 1930s, then spreading to fans of comic books, roleplaying games, and various other genres (mystery, weird fiction, sword & sorcery, etc.) or authors (Robert E. Howard, H. P. Lovecraft, etc.).

In general, members of these fan APAs, as they are called, send their submissions, usually called "apazines", which are then collated and sent out to the

membership, much like the mainstream groups, though there are some differences. Membership is typically limited to 30 or fewer people, with a copy count requirement a little higher than the membership level. While many groups are still hardcopy APAs, several have transitioned to electronic. Distribution schedules can vary, with many being quarterly, but could be bi-monthly or more often — even weekly.

I find electronic APAs not as interesting as physical ones. For me, one of the great elements of amateur journalism is the hands-on process of publishing. And some of the creativity of apazines can only be experienced in physical form. Print publications showcase a

variety of paper stock from rough paper to slick, colored paper, cardstock covers, printed professionally instead of on a personal printer, color art and photos (easier now with color printers and copiers), as well as different sizes. While most are 8.5x11 inches, I see larger size paper from overseas members and 5x8 booklets or even smaller.

Apazines are similar to fanzines, and in fact, some are the same, as creators may offer their apazines outside the APA. Or they submit their fanzines to the APA to meet their obligations. Content can be research, fiction, poetry, or reviews of books, magazines, TV shows, and movies. Some talk about their collecting, attending conferences or shows, and the like. Most fan APAs insist that submissions be "original" and not reprints. The concern is with reprints of copyrighted material from magazines and newspapers, and that two or more apazines may reprint the same materials. When I do see the rare reprinted material it's usually really old or from overseas.

Two unique elements are found in fan APAs. The first and more important is the requirement of minimum activity ("minac"), usually something like 6 pages every other mailing. Failure to meet the minac can and does lead to being dropped from the APA, even if you are up to date on dues. Submitting materials gets you back in, unless there is a waitlist for the APA, as a dropped member may find themselves on it. Few APAs require members to submit each mailing, and some members pace themselves by consistently submitting every other mailing, meeting the minac.

The second element is the expectation of "conversation." Members are encouraged to comment in their apazine about everyone else's submission. This can be a simple noting what they liked or can be a discussion with others that goes back and forth over several mailings.

As these groups are small, they are managed by one person holding the title of Official Editor (OE). They are responsible for creating the Official Organ (OO, more on that shortly), but have other duties. They also serve as Mailer, receiving submissions and bundling them together, often binding them (stapled or comb-binding) and adding a cover. They are also Secretary-Treasurer, taking in dues and handling expenses, and reporting all this in the OO. There are usually no other officers such as President. Most fan APAs will have annual elections for the OE, which may pass from person to person every few years, but some allow one person to remain OE until they don't want it or can't handle it.

Mailings contain a copy of the Official Organ, which includes several important items of information, though with some APAs these items may be considered separate from the OO. There is a table of contents of all the submissions, noting the submitter and

page count. There is a roster of all members, the rules of the APA, and some table noting member's dues status and minac status. The OE will include some editorial content, usually reminders of dues and pointing out people who owe dues or pages. Members lost or joined will be noted, and any concerns with members such as health or the like will often be mentioned. But the OOs usually don't include other materials such as member submitted articles or letters.

While mainstream amateur journalism has the Library of Amateur Journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, most fan APAs archive their mailings. Major repositories include: Bowling Green State University (Browne Popular Culture Library), University of California, Riverside (Terry Carr Fanzine Collection), University of Iowa (M. Horvat Science Fiction Fanzines Collection and M. Horvat Genre Apazines Collection), and University of Maryland, Baltimore County (Coslet-Sapienza Fantasy and Science Fiction Fanzine Collection). Links to all these collections can be found on The Fossils' website at

<https://thefossils.org/collections.html>

Overall, I find fan APAs interesting. They form almost a separate culture from what we call mainstream and they call the mundane APAs. Their members may not know about the larger world of amateur journalism, just as many in amateur journalism may not be aware fan APAs exist. Another interesting matter is there are some people who may be members of multiple fan APAs. Some of these people will create different apazines for each of these, while others might create one that they submit to more than one fan APAs.

While many fan APAs have come and gone, several still exist. This is not an exhaustive list, but these are still running. Several probably have open slots for membership. Unless otherwise noted, these are physical apas.

