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DON - o - SAUR



December 1973
Number 27

COPROLITES

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DON - O - SAUR

December 1973

No. 27

COPROLITES

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haphazardly to people who get their names mentioned in other zines. Take care!

Don-o-Saur Coprolites has undergone a process of cellular division. It has split into two separate entities, each living its own life, going its own way, yet each retaining exactly the same genetic structure as the original. This sort of thing happens all the time with 'primitive' life forms; I assume no one is surprised that it can happen with an equally primitive literary form.

The mitosis has occurred in response to certain stimuli: D'APA members were complaining that the zine was getting too big, and was concerning itself too much with people and things that were of no particular interest to them; general readers were complaining that DC seemed too closed and insular, with too little discussion about people and things of general interest.

Now, I do not always respond positively to criticism. Sometimes I take it personally and snarl ferociously; more often I simply shrug and do and say nothing at all. However casual I may seem about it though, I almost never just ignore criticism. I examine it, weigh it, bounce it around -- and sometimes, if I can do so without compromising my principles or increasing my work load (same thing, actually), try to actually apply the criticism; that is, to do something about it: to change whatever has been criticized.

This is one of those rare cases. Savor it. I decided that it would make sense and would not be much more work to split Don-o-Saur Coprolites. And so it has happened. The apazine has gone back to its earlier size, four pages or thereabouts, and is filled with personal ramblings, book reviews, comments on other zines...that sort of stuff. It's now called Don-o-saur COPROLITES. This zine, on the other hand, will range from eight to 12 pages in length, and will be illustrated and is called DON-O-SAUR Coprolites. It is filled with personal ramblings, book reviews, comments on other zines, letters of comment ...that sort of stuff.

I can't help looking ahead. I envision a time when DON-O-SAUR will have grown both in physical size and in circulation to cumbersome proportions. I'll be getting complaints that there is too much of other people in the zine for it to be considered a a perszine any longer, and yet too much of me for it to be a genzine. It will be necessary, won't it, to split once more? But what about names? Don-o-Saur Coprolites is easy to split -- once. But to call one zine Don-o and another one Saur just doesn't make it. Well, it may not happen for a while, so why should I worry about it until it does?

Meanwhile, I have this zine to contend with. Oh, there'll be no problem filling it. I've gotten some very nice letters, nearly all of which I want to print at least portions of. [I'm just waiting for someone to comment on the fact that I tend to end a lot of sentences with prepositions so I can say "screw it; I teach grammar, and I say there's nothing wrong with ending sentences with prepositions" but maybe no one even notices it; if that's true, maybe I'll have to quit doing it].

(I apologize for getting sidetracked onto shoptalk there -- but I refuse to promise that it won't happen again).

I was saying something about all the nice letters I've been getting -- well, just that, I guess; I've been getting some nice letters. I could print them in their entirety and it would take at least 12 pages, probably, even without any comments of my own. And it would be very interesting reading, I'm sure; maybe more interesting if I didn't make any comments ...

HOWEVER . . .

I'll get to the letters in a little while, and I'll print as much of as many of them as I possibly can, and I'll try to answer those that seem to demand answers (as some of them definitely do), but I don't want to devote the whole zine to that. I have things to talk about that aren't brought up in any of the letters. For instance, I would like very much to talk about some of the books I've been reading recently, such as Relatives by Geo. Alec Effinger, and Mr. Justice by Doris Piserchia, and The Cloud Walker by Edmund Cooper, and The Muller-Fokker Effect by John Sladek, and Harvest Home by Thomas Tryon. To say nothing of Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien. Oh, yes! and The Phantom Rickshaw, by Rudyard Kipling.

But circumstances being what they are (I'm talking about space and time), I must settle for merely listing the books and moving on to something else that I've read recently -- and this I do want to discuss.

The January 1974 issue of Analog carries a guest editorial by Robert A. Heinlein. Actually, it was a lecture given by Heinlein last April 5 to the naval cadets at Annapolis (Heinlein's alma mater), but it is superbly suitable as an Analog editorial. I read it several days ago, and I've been thinking about it ever since. I almost considered writing a letter to the Brass Tacks column, but I didn't see how I could make my comments brief enough.

