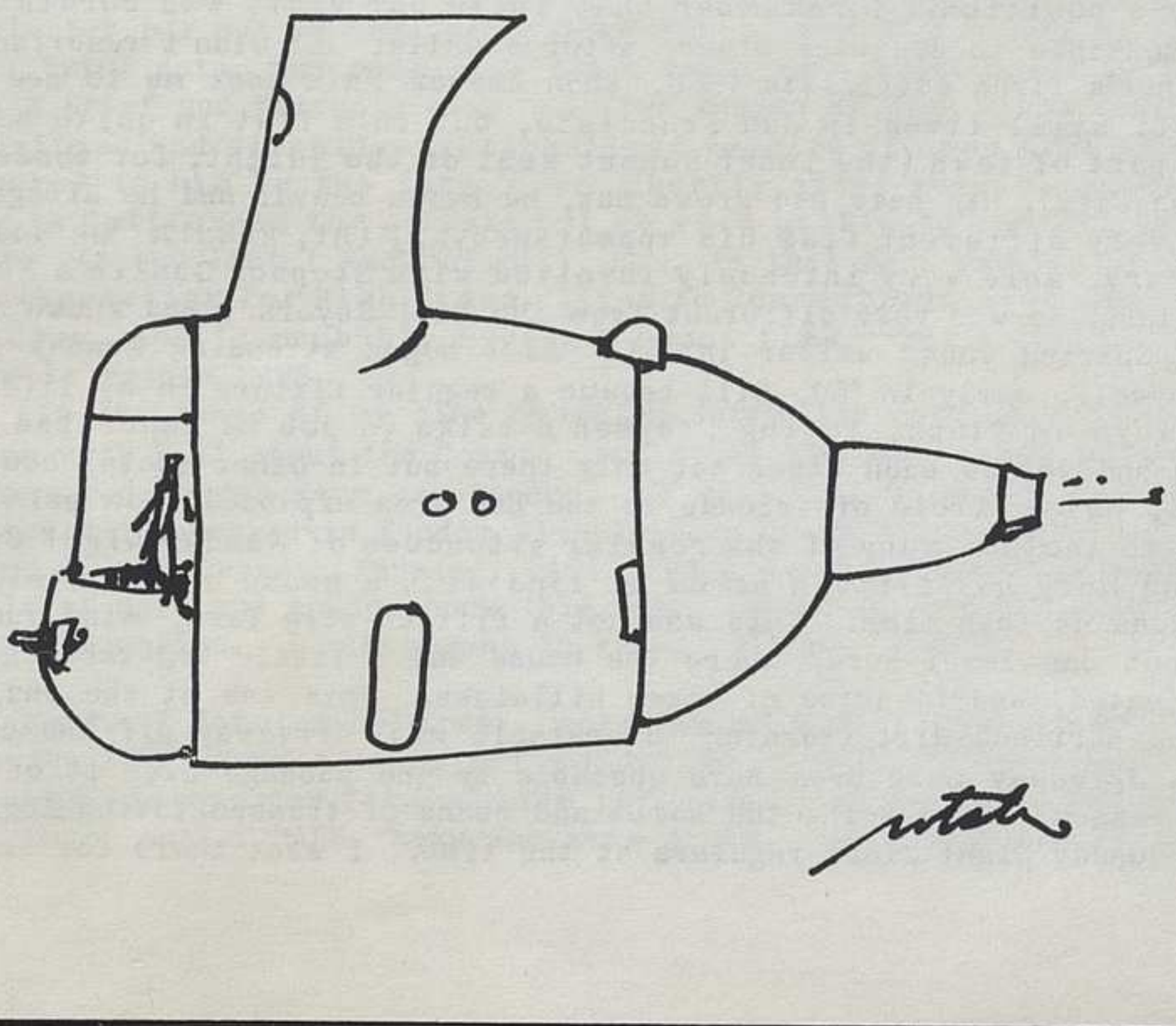
HERE THERE BE SAPS

April 1985



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In the 150th SPECTATOR, **Art Rapp** brings up raising the membership limit from 25 to 30. Art, I don't think that this is counting SAPS members "before they hatch," because it appears to me that the current gestalt that has formed over the past year, with hordes of members rejoining from the Seattle area (and a few from elsewhere), is not complete yet. It seems to me that some still missing components will eventually come back to the fold and if we were to develop a waiting list of around 10-12 people, I would be in favor in raising the membership.

