

BLOOMINGTON

NEWS - LETTER

Philadelphia Convention
Edition

September 1, 1947

" 'The Night Side' is perhaps a little more diverse than the previous 'Sleep No More' and 'Who Knocks?' and I don't mean to imply that this time he was scraping the bottom of the barrel. For Mr. Derleth, also known as the editor of Weird Tales magazine, does not operate in anything so solidly circumscribed as a barrel." -HPB in New York Times Book Review.

Dorothy McIlwraith, we presume, has resigned to ghost-write the Shaver stories?

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Bloomington News-Letter, a hobby publication, is found occasionally by Bob Tucker, P.O. Box 560, Bloomington, Ill. Sept. 1, 1947, No. 6

THE SAD SAGA OF SHANGRI-L'AFFAIRES

Burbee's End Is In Sight

Securing a copy of each issue of Shangri-L'Affaires for the edification and enlightenment of the forgotten man inhabiting Box 260 has become something of a struggle, a struggle whose sound and fury are apt to cause reverberations of international import, and will some day doubtless come before a UN peace committee.

Postal inspector, mail carrier, gremlin, Claude ---someone is stealing each and every issue of Shaggy as quickly as Editor Burbee claims he mails it; perhaps Claude has been cut off the subscription list and this is his only method of obtaining copies. At any rate, they never arrive at Box 260, and from one to six months after publication I'll read a review somewhere of the magazine and dash off a hurt note to Burbee asking: "Where's mine?"

He will immediately reply that he mailed it on such-and-such a date several months previous and don't I have it yet? I will then answer "no." He then dispatches another card saying that this is a shame. I tell him that it certainly is, and ask for a duplicate copy. He replies that he will institute a search for a duplicate on the Los Angeles clubroom premises. If this search is successful, the copy finally arrives; if it is not, he submits a tender note of regret and I borrow the issue from someone else. The next month (or the next issue) the entire performance begins again.

A few months ago I tired of this careless publishing system and issued an ultimatum: either Burbee get each copy to me promptly as it was published, or I'd be forced to send a cash subscription.

His thoughtful letter of apology follows:

"Are you trying to tell me you didn't get a copy of Shangri-etc #36? I sent you one along with the rest of them. What the hell. ((Note the lapse into profanity to cover his confusion.)) No other beefs have come my way. ((Note the reference to the meat shortage in an attempt to confuse the issue.)) Is there a hex on Box 260, Bloomington, Ill? What is the matter with Box 260? Is it haunted? Is it a section of subspace in which things placed vanish for once and all? Is it the dominion of a sluglike being from Saturn who lives on carboniferous matter? There is a mystery about Box 260, Bloomington, Ill. There is a definite out-of-this-worldness about Box 260. I might go so far as to say Box 260 is extra-terrestrially inclined, if not actually extra-terrestrial. It has other-world habits. Or, to put it briefly, it is the damndest Box I have ever heard of.

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" I can say all this with perfect equanimity, though my eyes have never rested on Box 260. ((Note his implied sorrow.))

"This is the damndest thing I have ever heard of. Why, that stupid fanzine ((note how he slurs his product in an effort to reduce my sense of loss,)) has been out a month or more. And no copy has reached you. This is incredible. It seems odd to me that you have not discovered the mystery of Box 260 by this time. Has it held forever to its bosom other works of fannish nature? Has it withheld from you checks from ~~stupid~~ enterprising publishers for your ~~stupid~~ pristine writings? Why, then, must it prey on fanzines? Especially sterling fanzines? ((Note contradiction of quality in an effort to raise fanzine in equal value to checks.))

" Oh well. I am sending you, this very minute, a second copy of that ~~stupid~~ excellent fanzine. Please allow a fortnight to pass. If it hasn't arrived I'll send you another. And another, and another, and another. I will teach my children that each and every two weeks a copy of Shangri-L'Affaires #36 must be sent to Bob Tucker, Box 260, Bloomington, Ill. We'll make a fetish of it. More, a whole new mythology will spring up around this."

(Burbee)

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REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Reminiscence Is Old Age

Once upon a time there existed a fan journal named Le Zombie, and in its hey-day it published some minor epics so good that we like to re-read them again and again. Mayhap you would too. On the following pages will be found a few condensed versions of some of the more glittering nuggets from a played-out mine.