Part of the problem is that Heinlein's editorial is really two editorials, one on writing and one on patriotism, and I've had extremely intense and complex reactions to both -- and in diametrically opposite directions.

My reaction to the portion about writing was warmly positive. My reaction to the comments about patriotism was coldly negative, downright hostile. I've been trying to analyze these responses, and I'd like now to try to put my findings into words.

For reasons that should become apparent later, I'm going to tackle the patriotism editorial first, and I'll begin by attempting to summarize Heinlein's major points, more or less in the order in which he makes them.

As a sort of bridge between science fiction and patriotism, Heinlein makes the science fictional prediction that within the near future nuclear-powered, constant boost space ships "armed with Buck Rogerish death rays" will be scampering back and forth between Earth and Mars, and that they will be used for military purposes (space warfare) as well as for exploration and colonization.

He does not predict (apparently does not believe) that these ships will be American, because "Popular governments are not generally favorable to military expenditures, however necessary."

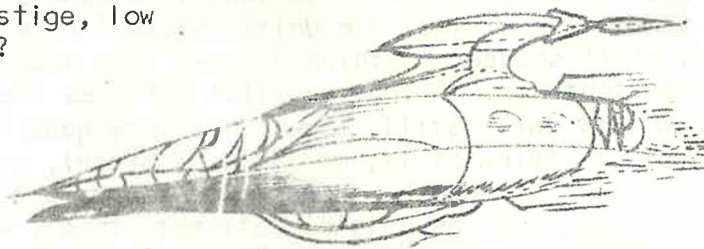
[I find it hard to believe that Heinlein is unaware of the size of the Pentagon budget, or of Congress' record of appropriating more money for the military than has been requested. But this is an aspect that just occurred to me and it has nothing to do with Heinlein's-- or my -- main point. To illustrate military poverty, Heinlein does use an episode from 40 years ago].

Heinlein says the whole country is in a "sorry state" -- and I'm not going to argue with him about that. But his clear implication throughout the rest

of the editorial is that the country is going to the dogs because of the decline of patriotism; and I think there is room for argument there.

"Why would anyone want to become a naval officer?" Heinlein asks the midshipmen, and goes on to stress all the disadvantages of a naval career-- low prestige, low pay, long hours, hard work . . . Why?

At this point, Heinlein tells of the baboons of East Africa and their practice of posting a guard in a tree to watch for leopards while the herd grazes. That young male baboon in the tree is morally superior, Heinlein asserts, to the "fat poltroon" [Samuel Johnson, though Heinlein chooses not to name him] who first wisecracked: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel."



Heinlein asserts, to the "fat poltroon" [Samuel Johnson, though Heinlein chooses not to name him] who first wisecracked: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel."

"Patriotism is the most practical of all human characteristics," Heinlein answers Johnson. Patriotism, he says, is a necessary survival trait for any species, and anyone lacking the characteristic is at an evolutionary dead-end. In effect, Heinlein is here defining patriotism as the willingness of the individual to sacrifice himself for the survival of the group, or, as he expresses it a little later, it is the naval tradition of "women and children first." Men are expendable; women and children are not if the group is to continue. Heinlein shows a clear awareness of the levels of patriotism-- loyalty first to the family group, and then the extension of that same impulse to larger groups as society becomes more complex. He says Neil Armstrong's first words as he stepped onto the moon ('..small step for man...giant leap for mankind..') were an expression of the highest level of patriotism.

Right about here, Heinlein pauses to "brush off those parlor pacifists... who...contend that their actions are on this highest moral level."

He brushes them off by saying that they say anyone who disagrees with them must be a bloodthirsty scoundrel. He has earlier said that "self-styled 'intellectuals'" "sneer at patriotism," treat the military profession with contempt and label them with such terms as "warmongers, imperialists, and hired killers in uniform." Heinlein gets back at those sneering "intellectuals" by labeling them with such terms as "pious pacifists," "custard-headed pacifists," whose "heads aren't screwed on tight" and who "live in a world of fantasy."

