

Beautiful Friend #104. (Includes: Applaud, Clap, Hiccough, Bozo the Clone, Cosmic Muffin, Electric Moonshine, Revolution, Erogenous Zone, Montezuma's Revenge, Pumpkin Pie, Inspected By, Déguisement Adroit de Plastique, Quak!, Call Any Vegetable, Stray Cat Blues, In Remembrance of Pigpen, I'm So Glad, Fout, Synthetic Brain, Extension, Fred Haskell Spaceship, Tralfamadore Times Gazette, Assorted Beard Mutterings, Footprints Dressed in Red, It All Comes Around, A Return At Long Last I Hope, Zircon Encrusted Tweezers, Just Me and the Pygmy Pony, The Dental Floss Digest, Two Separate Gorillas, Purple Haze, The Ubiquitous, Excuse, Esmeralda, And So It Goes, Magic Carpet Ride, The Zine Which Can Be Read, Apa Crisps, Have You Seen Her Face, Refried Leftovers, Gevalt!, Simulated Embarrassment Predicament, Down Home Advice, Gas Music From Jupiter, The Gentleman With the Melon, How to Put Your Budgie Down, Something Happened To Me Yesterday, Bode Memory, The Magic Poot!, The Great Turkey Stampede Of, OO VAR DISH?!, Tuesday After Lunch, Surrogate Pig-Bladder, Teonanacatl, Hungarian-English Phrase Book, Unwarranted Assumption, Say It With Humanoids, Jon Singer and His Asparagus Laser, Highway, The Chrome Plated Megaphone of Destiny, The Frog in the Window, The Frog in the Window (reprise), Each Evening from December to December, Before You Drift to Sleep Upon Your Cot, Think Back on All the Tales You Remember, Of Camelot, On Second Thought -- Let's Not Go to Camelot -- 'Tis a Silly Place, Love is Mainly Just Memories, In Blindfold Wonderment's Enchantment, You Can Lift My Wings Softly to Fly, Your Eyes Are Like Swift Fingers, I Know a Lot of Fancy Dancers, There are Places I Remember, I'm Being Followed by a Moonshadow, The Time You Waste for Them, When that Rooster Crows at the Break of Dawn, My Regal Zonophone, And the Wind Whispers, What's the Point of Callin' Shots?, O Friends No More These Sounds!, There's Beauty in that Rainbow in the Sky, Gotta Dance!, It Doesn't Matter Which Direction Though, The Light Shine Down the Valley, The Wind Blow Up the Alley, I Can't Get All this Mud out of My Eye, Rusty Strings, Somebody I Can Talk To, Pile of Smoking Leather, We Get Letters, How Does the Song Go?, Where Does the Time Go?, Counting Stars by Candle-Light, Vain at Last, The Sand, Long Strange Trip, The Life That I Have Made in Song, Rosewood Track, What I Meant To Do, May You Swim in the Sea, and Phenylethylamine)

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Started at 8:48 pm, Thursday, 2 January 2003
For MINNEAPA 400, the very last Mailing, which will be collated at the Minn-StF meeting on 18 January 2003. It's the passing of an era, it is.

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One of the most daunting things I encounter in this life is a blank piece of paper. Time and again I will confront a blank piece of typing paper, drawing paper, a mimeograph stencil, a dittomaster, or watercolor paper, or nowadays a blank computer screen -- any space I hope to fill -- and I'm nearly overwhelmed with trepidation -- with feelings of inadequacy. My hope is usually to emerge from the confrontation with paper that is no longer blank but is now filled with something esthetically pleasing and maybe even containing meaningful communication -- be it words or drawings or ... whatever. It can feel like wrestling with an invisible opponent -- nay! a nonexistent opponent!

Beautiful Friend #104, page two. 9 January 2003. Back when I would write my zine in notebooks or whatever scraps of paper came to hand and then transcribe it to stencil later, I would have a "page colophon" like this as the header of each page. In it, I would mention the date and maybe mention what music I was listening to as I typed or perhaps what was going on around me. It became one of the identifying features of my zines.

This is perhaps why photography is my chosen primary visual art form, although I have also, perhaps unwittingly over the years, developed some sense of layout and design as well. For although there are blank "canvases" involved in various stages of photography, the confrontation is of a different order, since in photography the task is a matter of filling the space pretty much all at once with a representation of something that already exists, created almost as if by magic by the thing itself; rather than filling it a little bit at a time with something which wasn't before and is only called into being moment by moment as I work. Photography is about abstracting (or sometimes "concretizing") what is -- presenting it in a different form or from a unique viewpoint. Placing it into a different context, for, after all, the thing itself most likely exists in three dimensions whereas a photograph only exists in two. The exceptions to this notion of what photography's about or how it works are some of the early photographers/artists who assembled tableaux to retell mystical or biblical tales; and also people like Jerry Uelsmann who assembles brilliant and breathtaking photographs of things that weren't.

