

first fandom is not dead!
only tottering granddaddy

37:

HIS PAGES

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(*) THE HIGHWAYMAN AND THE SNOW FENCE

Have you seen the Currier & Ives print entitled "The Road (in) Winter"? First published about 1850, I should think.

Enchanting picture: a pair of trotting beauties pulling a sleigh over a rural snow-covered road, with the two occupants of the vehicle bundled up to their chins in furs and blankets. In the middle background is the country cottage tucked amidst gently rolling hills and winter-naked trees, while overhead a flock of wild (if belated) geese are flapping through pastel skies looking for directions south. A heart-warming picture. No other traffic, no yellow stripes visible down the middle, no speed limit signs, no billboards, and no snow fences. If I lived a century ago, I probably enjoyed it.

A snow fence, for benefit of my effete Southern California readers, is a fence erected along the highways to control the drifts of that white stuff which falls from the skies. They seldom do the job, for reasons which will be made clear later on, but that is neither here nor there. In this part of the world, the motorists play a game with the highwayman and his fencing, a game we know as calling the coming storms. We usually win, because the highwayman is an unimaginative lout seldom able to profit by past experience -- he doesn't remember why he lost previous games the previous winters.

Snow fences are fragile-looking, cheaply constructed fences of thin wooden slats, usually painted red, and wired together in lengths of 25 or 50 feet; they stand about 3 feet high, and are held upright by temporary steel posts. These fences are erected in fields, perhaps 50 to 100 feet from the road, and are supposed to be so cleverly placed that --come the winter storms-- the blowing snow will be trapped around them and forced to drift immediately in front of them, theoretically keeping the highway clear. In the autumn, as soon as each farmer is finished with his particular piece of ground along the road, the highwayman will remove great rolls of fencing from storage and begin stringing up the slats in what he thinks are likely places. Sometimes the fences will blossom in a field of corn stubble, sometimes in a field of soybean rubble, but most often they will be erected in freshly plowed fields because local farmers like to turn the soil before winter. The highwayman patiently follows the farmer, getting the fences up as early as late September if the stubble is to be left, or as late as December if the plowing is delayed.

The game is in full swing again.

The distance from my door to the theater is twelve miles, ten of them along a blacktopped highway running almost true north and south. We have fun along that road in winter because the prevailing winds are westerly, with now and then a nor'easter dropping in to surprise and bedevil everybody. Just outside Heyworth there is a beauty of a hill-and-curve combination that drops down sharply to cross a narrow bridge over a rambling creek; beyond that is a series of seven hills and valleys; farther away a two-mile stretch of flat, open country that has neither house, hedge, nor tree to break the monotony. After the long open stretch, the driver comes upon two S-curves a half mile apart, and then another long stretch before reaching the four-lane highway into the city. The highwayman wanders along this road, ever so craftily planting his fences here and there.

He never thinks to plant one on that first hill-and-curve, so we sweat out the trap as best we can. He likes to spread sand, salt, or cinders on the bridge approaches, but seldom on the narrow bridge itself, so we pay him lip service as we gaily ricochet from one cement guard rail to the other. He ignores the following seven hills and dales, because there isn't much anyone can do about them, except to slide merrily into the deep drainage ditches on either side and hope another car isn't there before you. The highwayman comes into his glory along the two-mile stretch of open country, and on both of the S - curves. He has a secret formula for placing the fences: plant one wherever a drift covered the road last year. The poor man hasn't guessed right yet, not in the 11 years I've been traveling the road. If he craftily places his fence along a slope on the west side of the highway, all the heavy storms blow in from the east to confound him, and help us motorists win the game. If last year's big ones blew in from the east and built an impassable drift at the culvert, the highwayman will erect a fence there---and look on with a sad face as merry motorists tease him while stalled a mile away in an unprotected spot.

The two S-curves give him more trouble than the remaining miles added together, and we chuckle demoniacally as we plow through drifts headlight-high (or as we sit there waiting to be dug out) knowing the dullard missed again. Let him line the northeast sides of a curve, and here comes the blizzard from the southwest. There is one trick the old hands sometimes use to beat the blockade of drifts or stalls on the north (and worst) curve. Long before winter sets in we carefully note the condition of the field on one side, looking to see if the farmer plowed it, or left corn stubble. If it is stubble, and if we find the curve impassable, we chug merrily through the field and around the blockade, waving cheerily to the tourists trapped within it. Corn or soybean stubble makes for fine traction, but woe betide the hapless wretch who takes off through a plowed field.

A strange new pattern is in evidence this year. The south curve has nothing to protect it---nary a slat---but a half mile north, the second curve now has fencing on both sides of the road. The field has been plowed. A signpost frequently knocked down has been removed.