And really, that is all Heinlein says about pacifism or any other critics of patriotism. He says there is no chance of abolishing war in the foreseeable future, that the U.S. still needs a Navy, that the Republic will always need heroes; and then he gives some inspirational examples of past heroism and patriotism -- Nathan Hale, etc. Then he gets back to his earlier fear that the United States may not survive, because "any nation that loses its patriotic fervor is on the skids," but he assures the cadets that they are all right, that they are upholding a proud tradition of service. And finally he closes with another inspirational story about an unidentified tramp who died trying to help another man pull the man's wife from the path of a train. Her foot was caught in a rail. All three were killed, the men having made no attempt to save themselves.

All right, I've probably gone into too much detail about the editorial, but I believe it has served a purpose. If nothing else, it has clarified Heinlein's points in my mind and has enabled me to pinpoint pretty exactly the source of my strongly negative reaction. Before I start elaborating on that, I'd just like to say that I have never really considered myself a pacifist. I enlisted

in the United States Army at the age of 18, right out of high school, and I was ready to do whatever was required of me; and it wasn't really my fault that I was in and out between the time World War II was over and the Korean War started. I believed firmly at that time (and still do, though I'm less dogmatic about it now) that the United States' role in World War II was just and moral; I still shudder to think of what life would be like had Hitler and his minions won that war. A true pacifist believes that war is never justified; I can't go that far. Still, some of my very good friends are pacifists (including, come to think of it, my own son, Bruce), and I don't believe the pacifist philosophy or position can be brushed off with a few casual insults, as Heinlein attempts to do. An insult is no substitute for an argument. "There is no chance of abolishing war in the foreseeable future," Heinlein says, and I'll agree with that and go one step beyond: There is no chance of abolishing war at all, ever -- unless someone starts working on it.



It will undoubtedly require a basic change in "human nature" to bring about the abolition of warfare. Now, there may be a lot of people working diligently to bring about such a change. Maybe some patriots are; I don't know. I do know that the pacifists of my acquaintance are working on it, in their lives and in the lives of their children. Well, what they believe is that aggression is not basic to human nature, and that if children aren't taught to fight they won't grow up wanting to fight. Some of them may be custard-headed. There are enough stupid people in the world that it's easy to find some of them defending every conceivable philosophic position. Nonetheless, pacifists as a whole are trying to find a way out of a tragic human dilemma, and I admire and respect their efforts.

But let's get to the guts of Heinlein's editorial -- his definition of patriotism; this is where my real quarrel with him is. I resented on a personal level his slurs against pacifism, but after all he was talking to an audience of naval cadets, and they wouldn't have wanted to hear the philosophical arguments for and against pacifism; they wanted to be told that they were doing their patriotic duty and that it was something to be proud of, and that's what Heinlein told them.

However, in doing so, he was, I do believe, guilty of a bit of intellectual sleight-of-hand amounting to downright dishonesty.

His definition of patriotism again: it's that young male baboon in the tree, giving up his grazing time to watch for leopards; it's an individual's willingness to sacrifice himself so the group he belongs to can survive; it's "women and children first" in a shipwreck, and it's Armstrong on the moon, giving the entire human race a better chance for survival.

Fine.

How can anybody possibly quarrel with that?

The answer of course is that nobody possibly could -- not me, not even Samuel Johnson -- IF that were the commonly accepted, commonly understood definition of patriotism.

But it isn't. And Heinlein knows it. It certainly wasn't the kind of patriotism that Johnson called "the last refuge of scoundrels," and Heinlein knows that, too.

Heinlein's definition of patriotism is by no means the same one that has been propounded by the American Legion and the VFW and the DAP and the John Birch Society, and one hell of a lot of politicians who for the past quarter-century have equated patriotism with anti-communism. Surely it was not (was

it?) Heinlein's brand of patriotism that sucked the United States into Viet Nam, making possible the destruction of a village "in order to save it" -- and all the other idiocies and atrocities of that endless nightmare. "Women and children first" takes on a grimly, horribly ironical meaning when applied to free fire zones, or to Mai Lai.