Similar is my approach to music -- I take songs others have written and re-present them in my own voice. Sometimes I think of what I'm doing when I play music as just, you know, "Hey! I heard this swell song I'd like you to hear. It kind of goes something like this..."

In any case, I have come to think of my art as "editorial" or "reactive" rather than "primary" or "active." This distinction is no less artificial than any other, and I do not use it to demean or in any way think less of my artistry, it's just a way of thinking about what I do that helps me do it better. Heck, I've almost let go of my jealousy of artists who are able to work in a "primary" or "active" vein -- what I call "hand artists" of all sorts, as well as writers, songwriters, and so on -- although I will never lose my profound admiration for them.

I was far less actively aware this when Mike Wood brought MINNEAPA to life back in July of 1972, but what it meant for me was that MINNEAPA was a godsend. It gave me a context in which to write where I no longer had to confront the dreaded blank page in quite the same way -- it gave me "stuff" to work with, or at least with which to get started. I could read the things others had written -- look at the art others had produced -- and use those things as starting points for my own writing (in addition to enjoying them for themselves and on their own terms). I could write -- I could communicate. Sometimes I would write simply to let someone know I'd enjoyed what they'd produced. Sometimes I'd write to expand upon something said, sometimes to seek clarification, sometimes (though if my recollection is correct not very often) to argue. Sometimes the other material in the apa served as a springboard for my own thoughts, musings, experiences, stories, jokes, observations -- sometimes these would be only tangentially related, sometimes they were intimately entwined, sometimes the original thing was only related as a catalyst. Sometimes it wasn't the person's thought itself that caused the response, but a single word or a typo or something. Over time, we all together developed a community, a context, in which other thoughts would occur to me (to us!) to express that might not otherwise have arisen.

And -- lo! -- through this process, thanks to MINNEAPA, a bunch of pretty darn shy and bookish but intelligent and interesting people got to know each other and to be known by each other. And, for the most part, we all respected each other and more-or-less liked each other. We developed friendships and connections and shared cultures and understanding. Even those of us who didn't like each other developed more respect and understanding of each other than would otherwise have been possible. It truly was the right thing at the right time, and the effects were almost magical.

Beautiful Friend #104, page three. I think I started doing this because for the first, I don't know, couple of years I was working 3 to 11 at a small motel where there wasn't a lot to do in the evening but there was a manual typewriter at the front desk. I could sit and read MINNEAPA and type up comments on it there, but I didn't trust my ability to use that typer for making good ditto masters, so I'd write my comments there and retype things onto master at home.

It is my belief that very, very few of us -- perhaps none of us -- would have been able to achieve the same level of intimacy -- of closeness and understanding -- by any other means -- and certainly not through, say, polite verbal conversations at meetings.

In fact, for a while there it became quite a joke that Minn-Stf meetings which coincided with MINNEAPA collations were odd indeed. We'd all collate MINNEAPA, chatting casually and telling jokes and generally doing low-level socializing as we went. Then we'd each grab a copy of the completed mailing and sit down and start reading and egoscanning -- to someone not in MINNEAPA, these meetings were boring and weird and frustrating. And yet, in some strange way, we were all communicating far more completely and clearly and meaningfully than if we had forced ourselves to talk aloud with each other instead of to read. Each of us was alone, but we were together in the same location, and we were really together in our thoughts.

Of course, there were those of us MINNEAPAns who lived elsewhere, either temporarily or permanently. That was a very good thing -- it kept our scope from becoming too insular, too local. Further, some of us lived "elsewhere" in other ways -- espousing us to different ways of thinking and seeing and being.

Once MINNEAPA had provided a comfortable way for us to get to know each other better in a "safe" way, many of us were able to use the comfort to build on and to venture real conversation in person. All apas do this to one extent or another, but MINNEAPA I think was especially valuable in this respect. Again, it's a matter of right place, right time. (Not long before, Blue Petal tried to start "Blue's Apa," which might have accomplished the same sorts of things, but the time wasn't quite right and it didn't fly. MINNEAPA did. Go figure.)



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The photo at the right is of Bridget Dziejdzic, Barry Smotroff, Jan Appelbaum, and Jon Singer. I took it at Discon III in September, 1974.

NOTES:

Talk about how my laziness and inability to paraphrase, combined with my interest in making sure my comments would be understood later/out of time/out of context lead to me quote enough of people's comments so they were intelligible even if one hadn't read the collation. This was useful in part because I could then mail out a few copies of my zines to friends who weren't in the apa and it wouldn't all be gobbledegook. Further, there came a time when I was in both MINNEAPA and AZAPA (Arizona apa), and I started running my AZAPA zines through MINNEPAP and vice versa. This led to some interesting cross-fertilization, and some people got to know each other to some extent that otherwise would not have. It's always great fun to introduce neat people who don't yet know each other to each other, eh?