The **Esoteric Order of Dagon** (or EOD) is devoted to H.P. Lovecraft and weird fiction. Its mailings are done quarterly, with a membership limit around 30 or so. Mailings are loose bundles, which leads to some interesting apazines. It's been around since 1973 and sent over 200 mailings. Those who want to join can reach Official Editor S.T. Joshi at his website

<https://stjoshi.org>

ERBapa is for fans of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Its comb-bound mailings are quarterly, with a limit of 36 members, but there are openings. It's been around since 1984 and has passed 160 mailings. Full info, including indexes of past mailings and contact info, may be found at

<https://www.erbzine.com/apa/>

The **Fantasy Amateur Press Association** (FAPA), is the first and oldest fan APA, in existence since 1937.

Mailings are quarterly but I don't know the limit. The contact is Ken Forman via email address kforman@att.net.

N'APA is *not* NAPA but the **Neffer Amateur Press Alliance**, and "Neff" is the **National Fantasy Fan Federation** (NFFF or N3F), which was founded in 1941. N'APA started in 1959, but at some point went electronic. Membership in N'APA is open to any member of NFFF. It is distributed bimonthly, and back issues are available on the NFFF website

<https://n3f.org/>

They are coming up to 300 mailings.

PEAPS is the **Pulp Era Amateur Press Society**, devoted to all things pulp fiction related. While the main focus is on the pulp fiction that appeared in pulp magazines from 1900 to the 1950s and associated matters, some members have looked at related TV, movies, radio, and comics, and sometime "new pulp" works. Founded in 1987, membership is limited to 28 and currently has room for more. Mailings are quarterly and stapled. You can contact them via their website

<https://peaps.net/>

REHupa is the **Robert E. Howard United Press Association**, devoted to REH and sword and sorcery. It

started in 1972 and is bimonthly. The limit is 30 members, but I don't know their current number. They are well past 200 mailings and may be close to 300. The group has been working with the Robert E. Howard Foundation to organize and support the annual Howard Days in Cross Plains, Texas. No website, so contact them via the REH Foundation at <https://rehfoundation.org/>

SAPS is the **Spectator Amateur Press Society**, the second oldest fan APA, operating since 1947. (The second one founded, Vanguard APA, lasted from 1945 through 1950). It is quarterly with a 25-member limit and I believe they have room for more. I am uncertain of contact information.

SSWFT is the **Sword & Sorcery and Weird Fiction Terminus**. The focus is thus both sword & sorcery and weird fiction, resulting in a lot of overlap with EOD and REHupa. It started in the early 2000s and later went electronic. Contact Scott Sheaffer at email address kmacalp@aol.com.

Representatives of these or any other fan APAs who would like to provide additional information for publication are encouraged to contact the editor of THE FOSSIL. ♦

Book Review

First Fandom's Premiere 'Zine

by Bobby Derie

The Complete Acolyte. Edited by Daniel Ritter and David Ritter. Boston, MA: First Fandom Experience, 2023. 540 pp. \$120.00 (Trade Paperback).

SCIENCE FICTION fandom is the redheaded stepchild of the amateur journalism movement. Thanks in part to the participation and encouragement of H. P. Lovecraft, amateur journalism attracted writers and fans such as August Derleth, Frank Belknap Long, Jr., Clark Ashton Smith, R. H. Barlow, and Donald Wollheim, who carried forward many of the standards and practices of the ajays in producing their own fanzines, and organizations like the Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA, 1937-), the Neffer Amateur Press Alliance (N'APA, 1957-), the Robert E. Howard United Press Association (REHupa, 1972-), and the Esoteric Order of Dagon APA

(EOD, 1973-) that took the National Amateur Press Association (NAPA) and United Amateur Press Association (UAPA) as their models.

The period of First Fandom covers the first generation of organized science fiction fandom, primarily from the 1930s and 1940s, and much as The Fossils seeks to preserve the history of amateur journalism, groups like the Fanac Fan History Project

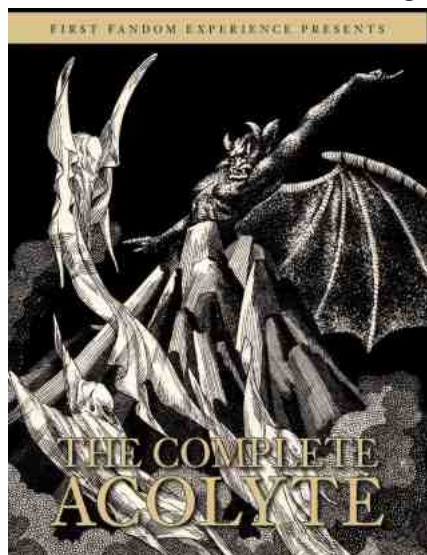
<https://fanac.org>

and First Fandom Experience

<https://firstfandomexperience.org/>

are devoted to preserving the often fragile and rare early fanzines—and information about the organizations and personalities that gave rise to them. This includes both the digitization of 'zines and related materials, and the publication of histories, facsimile reproductions of key series, and the like.

