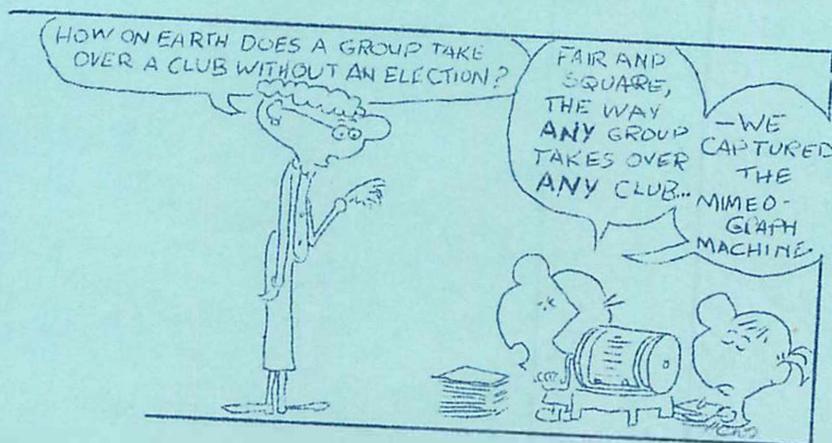


# AALIF

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F I L A

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November, and Halloween past. It has begun to rain; on some mornings there is fog in the valleys of Ered Luin. Roses and geraniums are in bloom, morning glory, moonflower, four o'clock, oleander, pelargonium, rosemary, bottle-brush, and chrysanthemum; one last sweet-pea that survived

the drought when we went on vacation; dandelion, mustard, mesquite. Twenty-two out of two dozen sparaxis bulbs have sprouted and the camellia and gardenias are budding. The ginger is five feet tall and seems to plan to go on. The Mexican dahlia, staked at waist height and guyed to the eaves, is as high as the roof peak and has budded profusely; but the windstorms may snap the stalks in the middle. It has never survived to bloom, so far as I know.

New varieties of birds are continually appearing. I have trouble identifying them; they won't sit still long enough, and most of the time they're silhouetted against the sky and look black all over. I'm pretty sure, though, that one of them is a titmouse; there are several that are probably Swainson's thrush unless the lighter color on the rump is really reddish-brown, in which case they are hermit thrushes. These take great delight in the three-basin fountain; they bathe, drink, and play hide-and-seek in the surrounding foliage. I am positive that one little bird is Bewick's wren. There is at least one mocking-bird, the first I've been sure of in the Bay area.

\* \* \* \*

How long ago the convention was. So many things have happened since then that I've forgotten what they were. Right now, Poul's mother is staying with us; next week she'll be starting back east, and on December first she'll be sailing on the Slavangerfjord from New York to Copenhagen. By then, we'll be in the middle of something else, I'm sure; goodness knows what.

And so, though I'd planned to write another convention report for FAPA, I'll simply take the easy way out and reprint my SAPS con-report.

While I'm speaking of con-reports, I have a request --- will people please send me copies of theirs, so I can pass them on to Heinlein? He asked me particularly to send him copies. If you put first-class postage on them and address them to me, I can forward them.

\* \* \* \*

The cover of this Alif features the "Miss Beach" strip for October 25. I cut the left half out for format reasons; it was fill-in for the same scene. Otherwise, I didn't make the slightest alteration.

Zed 797

Seacon  
Issue  
SAPS 57

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Is it basically a digital or an Astounding system? -- J. Kolfe

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We flew up to Seattle on a 707R Pan Jet, which I thought was nice of the airline, with Ellis Mills whom we'd come across at the airport. Arriving in Seattle, we found Lee Sapiro (the plutocrat) had traveled in the first-class cabin of the same plane.

That evening I finally met Wrai Ballard, and found his build detectably different from that of a gorilla. I also found he'd kept a letter from Irene Baron, dating back eight years, in which Irene said I owed Wrai a kiss. Wrai claimed the debt. In fact, he insisted on eight years' interest! . . . Wish all my debts were as much fun to pay.