Have looked for other like things, can't think of way. E? Dunno.

The first MINNEAPA mailing has 15 pages and 10 contributors. The tenth mailing, four months later, had 140 pages and 32 contributors.

Beautiful Friend #104, page four. I'd been frustrated when trying to figure out the dates I'd produced some earlier apazine and genzines, so I became somewhat compulsive about dating things. I reckoned I'd date both when I was writing the stuff to transcribe and when I was typing the stencils and writing these minicolophons.

In The Soul of Education by Rachael Kessler, one of the points she makes repeatedly is the importance of creating a safe environment in which people (specifically students in her book, but it applies universally) can feel comfortable sharing what's important to them with others and can embark on journeys of self-discovery. I think that in many ways, MINNEAPA provided a sort of safe environment for many in its community.

What apas and MINNEAPA did for me:

- enabled me to develop my "voice"
- kept me in touch when I went travelling
- allowed me to keep a "sort of" journal
- met new friends, deeper connection with old
- gave me the fun of cross-fertilization -- introducing people to each other

For club:

- "outreach"
- connection
 - inside
 - outside
- build community

Unique to apa:

- can go anywhere
- more length, more time, more consideration
- context -- able to discern/develop personality.

I must admit that I find it difficult to read and understand dense or long text on a computer screen.

In MINNEAPA, it became apparent that there was, to some extent, an inverse correlation between the length of a zine and the amount of comments it received -- almost as if people "burned out" or didn't have the patience to keep (or even begin!) commenting to the same person at the time. This appears to be even more true on line -- long, considered pieces seem to receive far less response than short, snappy messages. I think it's part of the computer-induced "hurry up" immediacy.

A computer uses essentially the same space to read and to respond. Difficult to get long things up to respond to.

Over thirty years. But it is time. Thank you, Dean! It is fitting to be able to have it "shut down" gracefully and for us to be able to say our farewells; to memorialize and remember it.

11 January 2003. Previous to MINNEAPA, my experience with apas was with a quarterly apa (APA45). I guess times were somehow more leisurely in the mid-60s' because a minimum three-month lag between writing something and seeing some responses to it seemed pretty adequate. Of course, being quarterly, it was different in more ways than simply the turnaround time. The texture itself really felt quite different, although some of that may also have had to do with the fact that members were more geographically distributed, though there were "pockets" here and there -- Minneapolis, St. Louis, etc. Many of the members of APA45 also published genzines and we'd run them through the apa as well as the zines that were specifically written/produced for the apa. (In fact, if memory serves, one member ran copies of the program of the school play she was involved in through APA45.) And we didn't just contribute pages, we'll collate and staple our own zines and send off the bundle of them, and the OE would collate our zines into the mailing, which would therefore be a bundle of zines rather than a single thing.

The notion of contributing pages that would be collated with the other member's pages and then stapled into just one (or two or three!) thing to make up a mailing would

Beautiful Friend #104, page five. I don't think anybody ever did this, but if one were to want to read my zines absolutely chronologically, they would want to start under the main colophon on the first page, read through to the back ignoring the minicolophons, and then come back through reading only the minicolophons. Sometimes they might have had to beak off the main body when I'd run out of draft and start reading the colophons and then pick up again where I/they had left off.

have been impossible in the quarterly apa, given its typical size, and was new to me -- although I guess Mike Wood took the concept from APA-L, which had been collated weekly at LASFS meetings for years and years already at that time, and, if they haven't stopped, still is for that matter.

So for me it was an adjustment. On the one hand, the possibility of only having to wait two weeks (instead of three months) to read some of the responses evoked by my stuff was amazing, thrilling, breathtaking speed. My golly, yes! On the other hand, marshalling my forces in order to keep up with pace, with having to read the whole mailing and comment on it and get my zine printed every two weeks (although this later changed to three weeks, which seemed to work better for everybody) was sometimes quite difficult. And having to do catch-up zines was even more daunting.

14 January 2003. My last zine for Minneapa was written and published on August 21, 1982. Wow. Quite a few changes for all of us since then.

18 January 2003. And now I'm going to be late for the collation. Drat! This is one of the reasons I dropped out -- I never could seem to keep up with things! Since I need to have this run to six pages (I got to five and there's still the running colophon on the next page that needs some text beneath it), I'll drop in a quick photo or two....

Well, faretheewell all. Bye-bye MINNEAPA.



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Beautiful Friend #104, page six. I think at least part of the fun of it for me was the somehow "time travelish" feeling I got about the minicolophons running in a different/later timestream than the body text. It amused me somehow. Perhaps even more amusingly, I've done it "backwards" this time -- having written most of these minicolophons before I've finished writing the main body of text. Something old, something new.