Patriotism? Well hell no; not in Heinlein's definition (that young male baboon doesn't go out of his way 5,000 miles to spew napalm on leopard cubs!).

But all that time our political and military leaders, along with those patriot groups already mentioned, were telling young men it was their patriotic duty to go over there and kill Commies -- "get them before they get us;" "your country right or wrong."

That, damn it, is the common usage of patriotism, and to have been fully honest about it, Heinlein should have taken that usage into consideration, especially since "your country right or wrong" is at least as much a part of the military tradition as is "women and children first."

Instead of the gratuitous slaps at pacifism (which after all is striving for the higher patriotism -- loyalty to mankind rather than loyalty to any particular country) Heinlein would have made a more valid point if he'd taken some time to brush off those self-styled "patriots" who have given the word such a bad reputation that an awfully lot of intellectuals (whether self-styled or not) do sneer at it.

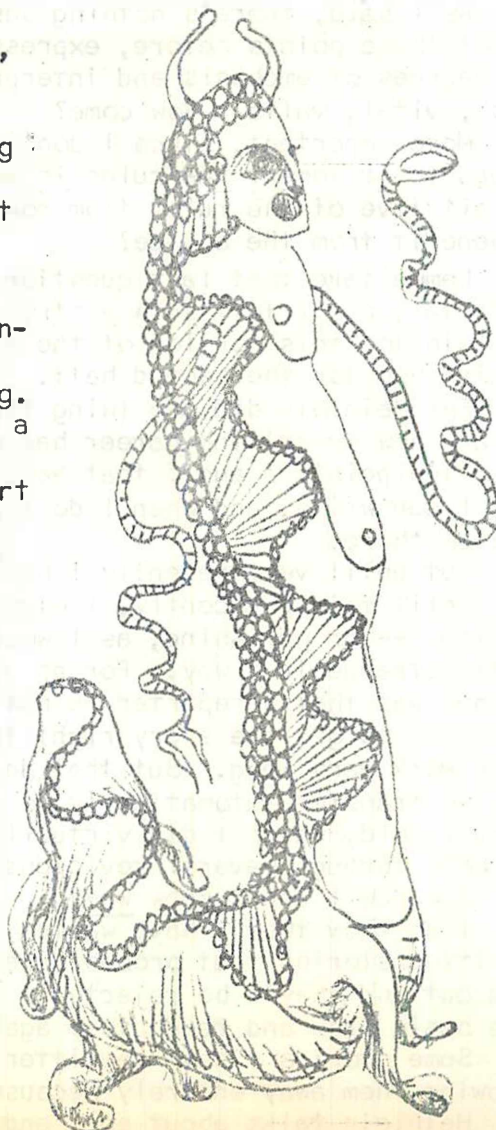
Well ... I apologize for being so sercon, and incidentally, there's a letter coming up pretty soon, in which I am taken to task unmercifully (and quite justifiably) for seeming to sneer at the sercon aspect of science fiction. All I want to say about it here is that I started writing about Heinlein's editorial before the letter came.

But I've still got the other half of Heinlein's editorial to deal with.

Patience. This won't take nearly as long.

Even though Heinlein has what I consider a blind spot as regards patriotism, he is still one of the giants of our field, and when Robert Heinlein talks about writing you can bet that I will be listening attentively and respectfully, and when Heinlein gives advice about how to write and sell I will be ... well, I was about to say I would follow that advice, but I don't know if I can. At least I will seriously think about the advice, and I've been thinking about it ever since I read the editorial.

I won't try to summarize what Heinlein said about writing because I'm not going to argue with him about this, but if you haven't read the editorial you won't know what I'm talking about if I don't list Heinlein's five rules for writing, which he guarantees as a sure-fire formula for getting anything (anything at all!) published. Here they are -- well, there they are, over on the next page:



of

- "1. You must write.
- "2. You must finish what you write.
- "3. You must refrain from rewriting except to editorial order.
- "4. You must place it on the market.
- "5. You must keep it on the market until sold."

Simple, eh? Nothing there that you hadn't heard before? Me too.

Except that Heinlein's point here is that all five of the rules must be followed, and that only the relatively small number of people who do follow all five of them are successful writers.