"Join The Science-Fiction Fanzine-of-the-Month Club!"

(From No. 52, March, 1943)

Forty thousand members now participate in this great club !! Why haven't we got your five dollars? Aren't you eager to obtain the nicely mimeographed, sturdily bound fanzine of the month? Many of them come with covers, occasionally the printing is dark enough to read, sometimes they have illustrations! There is no obligation to take every selection---you need buy only a minimum of five fanzines per year at a dollar a copy. These fanzines are the same sold elsewhere for five and ten cents per copy! Our competent judges select the best fanzine of the month from the hundreds that are published. Clip a five dollar bill to this announcement; as a bonus for joining we will give you absolutely free any fanzine of your choice that was ambitiously announced and advertised but which never appeared.

"The Diaper Dept"

(Also from No. 52)

Ever on the alert for new ways to aid fandom, Le Zombie joins Vom in presenting a new service for busy fan-fathers and mothers.... how to raise your baby the true slan way.

Allow the tiny tot to ripen day by day---do not rush things by resorting to time-traveling devices for aging the baby in a hurry. The outside world does not admit the existence of time machines you know; strangers are apt to look askance at a child several years older than its parents. Toys will be a vital factor in determining your child's future. Exercise his imagination even before he knows he has one by buying him rocket ships, fourth-dimensional cubes, BEM facsimilies, and so forth.

Let us consider the rocket ship for example. It should look like the real thing down to the hollow rocket tube in which little Elmo can poke his finger. If he can't get it out---that is lesson one. In order to provide authentic appearance and acquaint the little fellow with the true facts, stuff the tube with an inflammable material--flashlight powder will do nicely. Hand the darling a lit match and stand back to observe the results. Chances are, the child will know all about rocketry long before his classmates.

The familiar rat-in-the-maze intelligence test, somewhat modified for our purposes, is herewith suggested: place the baby on the floor and arrange around him in a semi-circle the following promags: Astounding, Amazing, Weird Tales, FFM, and Planet. Little Elmo will gaze stupidly at the fearsome covers for awhile and eventually reach for one of the five. (The parent making this test must stand by the child, ready to act.) Each time Little Elmo reaches for one of the magazines you do not like, bang him heartily over the head. This treatment is to be repeated daily until the wonder-child learns to recognize good literature at a glance.

Should he reach for the dero journal, you have a juvenile delinquent on your hands.

DEPTS OF THE INTERIOR
(From No. 58, July 1944)

MERELY A DABBLER Dept: John Cunningham in Vom #34: "I do not agree on mass nudism, but small groups must be a pleasant experience."

THE LIFTED EYEBROW Dept: Joe Kennedy in Black Star #5: "There is a lot more to belonging to the (club) than just letting BS flow into your mailbox."

BOOK OF THE MONTH Dept: Most of us are impatiently awaiting Arkham House to bring out "Thumb One in the Dark" ---a wild goose story.

OBSERVATION DEPT: H.L. Mencken maintains that oboe players are insane. We shall refrain from turning out eyes towards Hagerstown.

"A Fan At Large"

(From No. 49, October, 1942. Condensed and modernized)

Dear Mom: Gosh this is swell! I never dreamed a fan convention could be such great fun! Here I am away out in space for the first time --- as you know, Mom, this is the first time the fans have ever had a convention in deep space; our club has chartered the ship for a week's cruise around Pluto and back. There are about 300 of us aboard, plus the crew. Gee, a convention is fun.

Mom, do you remember that Rothman fella who came out to see me at the farm last Fall? Remember, he sold me a membership in the club and a ticket for this cruise? Well, he's in charge here; everybody calls him Prez Milty, everybody that is but the ship's captain. I'm not going to repeat what the captain calls him, Mom. Anyway, this Prez Milty is one swell guy! He took a shine to me as soon as I come aboard. He made a pretty speech saying how glad he was to see me and he asked me what I had in my suitcase. Also, he asked me what syence I liked best, and right away I said rocketry. And guess what he did, Mom? He took me aside and told me in a low voice he could fix me up with a dandy little room all to myself right under the rocket tubes!