We're expecting unusual weather this winter.

The best time to drive is as night, about midnight or so, after the theater is closed and I have the road almost to myself. Almost. In the spring and summer I like to drift along with the windows open, tasting the diesel fumes of passing trucks, smelling the dung and the fertilizer spread on the nearby fields, catching an occasional whiff of nature left by a skunk who challenged the car ahead of me, and lost. A pig farm on my daily route is particularly appealing; and I have recently noted with joy that a new trailer court near Bloomington has thoughtfully placed its sewage-treatment lagoon smack-dab by the highway. City dwellers, sweltering in their fetid streets, must envy me. In the winter, I sail blithely along the snow- or ice-coated road and wonder about two things: is the driver ahead of me drunk or has he merely lost control of his car; and is that truck driver behind me trying to climb inside and ride with me, or is the friendly fellow trying to push me in the mistaken belief I am out of gas?

Three of my warmest memories of the road involve truckers.

The first happened on a summer night, sometime past midnight. I was drifting homeward after the theater, probably wondering if it was possible to sneak by another year on only eight pages, when I spotted a red flare burning in the middle of the first curve. Creeping past the flare, I found a truck stalled in my lane-- dead in the water, as old salts phrase it; it had no lights, ignition, motor, nothing. Two other trucks were flanking it, fore and aft, to protect it from the traffic in both directions; they had all lights blazing and blinkers working to warn the unwary. I stopped and walked back to the hulk. The three drivers had their heads buried under the hood of the dead truck, looking, tinkering, and occasionally swearing like troopers. The three heads turned as one when I approached, skewering me. One asked if I was a mechanic. I said I was not. Not another word was spoken, and after several minutes of uneasy silence while they dissected me, I fled for my life.

The second incident passed me on a slippery winter's night among those seven hills and valleys. Like most happy knights of the road, this trucker was balling along at a sedate sixty or seventy or so, in high disdain of the prevailing conditions; he may have thought I was a sweet little old lady pushing my 1927 Buick at a cautious thirty to keep the dust off the windshield. I met him again a few miles and a few hills later. His trailer had jackknifed into the drainage ditch, while the tractor jutted upward at a crazy angle, pushing the beams of his headlights into the sky. I stopped at the top of the hill and left my lights and turn signal on, to warn the next knight who might be highballing behind me, then walked down to inspect the damage. My hero was sitting in his tractor drinking coffee from a thermos. He said he was all right, thanks, and no, there was nothing I could do for him, unless I wanted to go back to Bloomington and find a tow truck. If I wasn't up to that, he'd wait for the next truck moving in the proper direction, and ask that driver to send out a tow. One would be along shortly. Somewhat timidly, I suggested that it might be a good idea to set out flares on the two nearest hilltops, to warn oncoming drivers he was there. The friendly fellow thought a moment, and guessed I might be right. He dug out a pair of red fusees and we each climbed opposing hills, to plant the lights on the shoulders. I

stayed with the man until two trucks arrived in quick succession and paused to inspect the scene. His rig was gone the next morning. I don't suppose the buzzards carried it off.

The third, and last to date, happened a couple of winters ago, when the highwayman must have neglected to put up any fencing at all. It was the damndest blizzard I've seen in forty years, man and boy. (You remember the big one in the winter of '88, granddaughter.) When that kind of weather hits while I'm working, it is my custom to venture only as far as the city limits (if I can get that far) and case the road. Sometimes it is passable, with caution, and I will wait a while to follow the next snowplow out of town. But sometimes it is impassable, plow or not, and sometimes I will lose my nerve and say to hell with it; when that happens, I stay in town and close up the last saloon and the last (euphemism) dance hall girl.

That night, I had progressed almost to the edge of the city, to a point where Route 66 passes over my road on a concrete bridge. The road was clearly impassable from there, and I prepared to make a U-turn under the bridge and zoom back to the warmest saloon --- except that I found a hitchhiker beneath the bridge, a skinny, freezing, Navy boot, who had worked his way down from the Great Lakes Naval Training Station near Chicago, who wanted to get home to Decatur no more than forty miles distant. I got him into the car and thawed him out, meanwhile trying to coax him to give up and stay in town. The kid was polite, and friendly, but he refused to give up -- there was some pressing reason why he wanted to get home. In the end, we waited for a time and decided to follow the snowplow south. I realized the mistake when we lost sight of the snowplow after a mile or so, but it was too late to kick myself for an idiot; only a fool would attempt to turn around on a road that couldn't be seen, or risk being caught sideways in a drift, fair target for anything coming from either direction. I make no claims to being a brave fan; I was scared witless, but the only thing I had going for me was a ten-year knowledge of the road and every landmark along it. I don't know if the Navy boot had the sense to be frightened; it didn't seem wise to ask.