You know, I started reading advice about how to write almost longer ago than I can remember (except that I can remember -- I was about 15 years old and it was one of Jack Woodford's books); and many times over the years since I have deliberately and impatiently quit reading anyone's advice on how to write. And yet I read Heinlein's elaboration and explanation of his five points with exactly the same sense of discovery and the same excitement as when I was reading Woodford's Writing and Selling. It's more than just an intellectual acceptance of the ideas -- it's also a matter of feeling: the ideas just feel true. There's a solid, three-dimensional quality about them that makes 'em easy to get hold of.

As I said, there's nothing basically new in Heinlein's formula; I've seen all of these points before, expressed by different authors, with widely differing degrees of emphasis and interpretation. And yet they felt somehow new, fresh, vital, valid. How come?

More important, since I don't think I can answer that question, how do I intend to implement the rules in my own writing? Do I, in fact, intend to follow all five of the rules from now on? If not, have I gotten anything at all of benefit from the advice?

Lemme take that last question first. Yes, I have benefited from Heinlein's editorial, and I felt such a strong, warm, friendly surge of gratitude toward Heinlein for this portion of the editorial that I won't find it impossible to forgive him for the second half.

For Heinlein did one thing for me, if nothing else: he showed me exactly why and how my writing career has never gotten moving.

It's points 3 and 5 that have stymied me.

I can write, and when I do I generally finish what I start; no insoluble problem there.

But until very recently I have not been able to refrain from rewriting.

Until fairly recently, I might have argued vehemently in favor of re-writing -- or polishing, as I would have preferred to call it. And that's a little strange in a way. For as a newspaperman one of the first things I learned was that a reporter is not allowed the luxury of polishing his stories; he learns to get the story right the first time -- or he doesn't stay in newspaper work very long. But that deadline-discipline did not -- for me at any rate -- transfer automatically to my fiction writing. Except for the first story I sold, which I did virtually nothing to except retype, all my fiction has gone through several revisions before I considered it finished.

And now I don't know why.

I do know that I have wasted, over the years, one hell of a lot of time rewriting stories that probably weren't too bad to begin with. But I'd send them out and they'd be rejected a couple of times and so I'd decide they had some basic flaw and re-do them again. And again. And again.

Some stories I have rewritten literally to death. I may have ended by throwing them away entirely because I can't seem to find them now.

Heinlein talks about ego, and that has been my problem.

It really hurts to have a story rejected. I take it personally. And much too seriously. It diminishes my self esteem when I send off a story that I think is great, and it comes back with either a printed rejection slip or else a brief, curt note from the editor. Maybe the editor intended to be encouraging and helpful; it's still a rejection. Seldom have I been able to send out a story a third time after it's been rejected twice in succession (certainly not without re-writing it). What happens is I put the story away with the idea that maybe, someday, after I've learned more about writing, I'll get it out again and re-write it one more time and try again.

Yet when I do get the story out again, after a period of years, it still seems like a good story to me. Usually I can't think of any way to improve it. In short, as Heinlein says, I'm no smarter today than I was yesterday.

So I believe it -- what Heinlein said. If I had kept all of those stories on the market (and kept on writing at a steady pace -- and not wasted time re-writing) I could probably have been a successful writer by now.

Well, it isn't too late -- is it?

I don't think so.

* * * * *

I've just taken some time out to be extremely self-indulgent, and now I'm going to be a little more so.

I have gone through a pile of my old manuscripts to verify what I was just saying. The stories I wrote 10 to 15 years ago do read just as well as the stories I've written recently. No, they're not perfect, but they're not really bad; most of them should sell. So I've picked out three (not ones that I consider the best) that are in good shape just in terms of appearance, and I'm sending them off to three different magazines, and I intend to keep them in circulation indefinitely -- until they sell. There are about a half a dozen other stories ready to join them, but some retyping will be necessary.

But in going through the stories I came across one that seemed to me now actually much better than it did when I wrote it. I'd almost forgotten about it, but I recall that it did win an honorable mention in a Writer's Digest contest. I can't recall that I ever tried very hard to sell it, and that does seem strange because I know it will sell.

