



Paul W. Derthick

## Letter from FANX II

**"Where one is, is where the action is," says this now-converted member of last year's anti-move movement**

One more new acronym is something that even the least hard-shelled government servant takes in stride, and so "FANX" entered our lives a couple of years ago without causing a ripple. It signified that many personnel activities had been transferred to "Friendship Annex," but our paychecks came through on time from FANX and we remained undisturbed. Then "FANX" suddenly became "FANX I," signifying that there was to be a FANX II. And then the Agency's problem of needing new space and being unable to obtain funds for further construction at Fort Meade began to have meaning. New rumor factories by the dozen went into operation, contradicting themselves from week to week (a necessity, if they were to stay in business). Still FANX II remained in the category of tragedies that can only happen to somebody else.

The practiced out-wrigglers had been deftly performing for many months when, in January 1968, the twenty-nth version of who was to move began to jell. Aye, 'twas a chill St. Agnes revelation! The enormity of it! *We* were the victims! Quickly we rallied behind the one unassailable argument. One simply could not move so highly automated an organization away from the millions of dollars' worth of computers on which it was so completely dependent. We were shot down by promises that we would be given necessary on-board computer capacity and data-link connection to the main plant back at the fort.

Having failed in polemics, we began majoring in dyspeptics. Was it worse than the move from Munitions Building, or from Arlington Hall? Perhaps not—those

memories have acquired a patina—but it seemed worse. The fear of, and resistance to, change was compounded by the months of indecision and lack of reliable information. One felt as he did in Ceylon when stuck with a badly mangled ten-rupee note that no one would accept, or as if singled out for permanent KP. We were going simply because someone had to go, and it made sense only to those that survived on the troika. I suppose that we'll never learn that where one is, is where the action is.

There were threatened resignations which did not materialize. There were requests for release, although no one knew quite where to jump to avoid the fire. There was great moaning over shattered car pools, lack of buses, and the prospect of driving an additional twenty miles a day. The new site was particularly inaccessible, parking looked to be inadequate, and that sea of cars at Westinghouse was going to make traffic a mess. It was a hinterland, definitely lacking in the comforts of home.

Much of the flap could have been avoided by earlier distribution of information to the working level. We scrounged around for answers to questions and they were hard to come by. Too much of the planning was on a contingency basis since there were no firm commitments. Much difficulty was caused by limitations on what could be spent to adapt leased property to uses for which it was not intended.

Once the decision was firm (months after the revelation of January), the picture changed radically. From that point, those who staffed the move are deserving of the highest praise. One knows that there were staggering



### Friendly FANX II

problems, but the apparent order and ease with which it was brought off did much to bring morale back up. Cooperation was excellent, information was readily available and disseminated, briefings and tours were conducted, and doubts and rumors were replaced with facts. If we still were not exactly happy, we could at least make definite plans and start solving personal and technical problems.

Most people have found that FANX II is a far more palatable dish than the odors from the kitchen indicated. Most moved with their jobs and have not found it the debacle they had feared. There have been a few diehards, and a few true hardship cases, but most of these problems have been solved. One wonders what happened to the list of people who *wanted* to move to Friendship, but at least we no longer have numbers clamoring to swap with them.

The bulk of the people at FANX II drive or car-pool to work and there is ample parking space. Some are gratified to find that they have reserved parking which they did not enjoy at Fort Meade. Most have been surprised to find that they can leave work at the same time as at Fort Meade and get home at the same time, even with the extra miles. (We hope our exodus has relieved the hair-raising and tedious job of getting off the Fort Meade parking lots but we doubt it when we visit the old homestead.) Judicious scheduling of working hours makes it possible to avoid

peak traffic and one does not have to merge into that fast lane on the Parkway on a Friday if he is feeling unlucky. The completion and occupancy of FANX III will, of course, increase traffic, but we hope that by then Elkridge Landing Road will be four lanes and we will get a bigger share of the light at Route 170.