The kid put his head out his window to watch for glimpses of the road and the shoulder, while I did the same on my side. We crunched along, feeling first his wheel and then mine drop off the pavement, trying to steer a middle course between the two extremes. When our exposed faces and eyes could no longer withstand the cold wind we'd close the windows, turn up the heat, and sit there like dead ducks in what we hoped was our own lane, waiting for another try at it. Every once in a while the boot would sing out some passing landmark and I could judge our progress: it was dreadful. A motel only two miles outside of town was passed during the first hour. When it was passed I was certain I knew where we'd be stopped, like it or not. That northernmost S-curve had a wintry reputation for drifts and stalls; it was so bad the farmer living nearest the curve kept his lights on all night to guide stranded travelers, and invariably wound up next morning with a houseful of guests. I waited for that curve, ready to tell the kid, if he wanted to go home so damned bad, he could jolly well hike it.

Have you ever worn blinders, and found yourself lost?

Somewhere, sometime, after passing the motel, I lost my orientation in the whirling snow. I didn't know what section of the road we were on, and crept along wondering what the hell. The kid would cry, "I see a barn!" but it didn't mean a thing. The motor began an uphill pull and made me realize I was truly lost --- there was no hill between the motel and the S-curve. I suppose I was still marevlling over that when we crested a hill, dipped down, and started up another slope. The car had climbed the third one before I knew the truth: we were passing the seven hills only a few miles from Heyworth. At about that point I began swearing like a trouper, joyously. After a long time the youngster claimed he saw a Texaco station, and we were there. The feeling of relief was a physical impact.

The Navy boot left me at an intersection of two highways, still determined to hitch the rest of the way to Decatur; he would not listen to reason or warning, having adopted the attitude of "We got this far all right, I'll make it the rest of the way." (I suppose he did just that. He wasn't there the following day, nor was his frozen body found along the roadway.) My third and latest encounter with a trucker happened about three blocks later, as I prepared to turn off the highway and onto my street. As in past encounters, the truck was stalled, this time in the innermost lane of a four-lane roadway, next to the curb. He had his flares out fore and aft, and being the busy-body I am, I trudged over to see what was going on. His plight was a logical one, the night being what it was: his brakes were solidly frozen to the drums, and he couldn't move if he wanted to. Not that he wanted to -- he said cheerfully that only a goddam fool would move on that road that night, and he was bedding down in his sleeper cab to wait out the storm. He did, too, but not until after he'd helped me. In the short time I was parked across the road, drifts had built up around my wheels and I was slogged in.

I carry a shovel for such emergencies, and the friendly trucker and me took turns digging out my car. I couldn't drive home because the street was blocked, so left the car in a motel parking lot and walked the remaining distance. Three hours to travel twelve miles, with pauses to refresh here and there along the route.

The newspaper the following day carried the usual headlines and the usual pictures; it's rather dull reading about that which you've already lived through, but one picture and accompanying story held my interest-- and I'm still interested today, a few years after. The picture showed the usual number of stalled automobiles on the S-curve and the story in the adjoining column told the familiar tale of the good farmer who had taken in the storm-tossed travelers, after maintaining his usual watch throughout the night. Well and good. But I saw no lighted farmhouse, rounded no curve, jumped no stalled autos.

I suspect that Navy boot led me through a secret shortcut.

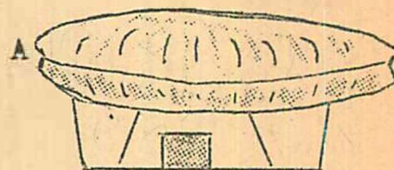
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● Donn Albright, 456 west 47th St., New York City 10036, is a Ray Bradbury collector who is offering cash for early Bradbury things published in fanzines. In particular, he's looking for certain issues of Imagination (1938), Nova and D'Journal (both 1939). Write him, if.

(*) LIFE UPON THE WICKED STAGE (part 1)

Away over yonder in Champaign-Urbana is the University of Illinois, a seat of learning possessing a student body about the size of that other seat in Berkeley --- you know, the place with the nimble press agent who is always grabbing off the headlines for his school. I work there from time to time, in a vast cavern called the "Assembly Hall". Life is always a chuckle in the Assembly Hall.

