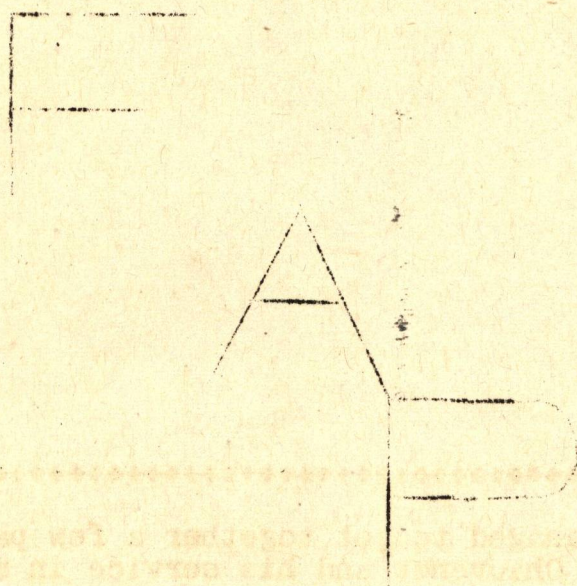


MLA 24

INSPIRATION

DEATH



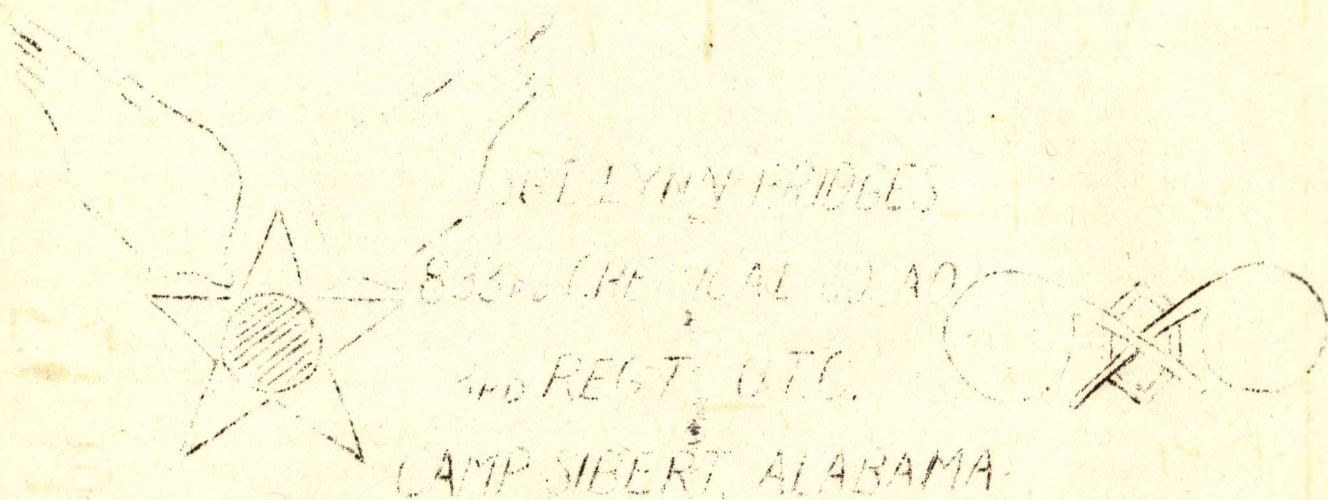
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SUMMER 1943

# INSPIRATION

The name and address (at the time of writing) of the perpetrator of these pages is as follows. As always, the address is subject to change without notice.



LT LYNN BRIDGES  
833rd CHEMICAL CO. AD  
1st REGT. UIC.  
CAMP SIBERT, ALABAMA

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Once again I've managed to get together a few pages of fapazine, thanks to L. R. Chauvenet and his service in mimeographing the thing.

As usual it's being done very hurriedly, and it will so continue to be done for the duration, if it is done at all. I just haven't the time or inclination to make of this a better piece of work. Other things must come first -- specifically the Army of the United States and my duties therein -- and this has to be done in what spare time I can find, if any.

So there will be no improvement in INSPIRATION until the mess in which the world finds itself today is cleared up, nor will there be any apologies.

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Someday, somehow, before I get out of this army, I'm going to meet a fan. So far the best I can do is to come close. Latest example occurred a short time ago when I was transferred to Augusta, Ga., just a little bit south of South Carolina. I immediately arranged with Jenkins to visit Columbia, not far distant. So what happens? I was transferred the same day I was supposed to meet HJ Jr. And now I'm in Alabam', miles from the nearest fan or from anything else.

FAN-TODS remains one of the most interesting items in the mailing. "Yesterday's 10,000 Years" is especially interesting to me this time, as I'd estimate that at least half of the Hornig quotations on Esperanto printed here were in answer to remarks of my own. That was the first time I'd ever written to any prozine and resulted almost directly into my discovering fandom. I'd been reading the stuff for years before that, of course, and even had a fair sized collection built up, but I never knew that there were such things as fans. Ah, innocent, happy-go-lucky days!

If I can get into this discussion of LRC's and Stanley's concerning chess, I'd like to make a few remarks of my own. I play chess, or to be more accurate, play at it, but I haven't the remotest idea as to what makes a good chess player. Intelligence doesn't seem to be too important. Most important seems to be the ability to reason what the opponent is apt to do. I can plan my own moves for several moves in advance, but just what he's going to do remains a mystery. Reasoning along the line of what I'd do in his place helps little, as no two opponents would play in the same manner. Could it be that an extra-sensory perception is involved, and the more successful chess players get that way by telepathically determining what the opponent is going to do -- or even by mentally suggesting what he should do, all unconsciously of course?