The Acolyte, a fanzine published by Francis T. Laney and Samuel D. Russell,



consists of 14 issues published from 1942 to 1946. The high literary character compared to other fanzines of the period, and the considerable material devoted to writers H. P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard that appeared in its pages, has made the issues highly sought after by fans and collectors. Laney and Russell were members of FAPA, and the 'zines make an interesting comparison with amateur journals of the period. Laney and Russell used cheap mimeographing and hectographing rather than the finer letterpress printing available for the best ajays, but the writing and amateur spirit are definitely there.

The Complete Acolyte republishes the entire series, and adds additional historical and biographical material on the creators and the history of the 'zine. The price reflects the high quality of the photographic reproductions; the early mimeographed pages in extant original copies are faded nearly to unreadability, but here are

clearly legible. These pages have quite literally never looked so good—and the biographical material includes reprints of original correspondence and other scarce materials.

For amateur journalists, *The Complete Acolyte* is a luxury—when has any amateur journal of any period received such treatment?—but it is also an unexpected sidelight into an aspect of amateur history: the legacy of the *National Amateur*, *United Amateur*, and all those little ajay publications of the 1920s and '30s whose influence on the *Acolyte* is clear in the layout, organization, and writing—and which, at least, highlights the legacy of that one peer among amateurs, H. P. Lovecraft.

Bobby Derie, a scholar of pulp studies and weird fiction, is the author of Weird Talers: Essays on Robert E. Howard and Others (2019) and Sex and the Cthulhu Mythos (2014). ♦

Official Editor's Message

Presidents' Field Plaque Discovered

by Dave Tribby

I FIRST wrote about Presidents' Field in the January 2020 issue of *THE FOSSIL* (no. 382), with a follow-up in July 2024 (no. 400). The Field was a six-acre grove of 156 pine trees that spelled out "NAPA," planted in 1934 by the Macauley family on their Michigan farm. Each president of the National Amateur Press Association (both past and future) would have their own designated tree. Near the center of the grove was a pedestal with a plaque attached. NAPA held their annual convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1936, the 60th anniversary of the association's founding, and delegates drove out to the property for a dedication ceremony. Future conventions would visit two more times, in 1953 and 1960.

In the mid-1970s the Macauley family sold the farm and it was developed for residential housing. Most of the pine trees were removed, although a few are still standing.

This August, Fossil Peter Schaub sent an email message to NAPA president (and Fossil) Michelle Klosterman, with a copy to me:

I recently attended the Amalgamated Printers' Association Wayzgoose (Convention) in Los Angeles. John Barrett, an APA member, printer and purveyor of letterpress paraphernalia, asked if anyone there was an NAPA member. I responded that indeed I am. He then discussed with me his finding and acquiring the plaque shown in the attached photo. He would very much like



This plaque from NAPA's Presidents' Field in Michigan was found in a Massachusetts letterpress equipment store.

to get it back into the hands of the NAPA, it being apparently a significant NAPA historical artifact.

Since NAPA has no geographic headquarters, I suggested the best repository for the plaque would be the Library of Amateur Journalism (LAJ) in the Special Collections department of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Those of us who were there for Amateur

Journalism Conference 2016 saw they have a large collection of amateur journalism memorabilia in addition to the world's largest collection of amateur journals. Michelle agreed that donating it to the LAJ – if they would accept it – makes sense.

I asked John Barrett if he recalled how he acquired it. That memory is lost in the distant past. For 23 years his store, Letterpress Things, was in an 11,000 square foot old mill in Chicopee, Mass., until new owners forced them out and they had to pack up their treasures and put them in storage. Just over two years ago they found a new home and began moving the printing items into the new building. Around April they noticed the plaque and thought it should be returned to NAPA. When I sent him links to articles in *THE FOSSIL*, he was excited to learn of its history.