When I was in SAPS before, the membership was 30 and the copy requirement was 35. If we go up in membership at some point in the future, I would lobby strongly in favor of reinstating this copy requirement. Since this move would represent a strength in the group in terms of attracting members, it wouldn't seem to me that <u>five</u> extra copies would be necessary in terms of making bundles available for recruiting new members.

In the last mailing, **Harry Warner Jr.** comments that my mention of Bill Meyers in the mailing before last was the first he's noticed Bill's name in fanzines in a long time. Since I notice that I mentioned him only in passing, and since others of you knew Bill when he was an active fan and member of SAPS back in the late '50s and early '60s, I guess I might ought to fill in a little.

Like the rest of you, I received Bill's excellent fanzine, SPECTRE, and enjoyed his SAPS contributions, as far back as 1959, when he was living in Chattanooga, but I first met Bill in person when he moved from New York (where he was attending Columbia University) to San Francisco around, I believe, 1965. He had taken a job as manager of a little residence hotel on Nob Hill in San Francisco and I went to visit him there in the very comfortable little apartment that was provided for the manager's position. I remember that while our visit was cordial, we didn't continue to see each other, after a while, and didn't resurface in each other's lives until late 1968, when Andrew Main took me to see him.

Bill still lived in San Francisco, but in a flat in quite a different part of town (the inner Sunset west of the Haight, for those who know the City), his hair had grown out, he had a beard, and he altogether looked very different from his appearance 1964 (hi, Redd!). He and his lady, Mary, were very intensely involved with Stephen Gaskin's Monday Night Class. He was <u>very</u> different from the Bill Meyers I had known as an ex-fan/aspiring young writer in '64. As I began attending Monday Night Class myself, early in '69, Bill became a regular fixture in my life. He was always in Class, taping Stephen's talks (a job he inherited from Andrew) and we saw each other not only there but in other social contexts as well, as my circle of friends in the Bay Area expanded from primarily fandom to include many of the regular attendees of Monday Night Class. Bill and Mary had fifteen acres of land with a house on it outside of Santa Rosa at this time. This was not a fifteen-acre farm, mind you; it was about one level acre, where the house and a little vegetable garden was situated, and 14 acres of steep hillsides. This was at the end of a long and perilous dirt (turning to unstable mud) driveway off the county road, a driveway made even more unstable by the passage over it of many school busses, these being the homes and means of transportation for many of the Monday Night Class regulars at the time. I went there for several

weekend get-togethers which included Stephen's family, and my primary memory is of long, tedious meetings where everyone's "subconscious" was sorted out and pronounced upon by Stephen. I much preferred other occasions when I was there with a smaller group of people and could take acid and trip on the hillsides. I remember one interesting time when I was by myself, very high, and encountered a little green garter snake of the sort that live in tall grass. For a brief but intense moment, my mind entered the body of the snake and I saw the world through tall green blades, very large and sunny. I was the snake and hoped fervently that the large, clumsy human sitting nearby would not do anything to hurt me.

When I moved from California to Tennessee, Bill's presence in my life continued. He and Mary had become involved in a "four-marriage," a curious early-Farm phenomena in which two couples get "married" all together. Many of the couples most closely allied with Stephen on a social basis were in these alignments and spent a great deal of their time "sorting out" their relationship. Eventually, nearly all of the "four-marriages" fell apart of their own weight. (And no wonder! It's hard enough keeping together two people in a marriage, let alone four.)

Bill's own marriage went through its changes, too, and while my memory of the exact timing is hazy, I recall that Mary went off around 1975 to pursue medical school. Bill followed and once again we lost touch with each other as rumors filtered back to The Farm that he was in California, in Mexico, in Connecticut. I know that he spent some time in the mid-'70s as typesetter and writer for the Sonoma County Stump, a counter-culture newspaper that appeared weekly at that time. I remember several interviews with Stephen that he put into that paper. In 1978, when I lived at the Richmond, California branch of The Farm, Bill was living in a rural area near Guerneville (the other side of Sonoma County from Glen Ellen). When I left The Farm in 1980 and returned to California, Bill was here, living with his family in Bolinas, a town in western Marin County. There was a party there in (?) '82, attended mostly by Farm-type people but I was there and so was Andrew Main, who spent a good portion of the day laid out in a back bedroom, having smoked too much pot for his body and mind to integrate.