Telepathy and clairvoyance are practically unknown sciences, but information indicates that they are sciences. And they might explain a lot of phenomena, for which we are unable to account in the light of present knowledge. It might be interesting to have some of the master chess players rated in tests with Rhine ESP cards or other such gadgets. It's just a thought.

LRC wants me to elaborate on last issue's statement that I prefer prose to poetry so far as beauty is concerned. The beauty that I referred to is that of expression and thought, not that of rhythm, so it may well be that we are thinking in different terms.

My reasons for making my original statement were based on the belief that prose offers a better medium for choice of words and phrases, as they don't have to be fitted to any set rhythmical pattern. The comparison might be considered the same as tho it were between an etching and a full color painting. An etching, when done by a master, is a magnificent piece of work, but it still cannot hope to compare with a painting done by an equally great artist. Poetry is but a specialized form of prose, and as such cannot hope to have the flexibility and fluency of expression possessed by prose.

Concerning jet propulsion as a form of power on one of the outer, hydrocarbon atmosphere planets, I'm glad that Norm Stanley brought up the point that an engine operating in a methane or similar atmosphere would be less efficient than one operating in our own oxygen atmosphere. That question of fuel weight had never occurred to me. Living in a world with free oxygen in the air we seldom think of it as a fuel.

But there are other considerations besides weight of fuel to consider in determining the efficiency of an engine. I'm still not convinced that jet propulsion in the atmosphere of, say, Saturn wouldn't be more efficient than on earth. Jet propulsion depends on gas expansion for power, and the more that gas expands the more the power that is developed. [The data isn't available, but my guess is that the difference in temperature between that of the relative atmospheres and the point of combustion (which would remain about the same), and the corresponding differences in amount of expansion would more than make up for the greater weight of the fuel.]

Nor would so large an engine be needed to furnish the same amount of power. On earth, 4 out of each 5 parts of air are inert nitrogen, which does nothing but take up space. It adds nothing to the chemical reaction. On Saturn as on the other outer planets, methane and other combustable substances make up, if my memory is correct, about 3/4's of the atmosphere. So a more efficient and lighter weight engine could be developed.

Not that it's important, but I'd like to know just which atmosphere would make for the most efficient engine.

Most of the complaints concerning ASTOUNDING's present crop of stories seems to be concerned with the type of story, rather than the quality of them. I doubt if it can be argued that any better or more consistent writing has ever appeared in the history of science fiction.

Most of the complaining is caused, probably, by the high proportion of "sociological" stories to be found. Personally, I think they're the best thing that has ever hit the field. I like science fiction, and as a rule the more science the better I like it. But I think a well-planned, well-written story of some future sociological system much superior to most of the half-baked "super science" that has appeared in the past. Sociology is a science, the same as physics or chemistry, but Campbell is the first editor to treat it as such.

Nor do I think that ASTOUNDING is overdoing this type of story. At least I still enjoy them better than any other stories to be found today, and so far as I'm concerned that's what counts.

It's been some time since a story has appeared which could honestly be called a classic. Such a story may at last be found in "Gather, Darkness!", currently appearing in ASTOUNDING. The theme isn't exactly new, but that particular development of it is one which I haven't come across before. Most s-f writers have stayed clear of religion on the grounds that it is too controversial. But it is an interesting subject, and one which is almost certain to play a large part in the immediate and even the far distant future.

Since I've read only the first installment of the serial, it's a little too early to say whether or not the story is a true classic. For that matter, it takes years to decide whether a story has that enduring quality or not. But "Gather, Darkness!" does start out with all the signs of being the story of the year, to date at least.

Recently I've been carrying on a bit of correspondence with another fan in the army, which has been very interesting. The exchange of letters came about when I, along with quite a few others, accused this fan of doing a bit of flagwaving in a fanzine.

His stand seems to be that our flag and country rate above all else, and should therefore be praised wherever possible. And I can have but little argument with that. Still, I disapprove of flagwaving in FAPA.

Hell, you can be patriotic without mentioning the flag with every other word. FAPA, it seems to me, should stay clear of the war and related subjects as much as possible. It offers a greatly needed chance to get away from the current day problems, and can be one of the most relaxing influences for any fan. Of course it would be impossible to stay away completely from the war, but when it is mentioned it should be in a minor way.

My chief point in our exchange of comments was that there's no reason to consider it an outstanding bit of patriotism to serve in the armed forces. It is, rather, a duty -- and something of an honor to be considered worthy of that service. I, for one, prefer to let my military record speak for itself, and devote my fanzine to other things.

Is fandom really going to pieces? Practically every fan letter I've gotten recently has made some comment on the lack of activity as compared with normal times. And of course I've noticed such a tendency myself.

But, the fans who are left and in a position to carry on with fan activity seem to be as active, if not more active than ever. Normal activity is hardly to be expected at this time; all that can be done is to carry on as well as possible. And so far Fandom has been successful at doing that.

True, there are quite a number of fans who have used the war as an excuse to cut down or even stop activity. Most of the time there has been some justification for this, but not always. But those former fans who are now deserting (and I don't mean those whose occupations deny further activity) would have deserted the ranks of fandom sooner or later anyhow.

On the whole, I don't think that fandom is doing so badly. There may not be as many subscription fanzines, or even as many fapazines, but those that remain are as interesting as ever -- and a surprisingly large number of them still appear regularly.

As happens practically every time I do one of these fapazines, I'm way behind schedule and so have to make it a couple of pages shorter than was originally planned. This particular issue is a couple of weeks late, and I'm trusting to the good graces of Chauvenet to do the mimeographing in something of a hurry. If this does appear, you will know that LRC has done a superhuman job.

So that's all for this time. Whether or not there are any future issues of this tripe is a matter which is strictly in the hands of whatever fates watch over fans.

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[DBT sez : No Phanny, but comes Sept, then...!?

[LRC]