Nobody ever went into the bar, hardly; so I was pretty dry by the time we went to a small party in Ajay Sudrys' room. He'd specified a latish starting time because he wanted some sleep beforehand. I suppose it's unfair of me to reveal that he's a person who indulges in that sort of vice at conventions, but the truth can't be suppressed indefinitely. I visited some between that party and the one Bill Evans had two doors down, then settled in with a folk-singing group. After a while the house dick told us the neighbors were complaining of the racket, so we took ourselves to my room; but then it turned out Harlan Ellison was next door and wanted sleep. So did his wife. Well, we packed up again and moved down to the N3F room and went on singing. We didn't have any trouble there; but then we decided it was time to grok the swimming pool in fullness, and of course we got tossed out of that. The pool was theoretically closed five hours earlier. It was fun while it lasted, though; splashing around and shouting "Thou art God" and all. Ted Johnstone did his best to swallow his tongue and sink to the bottom. (He was registered at the motel as Valentine Michael Smith; Bruce Pelz was under the name of Jubal Harshaw, and Jane Jacobs, Jill Boardman.) We went back to the N3F room for a while after that; I got to bed around five-thirty.

Saturday morning I went swimming at the motel-approved hour of ten, then had breakfast with Ric, Tracy, and various others. There was assorted badge-drawing; Ric did one of my star-trees on mine, captioned "I just have a green thumb, I guess." I did one of Doheug floating on his back in a pool saying "Thou art God."

So far this had been like most any convention, even with the swimming pool. Now it began to be different from all other conventions I've ever attended. Sure, they're all different, each in its own special way; the Solacon, for instance, because of that party after the masquerade, where I "flew" down the ramp through the garden in my hat costume. This was the take-off point of the Season ---

After the introduction-of-notables, I wandered to the back of the hall to talk to people, thus losing my up-front seat, and was ready to sit in the back while Poul gave his speech. But not the people I'd been talking to. Oh no - Robert Heinlein picked up one chair for himself and one for me, Ginny (Mrs. H) took one for herself, and we went right up front.

Goshwowboyoboy.

It's a good thing I'd already read that speech. I don't think I heard much of it.

Well, then a lot of us went out into the patio to listen in on Heinlein being interviewed for a newspaper, and then he went and took a nap. Sleepiest convention I ever saw. People were always going away to get some sleep. What do they go to conventions for, anyway? -- grr, grr.

Next came the pre-writers' panel, and after it, the Auction Block. I was sold for five dollars to Ben Keifer. My servitude was pretty light -- LBwenbrau Light, four bottles.

Poul and I had dinner with the Heinleins, the E. E. Smiths, and Dr. Ten Pas (W.D., that is) of Los Angeles. Realizing that this was a moment to preserve for my future enjoyment -- all right, call it gloating -- I passed my camera over the table to Dr. Ten Pas and asked him to take my picture: with my right arm around Doc Smith and my left around Robert Heinlein. It even turned out to be a good likeness of me!

Doc said (he was to judge the masquerade) that if anyone came as Helen of Lyrene, she'd automatically get a prize. I was tempted: my costume was based on a flesh-colored leotard. But I'd gone to considerable trouble for the one I had in mind, so I went ahead with it. I wore all purple accessories and make-up, purple loincloth, and purple bolero, plus a purple wig. Also, I had two balloons in the front of the leotard. I was a dittoed Rotsler Girl. Big put the Rotsler signature across my midriff, but there was one detail I'd overlooked. Ajay Budrys called it to my attention -- no navel! Happily, I had my purple pen handy, so I got him to draw it on for me.

I was involved in two other costumes, by the way: Phil Freedman of Los Angeles borrowed a pair of blue tights (plus a black pair for underneath), and Chris Moskowitz used a pair of green tights and a black taffeta cape with gold threads. The Heinleins had brought lots of makeup, so Chris borrowed some of theirs for green hair and such.

Ginny wore a tiger outfit that displayed a fine pair of legs, and Robert was "Dacordnyk, Ambassador Extraordinary, Arc-turus III" (and even autographed books that way) -- in formal dress, with his hands covered by turquoise rubber gloves and broad stripes of blue and copper over his entire head. I won't go into much detail about the masquerade, since I spent too much of it peering through flashbulb after-images. I'll just wind

up by noting that, yes, I did win a prize: "Most Humorous."  
The prizes were Bjo drawings of the winning costumes.