Course, it wasn't easy; he said he'd have to have a few bucks to bribe the purser -- a purser is the room clerk on a ship -- but that the man would come across without too much fuss. I gave Prez Milty five dollars and he said that ought to do it. Pretty soon he come back with a key, and gee, Mom, I have the swellest room ever! It's right under a rocket tube and I can put my hand up and feel the heat. The sign on my door says "Baffle Room," whatever that is. Prez Milty can really take care of a friend.

We cleared port at noon; the Captain was mad about something, I don't know what. Me and some of the fellows stood around an open hatch and dropped sandbags on little ants crawling around below; this is certainly a swell bunch aboard. One of them -- I think his name is Widner -- took me aside later and said those weren't really ants down below, but bipeds --- whatever that is, and it really wasn't sand in those bags, but powdered oxygen. Maybe that's why the Captain was in such a fit.

We made a short stop-over on the moon, and gee, it was a funny place, Mom. There ain't no air there at all. The Captain said we couldn't stay out long without suits, and after about an hour the talking died down and some of the fans got blue in the face, so the Captain made us come back inside the ship. One of the fans, a swell fella named Kennedy, came back to the ship lugging an old smelly dinosaur skeleton he found somewhere, but the Captain wouldn't allow him to bring it aboard. Gee, Kennedy got mad! He threatened to kick a hole in the hull and let space leak in, but Prez Milty talked him out of it, pointing out that the ship was chartered and the club would be held responsible for the hole.

We have a bar on the ship. Now don't be alarmed, Mom, you know I wouldn't drink anything even if there was hard likker at this bar. Prez Milty says the bar don't sell nothing but soft drinks.

He assured me that most fans don't drink likker; except for a rowdy from Los Angeles named Ackerman. He said he had confisticated a quart of bourbon from this Ackerman person and locked it away in his cabinet for medicinal purposes. He said that Ackerman was the only fan who drank at conventions, and he set a bad example for the rest. Prez Milty told me that if I wanted a really good soothing drink, to ask the bartender for a Micky Finn and tell him Milty sent me.

Talk about excitement, Mom, this trip is sure something! The Captain had to stop twice to pick up fans who fell overboard. Somebody named Willmorth or Woolmouth or something like that had opened a porthole in the ceiling to take some pictures of the stars, and a gust of wind blew him right out the window! It was a good thing some one saw it happen and rescued him right away, cause he was wearing a thin suit and might easily of caught cold out there.

We got a scientist on board, too, who is carrying on some secret experiments. He's an old fella named Evans and he's always puffing on a big cigar. I watched him two or three times when he didn't know I was around. In these experiments, he stands up at the nose of the ship and puffs a big cloud of cigar smoke out into space, and then he runs like sixty back to the rear port window to watch it float by, a pleased look on his face.

And say, Mom, some of the fans got out their costumes and put them on last night, although the masquerade party is a week away. One really swell guy named Speer has a complete Buck Rogers outfit. Last night he sneaked outside the ship, went topside and walked along the hull until he came to the pilot's observation window. Then, tying a rope around his middle to hold him, he hung head-downwards in front of the observation window and shot his ray-gun at the navigator and the pilot. The navigator fainted but the pilot got pretty mad.

I've got to close now, Mom. A couple of fans just knocked on my door and asked me if I knew how to play jungle dominoes. When I said no, they said they'd be glad to teach me, so I'm going to learn the game. Its something they play with little white cubes that have black dots on them. These two fans, some very friendly fellows named Moskowitz and Madle, guaranteed me I'd get educated pretty fast.

This is really a swell convention, Mom. -Yours, Joe

"The Great Fan"

(A fragment from No. 59, November, 1944)

The Great Fan never wrote letters, never entered into a correspondence with anyone. As a matter of courtesy and respect he always was tendered invitations to every fan affair, every convention. And he usually ignored the invitation, thus letting it be known he would not be in attendance. Upon rare occasions, such as this convention banquet invitation which he accepted, he merely sent a blank postcard in reply. The convention chairman knew the Great Fan was attending the banquet but not the convention proper because He had caused to be deposited on the back of the card a single, dried gravy spot.