Bill left Bolinas and California again some time after that party and was lost to me once again until an address appeared for him in a newsletter put out by and for ex-Farmies. I sent him a copy of TRAP DOOR and a brief note, and some time later received a thick envelope from him with a brief and friendly note and four issues of High Times containing a serialized and slightly-fictionalized version of some true stuff that happened to him in the late '60s. Shortly after receiving this, Bill came to California for a visit but we were unable to connect with each other. So the last I know of Bill, now, is that he's working in New York as a typesetter for High Times, lives in Connecticut with his wife and children, and is probably having a great time. But I don't think he's going to rejoin SAPS.

(In the issue of my zine on which Harry was commenting, I reported joking with Bill about the Cosmic Circle and the love camps in the Ozarks as compared to our Farm experience, and Bill told me about that time that Stephen had appeared in fandom with letters in an issue or two of the Dan Adkins & Bill Pearson fanzine, SATA, and I asked if any SAPS members had a file of SATA and could check this out. So far no one has reported back on this question. I still want to know. Terry? Dave?)

Dept. of Fannish Records: Walt Coslet's contribution of 'TATER #1 from the first SAPS mailing and his letter in SPEC indicate that he's had the same address for SAPS' entire lifespan of 38 years. Can any other fan, in or out of SAPS, make the same claim? None that I know of...

Kristi asks about The Farm: "To which religious tenets did you subscribe?" Put simply, the basic tenets that nearly all religions have in common. Stephen used to describe it by saying that if each religion on Earth had an IBM punch card made outlining its basic precepts, and you stacked all of these cards up in a huge pile and looked down to see where the holes lined up on all of them and the light shone through, then what those holes signified would be what The Farm's religious tenets consisted of. You know, things like doing right by one another, working honestly and hard, that sort of stuff. I always liked this way of describing the belief system of The Farm and often used it myself when asked by outsiders about the community's religious beliefs. So, not wanting to get strung out in extensive details, I'll let it stand here and hope it satisfies your curiosity.

As to your second question: "Did religion (always/briefly/occasionally/fill in your own) play an important role in the 'rules' or structure of The Farm?" I can't answer this accurately for anyone but myself, and for myself I would say, "all of the above." I generally tried to be fair with everyone, but from some people's viewpoint the fact that I also wanted to be fair with myself and my family was a real stumbling block, because they were into getting as much as they could for themselves. An example of this would be when certain food items would come in to the community store and be dispensed equally to all members of the community. Some people would use all of their share right away, or more rapidly than prudent, and then would be going door to door trying to "borrow" more from their neighbors. I would often say no, because I felt that everyone was supposed to make do with their alloted supply, and people would think I was stingy because I didn't want to relinquish some of my family's share to satisfy the desires of the more consumer-oriented. This attitude of mine would jar others' "do unto others" sensibilities despite my pointing out the unfairness of their requests. There were other situations analogous to the above that would sometimes make a thinking person wonder where others' religious beliefs were at, but I don't want to get long-winded here.

But overall, discounting such minor stuff, I feel that the community as a whole tried hard to follow the basic religious tenets that were established and probably didn't fail any more than any other group of religious people. You may read a lot into this answer if you wish, and you will probably be right.

I sometimes write shopping lists on the backs of junk mail, **Nancy Rapp**, but I have another game plan for junk mail that I follow pretty consistently. As you probably know, a lot of junk mail these days comes with business reply envelopes. When I get mail like this, I take the piece that has my address label on it, write "please remove from mailing list" on it, and then stuff it and every piece of the mailing that can be crammed into the return envelope along with it, seal it, and put it back in the mails. (I don't do this to Good Causes I simply can't afford to support, I hasten to add, just to things like magazine and book solicitations and that sort of thing.) The junk mail sender thus not only gets all his stuff back, saving me the space in my trash it would take up, and gets to pay double postage (approximately) for the privilege.

Finally, **Elinor**, in answer to your question about Andrew Main, he is now living in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he has a good job working at a natural foods grocery, a line of work he has pursued regularly in recent years. I saw him here in Glen Ellen last summer, and he made a brief appearance at the WorldCon last fall in Anaheim. I don't think he's going to rejoin SAPS, either.

--Robert Lichtman