I'd have sent it out immediately with the other three except for one thing: it's a Christmas story, and right now is the wrong time to be peddling Christmas stories, so I'll wait until March or April to start it on the rounds.

However ...

It occurred to me that since this is the Christmas issue of Don-o-Saur and since I'm taking no other cognizance of the fact, and since I already have set the precedent of running my own fiction . . .

Well, here it is. You can take it as my way of saying Happy Holidays:

A CHRISTMAS CANDLE

It was a Christmas miracle, but Jerry Merrinac didn't understand until late summer of the following year that the miracle he had written about involved him, too.

A lot had happened in the intervening months.

He had been promoted from general assignment reporter to assistant city editor of The Morning Express; he had fallen in love and was planning to be married soon; he had bought a new car, moved to a new apartment, won a \$25 Story of the Month Award (for a feature on how a father feels who has shot his son in a hunting accident), and written and edited hundreds of thousands of words of copy -- most of it slush.

CHRISTMAS CANDLE (2)

So much had happened that when the name Abner Burdick appeared in an obituary one quiet Sunday afternoon in August, no bells rang in Jerry's mind.

He examined the obit cursorily and tossed it into the basket marked "To Copy Desk."

One of the copy editors, George Turnbull, had a better memory than Jerry -- or perhaps less had happened to him.

Bending over Jerry's desk, Turnbull said, "Just curious. This obit, Abner Burdick -- would that be the same guy you wrote the story about last Christmas? You know, the flickering candle story that everybody liked so much?"

"Burdick? Was that the name? Holy cow, you suppose it is? I dunno. I'm surprised you even remember the story."

"Hell of a good story. Made a big impression on the desk. On me, anyway. I still think you oughta submit it for a Story of the Year, or ..."

"Send the obit on through and I'll check. If it is the same old boy, maybe we should have a follow. Burdick. Hum. Could be. Age 73. . ."

He sent to the morgue for a clipping of his Christmas story, and the clipping confirmed Turnbull's suspicion.

"So old Abner burned out first," Jerry murmured. "And I'd even forgotten the name."

He read the story through and was surprised that it really was good, remembering how dissatisfied he been with it at the time.

He remembered how hard he'd fought against writing the story at all . . .

"What! You want me to do a tear-jerker?" he'd protested to City Editor Steve Burggold. "Whatsa matter with Bonnie? This is her specialty."

"Bonnie is busy and you're not. Anyway it doesn't have to be a tear-jerker. There's nothing tragic about it. Just a nice little Christmas feature to warm our readers' hearts."

"oh bull! If they're that cold they can wad up a copy of the paper and start a fire."

Burggold cut off further argument. "Would you rather be back on night police duty?"

Jerry had completed a year on that lonely, thankless beat only two months before.

He said, "Okay, I'll see what I can do with it."

The Burdicks lived in an old part of town, in an old house with small, wallpapered, high-ceilinged rooms.

In the cramped, dim dining room, Abner and Edna Burdick posed stiffly with a stup of candle while the photographer snapped their picture.

Then the photographer left.

Abner Burdick, pale and fragile in his wheelchair, turned to Jerry. "You know, I feel kinda foolish about this. When I wrote that letter I didn't figure anyone would want to make a story of it. I thought it might get in the Letters-to-the-Editor column, but . . ."

"No, this is just the sort of thing we're always looking for," Jerry said. "Good human interest stuff." He was aware of the hardness and sarcasm in his voice, but he was angry, and he didn't care.

Jerry had the letter in his pocket. It was written in response to a story about a local department store that was running a contest

CHRISTMAS CANDLE (3)

to see who could come closest to guessing when its three-foot candle would burn out.

Abner Burdick's letter told of a similar contest in his family:

"We have an eight-inch candle that we've burned for a few minutes every Christmas Eve since 1938. The candle is getting pretty short now, but the wife and I are getting on in years, and the real contest is to see which burns out first, the candle -- or us."

Maudlin self-pity, had been Jerry's observation.

"Uh . . . how did you happen to start this candle-burning ceremony?" he asked.