The place is shaped and sized like a giant mushroom, and has had that label stuck on it. The management cringed and colored while Bob Hope stood on the stage and cracked jokes about playing in a mushroom and a flying saucer; from a distance it resembles either one, because the roof is a concrete dome, and the rising walls bulge outward to meet the roof. The mushroom seats about 17,000 people in a perfect circle, stadium-style. I haven't counted the rows of seats, but it takes about five minutes to climb from the stage to the projection booth, which is tucked just under the roof at point "A". The stage, or the basketball floor, or the ice arena, or whatever is located in the exact center, slightly below ground level. When the mushroom was being built, a machine like a spider crawled around and around the upper framing, spewing out copper wire behind it like that spider dispenses a silken thread; later another machine followed, pouring and forming concrete. Local critics predicted the roof would fall in within a year. They missed by just two years. Bits and pieces of concrete have been tumbling down for the past several months, and this past summer it leaked so badly a new weather-coating had to be applied to the entire surface.



The management team is medieval, incredibly medieval, and their attitude is reflected in every operation of the building. Labor turnover is the campus scandal, and their staff of two dozen attendants (janitors, doormen, stenos, etc.) turns at least twice a year. When management booked its first road show, a second-company of "My Fair Lady", they decided outside stagehands were unnecessary; the janitors could put on the show as well as anyone. A company manager traveling with the show said "Over my dead body!" and the stage crew traveling with the show said "***** *** brother!" Everybody sat in their trucks and busses in the street outside, while management called New York to plead their cause. The New York office told them janitors were fine with brooms and things, but they didn't know from beans how to hang a leg or focus a Leko; the New York office then told its company manager to turn the trucks around and start them on their way to the next city on the route. The trucks were actually pulling away when management surrendered --- they'd sold about 12,000 tickets and were committed. Since then, professional stagehands work the professional shows, while the janitors handle student recitals and other campus theatrics. One small problem has arisen. The janitors are civil service people and their contracts call for coffee breaks every now and then. Come break time, they go, no matter what is happening on the stage, and more than once a curtain hasn't been closed or opened because no janitor-curtain man could be found. A stunt like that would mean Siberia for an old pro. Medieval serfs couldn't care less.

The genius who designed the mushroom overlooked one small detail: he neglected to provide an entrance from street to stage. Truck drivers like to back into a theater and unload as near the stage as is possible; some of the equipment they carry (such as switchboards) weigh a ton or two. When this error was discovered, the university was left with the choice of unloading in the street, about a quarter-mile from the stage, or knocking a gaping hole in their pretty new mushroom and building a ramp down to stage level. They knocked the hole through a supporting wall and then hastily patched up the many cracks which appeared here and there.

Because of the many uses of the building, a permanent stage cannot be built in the center, so a portable one was designed, and it is hauled in and out in hundreds of pieces whenever needed. A permanent grid is necessary, directly over the spot where the stage is placed, and so that same genius designed an open gridwork and hung it from the roof by cable; this grid hangs ninety feet above the stage, and moves scenery and lights up and down by an intricate system of cable, pipes, and electric winches. Splendid. Each pipe and its set of cables is equipped with a safety-stop, so that a forgetful stagehand cannot allow a rising piece of scenery to fly right on up through the grid and through the roof. Splendid. The safety-stop on each pipe trips a stop-switch on a winch, freezing it in position until the error is discovered and the safety apparatus is manually re-set. Once more, splendid. But the manual re-sets are also located on the grid, beside that stopped winch, ninety feet up, and not on the stage level where the men work. When a forgetful stagehand allows a backdrop to get away from him, the management will not allow him to ride another pipe up to the grid and unplug the damned thing; instead he must race through the front of the house, climb the stadium to the roof line, climb through the projection booth to the top of that, and then walk a catwalk out over the heads of the audience to reach the grid. If the man is lucky, he gets the winch free and the scenery moving once more before it is needed for the next act. People stare.

The same designing genius hung spotlight cages from the roof. At four equally-placed positions around the auditorium, platforms about five-by-five feet are suspended by cables from the dome, adequately covering any theater-in-the-round presentation. The platforms are reached by climbing a ladder up and over the cringing heads of the audience; once in the cage, the spot man can look down on those heads and spit if he cares to -- none have the nerve to come up after him, seeking revenge. Because the supporting cables are not rigid, the platforms tend to swing and sway as the operator and his lamp move back and forth following the action on the stage. Spectators have been known to seek new seats out from under the cages, and the management will not allow faint-hearts to operate the lamps. Wise old hands find the height and the precarious perch no handicap, and have evolved various stratagems to protect themselves. My trick is to stand with my right hip touching a guard rail, my left hip resting against the spotlight, and the top of my head firmly fixed against the roof. This stance seems to impart a sense of balance and stability, a feeling of being squared-in. In between cues, the spot man can search the audience for attractive blondes in mini skirts.