I must mention the three, Ron Ellik, Adrienne Martine, and Steve Tolliver, as Holger, Alianera, and Carahue. I took three color photos of them, just to make sure at least one was good. (It was.) By then almost everybody had gone away to change to "ordinary" clothes; one more pic of Jack Harness as the Jack of Hearts, and I changed too.

I tried to arrange a filk-sing then, but couldn't find anybody to sing with me. Eventually I took Ruth Berman and Ron Whyte (who did want to sing) to the party in Ajay's room. It was a nice, quiet sort of party, with the Heinleins, the Pohls, the Silverbergs, and the Ellisons.

I forgot to mention: Harlan is certainly becoming likeable. That morning, seeing me in the pool, he apologized for having made us move the filk-sing: the really notable part is that he was up on his balcony, actually yelling an apology for the whole convention to hear. A number of people, Poul included, commented at various times on how much pleasanter Harlan has become.

Ruth Berman and I decided we wanted to go swimming at about the time the Heinleins decided they wanted to get some sleep. Ruth didn't have a suit along, so Ginny lent her one, and we went. Naturally, a bellhop spotted us and requested us to kindly get the hell out of that pool (it was 3 a. m.), so we did. I said we should head for the N3F room for extra towels and hot coffee. We were next door to the N3F room -- I should explain that all ground-floor rooms opened onto the patio with the pool in the middle) when a curtain was pulled aside -- Ginny beckoned us in. We were invited, in effect, to get out of our wet bathing suits and into a dry martini -- as I believe Benchley once put it. I did get out of my suit and accept the loan of a robe. Ginny went to sleep, and the three of us moved into the other room of the suite.

About this time Poul started looking for me, and, hearing voices behind a door, he knocked. Seeing Robert in a bathrobe, he apologized for disturbing him and explained he was looking for me. I'd like to know just what Poul thought when he saw me sitting there in a bathrobe.

Poul joined us, and we talked on . . . he wanted a cigarette, but officially has stopped smoking and doesn't carry any, so he smoked Robert's . . . he finished his drink, and was told to help himself to more . . . "I feel as though I'd barged in on God," he said, "delivered my own opinions to God at great length, bummed God's cigarettes, and been given a free hand with God's liquor." It wasn't until next morning, though, that he remembered what he should have said: "God, in a yellow bathrobe." (Type-writer in the Sky, remember?)

And that lasted until about five o'clock. Goshwowboyoboy. . .

So, Sunday morning, I happened to walk past the Heinleins' suite and was invited in . . .

Actually, there was an easy way of knowing whether it was OK to walk in on the Heinleins. The whole wall facing the patio was glass (the whole place was that way, even second-floor rooms without balcony) and if the curtains were open, you were welcome.

I won't even try to describe the Big Speech. After all, it took Robert A. Heinlein an hour and a half to say it all --- I should try to say it in one paragraph yet?

Then Poul finally got a Hugo. About time, I say.

Truthfully and objectively: is it right that We Have Fed our Sea (The Enemy Stars) should fail to get a Hugo, and "The Longest Voyage" should succeed? Not that the latter didn't deserve one; but that the former deserved it more. "The Longest Voyage" is far from being Poul's best work.

Small grouch, that, after all. Now he does have a Hugo.

I tried to enter myself in the art show (in competition for the "Heroic Fantasy" award), dressed just as I happened to be: tights and cape, plus a sword borrowed from George Scithers. I managed to hold a pose for half an hour while the judging was going on, then gave up, returned the sword, and (since the curtains were open) joined the Heinleins and a dozen or so of their admirers.

After a while it came to be time to eat. Poul wasn't hungry yet, so he was deputed to act as host and the Heinleins, the Webberts, myself, and a couple of others went out to the coffee shop to eat. (The food at that coffee shop was good and very reasonably priced.)

. . . I had breakfast with Ajay about six in the morning, and then wanted to go swimming, but he suddenly decided he was too tired and went to bed.

(It has no doubt become obvious that I'm omitting things of general interest, because I wasn't there or wasn't paying attention, and omitting things of interest to me alone because they'd probably bore the rest of you. Sorry -- but this is simply the reportable part of my convention, not a report on the convention in general.)