We realized that plaque is probably the last physical memento of that NAPA historic happenstance! And we lament that the plaque couldn't have found its way back to NAPA in time for its 150th anniversary! The plaque is a significant keepsake from a very active time in NAPA's life span. It has no special meaning to us but it should be merged with other historical ephemera.

John later reported the item was 9½ by 12½ by 5/8 inches in size and weighs about 12 pounds.

I contacted David Pavelich, Associate Dean for Collections and Acting Head of Special Collections at UW-M Libraries to ask if they would like to include this artifact in the LAJ. As this issue went to press in early October, the department was evaluating whether to add it.

In other news from Madison, on August 24, 2026, the Department of Special Collections on the ninth floor of Memorial Library at the University of Wisconsin-Madison opened its doors to researchers. It had been closed since December 20, 2024 in order to modernize the fire suppression systems. Dean Pavelich commented, "It's been really wonderful to welcome students and faculty back into our reading room, classroom, and exhibitions."

Michael Brown's article "Fannish APAs" in this issue prompted me to explore the topic further, and a web search led me to Will Straw's "Bundles and Mailings: Science Fiction Fandom and the Amateur Press Association" (*DIY, Alternative Cultures & Society*, vol. 1, 2023, pp. 7-19). It is available at journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/27538702231151625

Straw, of McGill University's Department of Art History and Communications Studies in Montreal, Canada, opens with his experience in 1973 preparing mimeograph stencils for *Arfur*, a fanzine he produced

for the Minnesota Science Fiction Society (MSFS).

He views the history of fandom as driven by shifting relationships between four institutions: two print-based (the apa and the genzine) and two based on interpersonal encounters (the local science fiction club and the convention).

His account of apas starts in the 1940s, but he emphasizes the years 1964-1974. He includes the Carl Brandon hoax from the 1950s, in which two white authors created an African-American fan named Carl Brandon. (Straw's own early activity led to speculation that he himself was not real.) Another significant event was the Breen Affair, or Breendoggle. Organizers of the 1964 World Science Fiction Convention excluded Walter Breen, a fan accused of abusing children – a decision that caused significant division in fandom and Straw believes led to a growth in local clubs and smaller apas where the participants could be better known to each other.

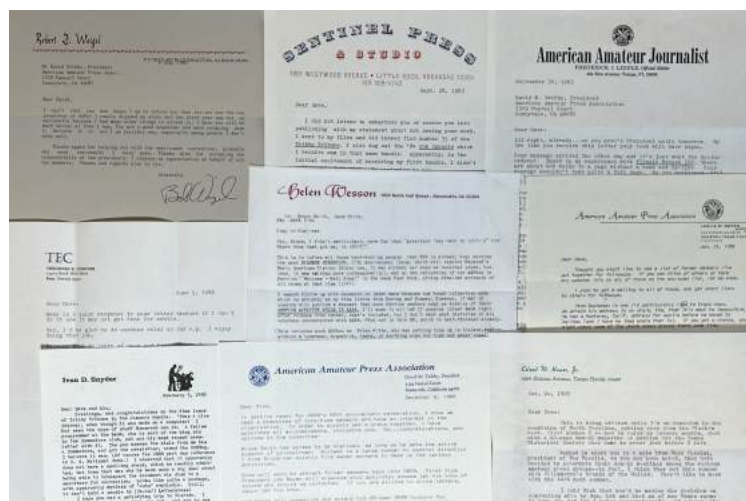
Straw concludes by describing the transition of print-based apas to digital formats and also the differences between the 1970s fandom he first encountered and more recent zines and fan culture.

If you are interested in the topic, read the full paper for yourself and check out the 34 references to related documents, particularly those available online.



I didn't need to go far to research this issue's lead article: only into my closet for letters I had squirreled away years ago. If you readers have stashes of your own that relate to amateur journalism, I urge you to get them out and review them to see what memories they contain:

- How did things work when we used typewriters and postal mail instead of computers, email, and text messages?



Old letters contain a wealth of information. Many ajays printed unique letterheads that are fascinating to see.

- How did you get started in amateur journalism, and who were your mentors? What did you learn about writing, printing, or editing that you still use?
- Who were the people you wrote to — what do you remember about their personalities and accomplishments?
- What do you remember about attending conventions or local meetings?
- What were your interests “back in the day”? How are things different today?
- Were there any surprises lurking in the correspondence? What had you forgotten?