A negro comedian named Floyd Kirby has a favorite way of getting

even with spotlight operators who miss cues and foul up his act. He shook his fist at me and threatened to move into my neighborhood.

Another little chore that seems to shake up people more than somewhat is working the light-bridge. A light-bridge is an oversized catwalk, a bridge, again hung from cables from the roof, placed about midway between the projection booth at the rear and the stage in the center; it hangs perhaps fifty feet above the audience, and perhaps a hundred feet from the stage. The bridge holds two banks of brilliant, fixed spotlights which are used to pinpoint a person, table, or other non-moving object on stage, or they may be used to completely bathe the stage with any desired color. (There are at least 150 colors and shades of color available for lighting. Ever seen a "bastard amber"? It's a bit less sincere than "golden amber".) These spots are set in the desired positions and equipped with the desired colors before the show; if anything goes wrong after the show begins, that's tough, because the management will no longer permit anyone on the bridge after the audience enters the hall. Too many faint-hearts down there looked up and saw men on the catwalk over their heads; it sort of spoiled them for the performance on the stage. The man working on the bridge is in little danger as long as he keeps his head, tends to the lamps, and does not step back to admire his work.

Permit me to report my finest hour in my life as a stagehand. I helped kill Batman.

The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra opened the new season last October, with Arthur Fiedler conducting. Mr. Fiedler is something of a show-off, in a refined way, and delights in hamming it up during his encores. The numbers to be played during the encores are never mentioned in the printed programs, allowing him to ring in surprises of his choosing. This night, the next-to-closing encore was the Batman Theme, and I was sent to the grid with a sack of feathers and a cue. Batman came on very loud, fast, and brassy, and the audience did the same. Near the end of the number, the bass drummer stands up, whips out a pistol, and fires four shots at me concealed on the grid. I dump the sack of feathers, and the theme blares to a finish.

Mr. Fiedler had a bit of trouble getting started on the last encore ("Stars and Stripes Forever," in which the drummer waves a flag) because of those feathers. They continued floating down after Batman was done in, and at least the first ten rows of spectators were all but trampling him and his musicians in an effort to grab souvenirs.

After the show the stage manager thanked me for a job well done, and admitted he had miscalculated the height of the grid. I thought it wisest not to whip out my feather and ask for an autograph.



HARRY WARNER made certain proposals for the W-L. I like these:

- 1) require present members to publish 8 pages every six months.
- 2) choosing waiting-listers by vote, to fill vacancies.
- 3) require all waiting-listers to submit annual credentials.
- 4) and I think I will go along with the idea of reimbursing the postage costs on Shadow mailings going to Fapa members.

(*) MR. SPEER AND THAT OL' DEBBIL TAXES

Juffus, old son, you are an idealistic reformer, but those cantankerous people out there don't want to be reformed; they prefer to go on believing that the more they earn, the larger the tax bite will be, until finally a point is reached where the tax is greater than the earnings. That's a cherished myth, don't you understand? Wise men don't attempt to destroy cherished myths.

But I think the statement quoted by the Daily Telegraph, and Bill Morse, is something else again and you leaped to a conclusion. "She had written no novels for several years because of the income tax liabilities they would have entailed." That statement need not run afoul of your pet fallacy. It suggested to me that the author had a nice nest egg laid away, and perhaps was receiving some late payments on her previous books, so she decided to coast for several years and enjoy a period of little or no income, and little or no taxation. I believe I would do the same, feel the same, just to see what it was like. If I received \$25,000 this year, I'd be tempted to coast next year, just to see if the Feds would allow me to remit no taxes.

But for the hell of it, I dug out an extreme example from the government tables which reveal that a single man could be given a one dollar increase in his weekly wage, and be allowed to keep 16¢ of it.

Old salary:	\$104.00	New salary:	\$105.00
minus tax:	<u>12.70</u>	minus tax:	<u>13.50</u>
balance:	91.30	balance:	91.50
minus FICA:	<u>4.37</u>	minus FICA:	<u>4.41</u>
Take home:	86.93	Take home:	87.09

Big deal.

(*) CANARIES AND CAT HOUSES

"Original paperback novels will begin to appear, if such distribution can be developed that they will be more profitable to the writer than hard-cover royalties plus fifty percent of reprint. (This will also probably mean a larger infusion of sex into a field which has throughout most of its life scrupulously avoided the subject.)" ---Anthony Boucher, in MODERN SCIENCE FICTION (Coward-McCann, 1953.)