Bus transportation to work is certainly not ideal, although it is *improving*, and with the addition of FANX III, may become tolerable. The only really satisfactory bus service would be regularly scheduled lines, running throughout the day. Special buses permit no flexibility of work hours and make it most difficult to arrive an hour or two late or get away early. For this reason it is a problem to find and maintain enough riders, the necessary condition for the specials which the bus lines are quite willing to establish from any location. However, no

The Friendship move was not Paul Derthick's first experience with removal to remote places. In 1943-44 he was a member of a now famous lost expedition from Arlington Hall, bound for New Delhi, that wandered for five months before being rescued near Calcutta. A mathematician by trade, he joined the Signal Intelligence Service at the Munitions Building one month after Pearl Harbor. He is now chief of A54 and well known as creator of the *Newsletter* puzzles.

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number of special buses will reduce the headaches caused by drivers who get lost, arrive late or not at all, or leave their stops ahead of schedule.

In contrast, the military bus service between Friendship and Fort Meade is as precise as the moon-orbiting Apollos. Buses leave every half hour from each location, and, though a small bit of business must necessarily occupy an hour and a half, with a little planning one can make a meeting, see a couple of contacts, run some errands, and perhaps have lunch with old friends on one three-hour trip a week. For those who must commute frequently, there are reserved parking spaces at both locations.

One would expect the move to increase the dependence on the telephone and it did, too much so. The secure trunk lines have proven drastically inadequate, with endless dialings and frustrations trying to get an open line. The congestion seems to have eased some recently, probably due to the move of more organizations and the discouragement of those without a pressing need for calling. On the plus side of communications has been the mail, which seems to be delivered faster between Friendship and Fort Meade than it was internally before the move.

Some other plusses are that most organizations have more room, and working space is better arranged, better lighted, and quieter, even with the big planes going over. The halls are sometimes too narrow for conveniently moving things, but they also discourage loitering, and there are no mobs around snack bars and coin-operated dispensers at every corner, with the resultant litter.

A minus is the fact that you cannot get a cafeteria breakfast before seven o'clock, that the food must be trucked in from Fort Meade and is sometimes late, that the cash register lines are so long at times that you cannot get hot food to a table. However, the food-dispensing machines with the infra-red ovens are much more convenient than we expected, which is important for the night shifts in particular. It is said there will be a new

cafeteria with kitchen in FANX III, an egg we will number when hatched. We have a few more brown-baggers and there are excellent eating places near by.

Some people freeze while others are too hot, but is that new? We have a non-callable elevator that has been a real headache, but that problem will be shortly solved. We have no dispensary, not even a nurse, and calling an ambulance may not be quick enough one of these days. But, even with the faults, we have a work force that is a lot happier with the actuality of FANX II than they were with the prospect.

To get back to those promises that coaxed us up the primrose path, it looks as if they will be kept. If you notice a body or two lying around you will realize it has not been easy, but they are preparing for the installation of the first 1108 computer. We have yet to see even a slow-speed secure data link that can be termed truly operational, but they are working on it. One feels that an agency that is supposed to be tops in the world on communications can lick the problem and that before long we will function quite well remote from our principal computers.

I must confess to having acquired my gray hairs pushing a pencil and scratching my own head, and never really having given a computer a chance to insult me by dumping six months of work in my lap. But since 1942 when I worked all night as leg man to a then miracle assemblage of sorters, collators, plugboards and printers that were saving us untold manhours, I have been more than impressed with the overwhelming rate of advancement in the computer field. Today's computers are so intricate that they require other computers to program them, they have logic so complicated that the conclusions they arrive at can be open-ended, they can process and produce in a few seconds more information than the human mind could cope with in a lifetime. I know they are merely the pencils of youngsters who dream of "going to space," but the oldtimer is perhaps not averse to moving to an even more remote spot, a bit nearer the trees.