While the recollections are fresh, record your thoughts and send them to me for an article in THE FOSSIL. (You don’t need to be a member in order to contribute an article.)

This issue has far too much of my own writing, so

other voices are needed and encouraged. (Thanks to David Goudsward, Michael Brown and Bobby Derie for adding theirs.) Even if you cannot write a full article, how about a letter to the editor? Contact information is in the masthead on page 12.

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I hope you enjoy the new nameplate on page one and masthead on page twelve, redesigned in the runup to celebrating the 125th anniversary of The Fossils’ founding in two years.

For type nuts among readers, “The Fossil” is set in the same font used previously, Old English Text, with the horizontal scaling set to 115%. The typeface for text and heads remains Book Antiqua (a computer design based upon the metal type Perpetua). ◆

Fossil Fiscal Year 2026

by Dave Tribby

HERE ARE financial numbers for the recently completed Fossil fiscal year:

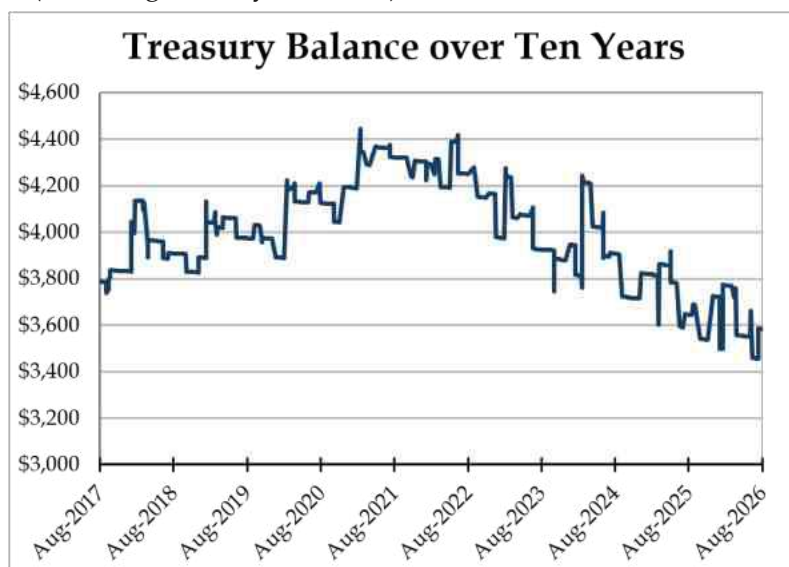
Treasury Balance on August 15, 2025	\$3677.47
Income for Fiscal Year 2026	
Memberships (22)	\$430.00
Subscriptions (2)	\$20.00
Donations (16)	\$343.14
TOTAL INCOME	\$793.14
Expenses for Fiscal Year 2026	
Bank Fees	\$36.00
Website – Internet Service Provider	\$35.91
Website – Domain Registration	\$12.98
THE FOSSIL – Postage	\$139.90
THE FOSSIL – Printing	\$629.75
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$854.54
Net Loss	-\$61.40
Treasury Balance on August 14, 2026	\$3616.07

Fossils were generous during FY26, with 16 of our 22 renewing members making donations that were over 43% of total income. Total income was up by \$280.14 (55%) over FY25, driven by multi-year renewals and higher donations. (If everyone renewed for one year, memberships would bring in \$370 and subscriptions \$30, for a total of \$400.)

On the expense side, the cost of mailing THE FOSSIL in FY26 was nearly the same as the previous year, while printing increased \$72.21 (13%). The charge for the website ISP is for two years. There were no extra bank charges during the year, only the \$3 monthly fee.

Subtracting income from expenses shows a net loss of \$61.40 for the year. Looking at the chart showing the treasury over the last ten years, the balance was holding steady until about 2022. Since then it has declined an average of \$143 (3.5%) per year. This decline was driven by the decision to print THE FOSSIL in color, so please continue the contributions so we can have colorful issues.

During the year we gained two new members: Monica Wasserman and Sean Donnelly. We also lost two members: George Hamilton (who died in December) and Don Peyer. At year end we had 29 members (including 5 family members) and 4 subscribers. ◆



The balance in the Fossil treasury has trended downward since 2022.

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**Note: The Fossils Board of Trustees granted life membership
to Martin M. Horvat* ♦

The Fossil

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