"A curious datum came to life in the 1930's when a part-time writer for Weird Tales, on a business trip to New Orleans, was taken by his business acquaintances on a visit to one of the fancier bordellos. It transpired that Weird Tales was universal reading matter in such establishments, and the personnel of the institution were so honored by the writer's presence that they offered him one on the house. This is particularly odd because Weird Tales is not a lewd or salacious magazine. Though it may strive to horrify with 'gibberings grim and ghastly' its morals are above reproach."

---L. Sprague de Camp, in SCIENCE FICTION HANDBOOK (Hermitage, 1953.)

● STALKING THRU HISTORY WITH LE ZOMBIE ●

HANNES BOK ON THE FANTASY SCENE: "I met Hannes in L.A. about Christmas time in 1937. I knew him for three days. He showed me his paintings, we played chess together and enjoyed each other's company immeasurably for those short days. Then he went north to Seattle. We corresponded for a year and a half, two years, until early last Spring when I found out I was going to Manhattan for the convention. I wrote Hannes and told him this was the chance he needed; to make up six or eight paintings and pen and ink sketches for me to tote along with me to my destination. He agreed and painted. The paintings arrived in Los Angeles about a week before my trip. I packed them in my suitcase and off I went, finally ending up by speaking with Campbell, who liked them very much, and Weisinger at TWS who also liked them.

Then, on Friday morning in July, I went up to Wright at WEIRD with the paintings. My heart was jammed halfway up my throat. Mrs. Wright, bless her soul, liked them right off, and so did Farnsworth. He looked up at Mrs. Wright and said, "Well, do you think we ought to give the boy a chance?" She nodded. And I jumped, really, for joy and practically pounded the back off Ackerman who had gone along. Wright explained that he had found Finlay in much the same manner, out of town.

So Wright told me he would contact Hannes in a few days for some illustrations. He gave me a couple of Finlay drawings and I hurried off to my hotel and wrote Hannes a happy (and I do mean happy!) message. Then, a week, two weeks later, I routed my bus trip up thru Seattle and arrived there early one Friday morning in late July. Hannes was waiting at the station for me and it was a grand reunion. We talked about everything: art, science, books. He took me to his apartment and showed me the stacks of paintings he had. It was there that I received my drawings and promises of more, for Futura Fantasia. . . And it was there that I saw a painting called "Psycho-analysis" worth approximately fifty dollars, that Hannes is now completing to send me as my "agent's fee". I can hardly wait for it to arrive from New York! I spent the whole day with Hannes and at midnight left for San Francisco. The next Monday he left for New York.

He's in New York now doing another cover for WEIRD for the February issue, and some interior illustrations. I got a letter from Wright the other day and he shares my exuberance for Bok's work. Here are his exact words: "If you think the first cover by Bok was good, wait until you see his February cover. I only hope the printers can match its beauty!" --Ray Bradbury, in LeZ 18, December 2, 1939.

PERSONALS: "Hannes Bok also illustrating children's books in New York City." --anonymous tipster, in LeZ 20, December 30, 1939.

THE AMATEUR PRESS DEPT: Harry Warner is putting out a new "sister magazine" to Spaceways entitled Horizons, which will be hecto'd. Two issues for 15¢. --the editor, in LeZ 14, September 30, 1939.

PERSONALS: Harry Warner had his first poem published by WEIRD TALES lately. --the editor, in LeZ 21, January 13, 1940.

TREMONSTROUS!

by D. Lerium Premaine, Pffft.

Frankenstein before me stood, (1)
 Mad Mr. Hyde behind, (2)
 Doctor X was to the left (3)
 Dracula had my mind. (4)

No wonder I the jitters had,
 Surrounded thusly so;
 From head to tow I quivered,
 Then caught my breath -- oh!

From up above in lofty tree
 A roaring voice rang out;
 And I was up in mentioned tree
 Before I'd turned about.

Tarzan of the Apes! (5)
 Or was it really he?
 In this mad place he might indeed
 Chandu, Magician be! (6)

For this was the Island of
 . . . Lost Souls (7)
 White Zombie's terror world, (8)
 Into which I, shipwrecked had
 With no choice been hurled.

But now it seemed I was safe,
 Yet how could I have guessed
 That Fu Manchu was yet (9)
 To have me to molest?

A flash of light in Tarzan's eyes;
 He slipped and I -- I yelled.
 Fainted, then when I awoke
 A prisoner was held.

The Mummy my companion was (10)
 On this Mysterious Island; (11)
 I with it on this Lost World. (12)
 Oh gosh, where was Sir Nyland?