I found Harlan dealing blackjack in the Chiac suite, at ten dollars a hand; Elmer Perdue losing and Fred Pohl winning, Harlan simply moving the money from one side of the table to the other. Elmer lost as much as he'd a mind to, then he and Pohl and I were going to go swimming. But by now it was eight o'clock, and the pool was being cleaned (besides being officially closed for an hour yet. Elmer and I decided to go across the highway to his motel, which also had a pool; Pohl decided he couldn't walk that far. So it was just the two of us who went:

It was occasionally problemful, for me, when I wanted to go swimming -- I had trouble finding someone to go in when I wanted to, and I prefer not to swim alone. I'm chicken.

About ten o'clock, Elmer and I came back. No, we hadn't spent much time in his pool; we sat and talked for a long time. I left him in the coffee shop and went up to get fresh clothes. Poul was still asleep.

It wasn't really deliberate -- I almost had to pass their suite after coming down the stairway from the wing our room was in; so I passed the Heinleins' suite, and Robert invited me to have some coffee with him. It began with me and Robert sharing

a single cup, but before you could say Quintus Teal there were so many people there that he ordered dozens of cups and a couple of Silexes full of coffee. Then the brandy was brought out, in case anybody wanted that instead; I decided on coffee royal, so Robert up-ended the first bottle over my coffee cup and made milking motions . . . I had half a cup of brandy, before the coffee went into it.

I don't recall the transition to the patio. (Small wonder.) Anyway, I think it was then that Ajay began to show interest in my watch . . . "How does it come off?" he asked. I showed him. Then he seemed to want to know what time it was. Next thing I knew, my watch was on a table, Ajay had one arm and Agberg the other, Harlan had my feet, and I was about to be dumped into the pool.

Goddam pro's acting like the Beanie Brigade!

That end of the pool had steps across, and while stopping (or slowing down to get around) they lost momentum; I was set down by the side of the pool. If it hadn't been for those steps I'd have been a scuelchy mess, and goodness knows what it would have done to my suede elf-boots. Probably made the dye in them run all over the feet of my tights.

(Parenthetical observation. I wore tights through that entire convention, and only drew whistles -- or any kind of overt notice -- from one person: Robert Heinlein. Fans seem to be blase about me, but he still has a sense of wonder.)

Well, I did get a definite reaction from the headwaiter in the restaurant. The coffee shop was full, so we (Webberts, Heinleins, a couple of others) decided to try the dining room --- but I was told I was unsuitably dressed. I was wearing a cape that converts to a skirt, and would have converted it; but Ginny would have none of this. What I wore was my business, and we'd take our custom elsewhere. So we did.

We went up the highway to a burger palace. Robert was feeling under the weather, so he left the party and got his lunch from room-service; the rest of us went. (Not Poul; he was going somewhere else with other people.)

It was during lunch that I learned from Ginny that Heinlein has never liked being called "Bob"; so that's why you don't see me using the nickname here. Since then I've been making sure what people would rather be called. In Boucher's case, he says (in effect) that by now the correct name is "Tony." A relief -- I've called him that for years.

(What a pity Tony wasn't able to get to Seattle.)

As we returned from the burger palace, we noticed that the Con Committee had made a special effort -- Mt Rainier was visible. When we got back, we told Robert, and we all went out front to look. Robert mentioned he'd once been stationed at Fort Lewis (nearby); after two weeks, he'd gone out one morning and utterly croggled to discover that "overnight they'd put up the goddamn biggest mountain you ever saw!"

Things settled down in the Heinleins' suite again, and this time it was wide-open-house with everybody there and all the licuor they could drink. About ten or eleven, Ginny wondered

out loud why people kept coming. I tried to explain, quoting what Poul had said the other night -- "I am bumming God's licuor" and so on. Like, good grief, fans don't expect the Guest of Honor to throw a wide-open party like this. Of course they all come.

The couple next door to the Heinleins on the other side from the NSF room were nonfans. They'd seen us around, with the name tags and so on, and wondered what the deal was. So, observing the open door, they came in too, and asked.