He of Scotland Yard could save me
 From this Most Dangerous Game (13)
 A message to him---and at once.
 My sole hope then became.

But after all, twas hopeless tho,
 With him so far away.
 Then I cried and whirled about
 As in my door did sway:

Into the room they slowly stalked:
 The Monster, Mad Genius, and
 King Kong! (14,15,16)

(The latter a prehistoric ape
 Nine men tall -- and strong!)

Now which of these endings
 you prefer,
 Is entirely up to you.
 Here is ending number one,
 And then ending number two.

I

What happened then dear reader,
 I shall never know;
 Pale, half gasping, I awoke--
 Horror films for me no mo.

II

Close behind came other terrors
 Literally by the thousan'
 Well, vas you dere, Sharlie?
 Yrs truly, B. Munchausen.

--Ray Bradbury, in LeZ 21,
 January 13, 1940.

(Editor's note, 1966: the numbers in parenthesis were not in the original submission. They are added now to indicate names of horror films in circulation at that time. Each should be self-explanatory.)

PERSONALS: John A. Bristol of Washington DC turns out to be Jack Speer, as hinted on page 2 last issue. It tickles us when we remember the way Mr. Bristol fooled the LASFL by a letter to Imagination! long months ago.

--the editor, in LeZ 12,
 September 2, 1939.

Damon Knight, editor of the coming Snide, has sold a cartoon to Ziff-Davis. Two others were rejected.

--the editor, in LeZ 21,
 January 13, 1940.

FLASH: there is no truth to the rumor that

HOW TO DO A GOOD TURN DEPT: "I expect you have heard by this time of the unfortunate decision made by the publishers of WEIRD TALES in firing Farnsworth Wright. Speaking for Los Angeles fans, I have this to say:

We cannot understand why Farnsworth Wright is no longer the editor of WT. Dorothy McIlwraith is now in charge. She is a capable editor, and SHORT STORIES MAGAZINE has been successful under her guidance; but there is no editor in the business who can supplant Wright. He has been identified with WEIRD TALES almost since its inception. He is part of the magazine, and those who know the history of the book realize that to Wright belongs the credit of piloting it through depression, competition, and foolish censorship, maintaining a standard enviable in the pulp field. Without Wright, we feel that WEIRD TALES will unquestionably become just another fantasy magazine. If Farnsworth Wright decides to edit a new weird magazine, it is certain that he has a ready-made group of writers and readers and fans who have grown up with Wright's WEIRD TALES, and who will support him as he deserves!

All fans who feel as deeply about this matter as we do, are asked to write to Farnsworth Wright, pledging him their support in whatever move he decides to make. His address is: 3545 79th St., Jackson Heights, Long Island, New York."

--Russ Hodgkins, in LeZ 23, February 10, 1940.

GREEK GIFT HORSE DEPT: Keeping in mind the honor of the press and all that, we are extremely reluctant to mention names, so we shall merely say that our favorite westcoast spy, Mr. X, informs us that some wag mailed a razor blade, a cold, naked blade to the editor of a newly-sprouted Washington (state) fanzine. There was no accompanying message. Mr. X tells us the editor in mention does not shave. Why, we wonder in mystification, was the blade mailed then?

OTHER HORSES DEPT: The incident above recalls to mind two other gifts anonymously mailed to unappreciative fans. Some irresponsible urchin once mailed a child's spelling book to Jimmy Taurasi. And another lad (filled to overflowing with Yuletide cheer) sent Willy Sykora (an ob-scene) Christmas card. Mr. Sykora was lacking in appreciation. He posted a reward asking for identification of the sender. It was never collected. Ah, what ghouls these fans be!

--both items by the editor, in LeZ 48, July-August 1942.

LEZ LETTERS: "I have recently set myself up as a ghost writer for ambitious young fans who wish to become famous. Briefly, I do stories, articles, verse (or a letter to VoM), on any subject at all my client designates; or I will select a subject for him and do it-- the fee is very reasonable, and I act as agent to see that the paper is published in a reputable fanmag, such as: Star Dust, New Fandom, or Phantagraph. Some of the most famous fans are regular clients of mine; to name but a few: Hamling, Moskowitz, Wollheim --- you see what I mean. May I also assist you, Pong?"

--Earl Singleton, in LeZ 35, December, 1940.

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THERE IS NO TRUTH to the rumor this will be continued in the future!!

(*) WINTER IN THE COUNTRY: A POSTSCRIPT

The new winter struck one night this week, as I arrived home. It was a mild and rather delightful experience.