I tried to explain what it is about fandom, using Charlie Brown (of New York) for an example. I told these people that I had never heard of Charlie before this convention, and hadn't said more than hello to him so far. But, I said, I knew that Charlie Brown and I were natural friends, and had a great deal in common. So Charlie and I spent about fifteen minutes asking each other "do you like ---" and the answer was always yes, until I mentioned wearing fancy costumes. He said no, but added he liked to look at costumes. The outsiders were extremely impressed. It bore out a belief of mine: that almost all fans are "instant friends," whether they know about each other ahead of time or not.

There were two Japanese there: one straight from Japan, not speaking much English, and a Nisei who translated for him. I seem to have snowed them into thinking I was a person of great culture and like that. I asked a couple of moderately intelligent questions about the Tale of Genji and was able to quote a couple of classic haiku. This makes a person cultured?

At one point, Robert imitated a baby penguin learning to walk. It was delightful and utterly indescribable.

I can't possibly do the party justice. It was simply the goddamnedest best party I've ever been to.

A lot of the time I haven't spoken of in detail went to quiet talking with one or two or half a dozen people. In response to two or three people's remarks about what this or that person was doing (never mind what I was doing!) I developed, on different occasions, a fairly complete Theory of Snogging; I'm putting it together now.

This is, of course, a theory mainly applicable to my own attitude; others may operate under a different theory. Basically, I feel, snogging is simply fun. Jubal Harshaw put it neatly on page 166: "Kiss al the girls you like. It beats hell out of card games." It's an activity that is a great deal of fun for its own sake, within strict and easily definable limits. In my view, snogging merely implies fondness for the person with whom one snogs: nothing more. It's possible that, in the instances under discussion at the time, the persons involved were not merely snogging as defined by my own interpretation. I was only going by my own standards. But, by those standards, snogging is strictly limited -- utterly blameless -- and highly enjoyable.

And it beats hell out of card games.

What happened to Monday? Oh yes: it was Sunday continued.

Tuesday morning, then, I got up at eleven or so. I was to check the temperature of the pool, which varied considerably, and signal Poul whether it was warm enough. I'd thought the Heinleins were leaving early, so as far as I was concerned the convention was over; but there they were, and beckoned me in. . . I did go and check the pool temperature, find it too cool, and give Poul a negative signal. Back to the Heinleins; they said, why not call Poul and have him come too? So that was done, and we sat and talked a while. Robert was feeling pretty poorly; he'd been fighting a bug, and now felt as though he had pneumonia -- "drowning from the inside." We offered to let him alone but he said company would take his mind off it. In small doses, at least. Most people had gone by then, and only a couple more walked in.

The details are reported elsewhere for those who are interested; it was at this point that I found out Robert was interested in Sherlock Holmes fandom, and in fact a deep enough student of the Conanical Writings that Poul and I (acting under a rarely used article of the B. S. I. Constituion and Buy Laws) declared him an honorary member of the Scowrers and Ginny automatically an honrary Molly Maguire. ("Any two members shall be sufficient to form a cuorum." . . doubtless incorrect, but correct in substance.)

Then the Heinleins left; we packed and left; and there was just enough breathing space before the party we had on Wednesday. Good party.

Thursday, I took George and Lou Ann Price on a tour of the City. (San Francisco, you auslanders.)

Friday we entertained Jack Harness, Miri Carr, Jerry Knight.

Saturday: closed-door pro party for Frank Herbert, Fred Pohl, Reg Bretnor, Jack Vance (all with wives), Tony Boucher.

Sunday, dinner with Vances.

Monday I first-drafted a story about the sense of wonder . . . and there my convention notebook ends.

Other fannish doings have taken place since. The most reportable is the following:

About two weeks later, we went to the Herberts' for dinner and Frank mentioned the "Bluejacket's Manual" as a source of humor. He said he used to lie in his bunk and read it, and laugh and laugh. Sample:

"Profanity or the use of filthy language is a sign of ignorance in the man using it and shows a serious lack of principles required of a leader of men." (Bluejacket's Manual, 1940)

Frank read us that passage, then commented: "Ithink he's full of shit."

"May I quote you?" I said.

Frank started to say "Why sure---" then corrected himself: "Hell yes!"