As I'm sure I've said before in these mailings, I live at the very edge of a farm-oriented village, and my viewing world is as big as all outdoors. My lot runs back 130 feet from the curb, if we had a curb, and the nearest farmland begins just an inch beyond that. From the vantage point of my rear deck, the plowed prairie and the unplowed pasture--plus various woodlands--stretch for many miles and what seems to be thousands of acres. Directly south, the next town is six miles distant, and on a clear day (and with my specs, granddaughter) a water tower and a grain elevator can be seen rising above the tree tops there. At night, a blinking light above a radio relay tower is easily visible. To the right and left (east and west) there is nothing obscuring the view but a distant pipeline pumping station, and other woodlands; towns are much too distant to be seen.

In the summer night, I like to sit on the deck and spend hours doing nothing but looking and listening: looking at satellites overhead, and listening to far-away dogs chase rabbits or strangers from some farmplot. A Chicago-to-St. Louis railroad, ten miles away, never fails to announce the passage of each train with those despicable diesel horns; a town on that railroad, about fifteen miles away, puts on a Fourth-of-July show each summer which the kids and I watch from the deck. Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn always accomodate us by following the ecliptic around three sides of the deck, although later in the year the moon spoils its view by rising in the northeast, behind a corner of the house. (I'm planning to either shift the house on its foundation, or change the course of the moon.) Eclipses always place themselves to be seen in comfort at the back door.

In winter, outdoor stays are much more brief, although one winter a neighbor and myself did manage some two or three hours, watching an eclipse of the moon through the telescope. He, being a tenderfoot, came down with the chills and shudders. But in winter the stars are much brighter and near at hand, the sounds of trains and dogs almost adjoining the listening ear, and the frozen fields under moonlight are a delight to search. Careful scanning will reveal a brown something scuttling across the snow an incredible distance away, or a brownish rabbit not-yet-turned loping over a plowed field toward or away from something unseen. A light snapped on in some distant window, miles away, appears as bright as a light next door. I like to stand there a few minutes ---or longer-- each night, looking, listening, sniffing, like my noble ancestors of B.C.

... This night, the night winter came, a new moon was flooding the eastern sky and very nearly washing out the dim Pleiades overhead. A heavy gray cloudbank was approaching from the west, a cloudbank turned almost white by the moon. I examined the fields, listened to the rising wind in bare trees, watched some farm lights blink on, and off then made sure the red blinker on the relay tower was still working. Snow pelted my face and in the next few minutes filled the air, shutting out the blinking light, the distant farmhouses, the woodlands that rimmed my world. I stayed for an unguessable length of time,

watching the novelty of a bright moon filling part of the sky, and an oncoming snow filling the remainder. It was much more rewarding than seeing sun and rain together. One of the cargo planes that fly between Chicago and St. Louis wandered by above, ten miles off his sky path; those planes usually follow the railroad, as do all the amateur pilots and commuters traveling between the cities. After a time the cloudcover filled the sky, and when the moon vanished I went indoors to the prosaic world of typewriter and space opera.

Mr. Currier and Mr. Ives were back between book covers.

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(*) DICK DARING AND THE DEADLINE

I look with amazement (and some admiration) on those people who put off until the last minute the work that is necessary to meet the deadline, and make the next mailing. Each mailing some few members will casually mention they are rushing the deadline, and only sat down a few days ago to start work -- of course, it always seems to be the same people who admit this each time, as if they can't learn by experience. Well, I still gaze with awe as they do it, and succeed. I can't do it, and that's one large reason why I appear only a few times each year. I work at the other extreme.

My bundles usually arrive on or about the fourth Saturday of the month, and I begin reading immediately unless circumstances prevent it -- usually at the theater that night. By the second or third evening (and perhaps the tenth or twentieth fanzine) I'm ready and eager to be at it. The first pleasure is receiving the bundle, the second is reading the contents, and the third is stenciling my next issue in response to the reading. If I respond and stencil at all, it begins sometime during the first week after the bundle arrives, and continues until interest wanes, or time presses, or something interferes -- but by that time there will be ten or twelve pages done. If I don't stencil immediately it doesn't get done at all, and once more a mailing is missed and you good people put me in with the deadwood.

I also have the image of the ever-patient Juanita Coulson hovering before me. If I can't get the finished stencils to her at least a month or six weeks before deadline, I don't send them at all -- she has more important things to do than sweat the deadline for me. So I stand in awe of those who wait until the very last minute: you have more guts and nerve than I do, Dick Daring.

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● THE NAMES at the top of each page, like lazy interlineations, is the memory-jogging exercise for today. They were taken from the 1950 Fan Directory, published by Len Moffatt for the N3F. Stan Woolston is still with us, of course, but the others ??

- Bob Tucker
December, 1966.