Well, it was our daughter, Pat, started it," Abner said. "She was eight that year. I was out of a job and things were pretty tough all around, so we weren't planning to have much of a Christmas."

"Abner was a salesman," Mrs. Burdick said. "A wonderful salesman, too. But there just wasn't anything to sell."

Abner smiled. "Well, anyway, Pat . . . she's been saving for months until finally she'd scraped together a whole quarter. Then on Christmas Eve she brought out her present to us, and it was this candle. She'd spent the whole damned quarter on one eight-inch candle. For us. We were kinda . . . touched. You know. So anyway we lit it and let it burn for a while that night. And then the next Christmas Eve -- things weren't much better that year -- we got it out and let it burn for a while."

"And every Christmas Eve since then," Mrs. Burdick said.

That was all there was; that was the story. Jerry stayed on for a while, sipping coffee and talking comfortably with the quiet, friendly couple.

They told him more about their daughter, who was living on the West Coast now and having troubles of her own, with an invalid husband and three growing children.

"She'll call us on Christmas Eve," Mrs. Burdick said. "She always does."

It wasn't until he was back in the office that Jerry realized he still didn't have the slightest idea of how to make a newspaper story out of the Burdicks and their remnant of a candle.

It just didn't seem worth a story. Not his kind of story.

Jerry knew he was a good reporter -- on straight factual stuff. Crime reporting was his specialty.

He protested once more to the city editor and when Burggold remained adamant, Jerry said, "All right, damn it, I'll give it a try, but I won't promise anything."

"Well, I'll promise you something!" Burggold snapped. "If you don't give me a story on this for next Sunday's paper -- and I mean a good story; with none of your damned tough-guy cynicism -- you won't be back on night police, you'll be out on your ear! When I give an assignment I expect it to be carried out!"

And still Jerry stalled for three more days, feeling helpless.

He wasn't afraid of being fired; he'd been fired before and had survived. But to lose his job over something as silly as this . . .

It became a matter of principle: A good reporter should be able to write anything.

Finally, on Thursday night, with Friday the deadline for Sunday copy, he took his notes home with him and sat down at his portable typewriter.

CHRISTMAS CANDLE (4)

He began:

"Mr. and Mrs. Abner Burdick, both 73, of 7609 Elm lane, have a stub of a candle.

"The candle was given to them on Christmas Eve 1938 as a gift from their daughter Pat, who was 8. The candle cost Pat 25 cents. That was a lot of . . . "

Jerry growled an obscenity and jerked the paper from the typewriter. That was no good, and he knew it.

That was the way Jerry Merrinac wrote. This had to be handled ... well, the way Bonnie Brightly would do it, for instance.

He grinned. Sure! That was it!

If that's the sort of syrupy goo Steve Burggold wanted, then by God, that's what he'd get!

He twirled another sheet of paper into the typewriter and began again:

"Sometimes a single candle can warm an entire lifetime -- and make the poorest dwelling a happy replica of that first Inn."

In the same lyrical prose he wrote of the meager Christmas the Burdicks were planning in 1938, and he uttered a triumphant "Hah!" as he worked in the phrase, "But they had briefly forgotten something the Wise Men knew a long, long time ago."

He covered three and a half pages, and then, grimly, gritting his teeth, he read the whole thing over.

But a strange thing happened as he came to a phrase about "that same candle, flickering down the years, still burning on Christmas Eve, after more than a third of a century..."

A miraculous thing happened.

The smoke from that ghostly, flickering candle wafted into his room and stung his eyes, bringing moisture to them, so that he had to close his eyes for a while.

And after he opened them and read the rest of the story, he decided it wasn't quite finished.

He inserted the last page into the typewriter again, and he added:

"This Christmas Eve Mr. and Mrs. Burdick will relive a night from long ago -- when a Christmas miracle was wrought by a little girl."

It was no longer a joke.

And on a quiet Sunday afternoon in August, as the deadline for first edition copy neared, Jerry pulled up a chair to an unoccupied typewriter and tried to think of something to write about Abner Burdick, who had burned out before his candle stub.

After a few moments he began:

"It was a Christmas miracle, but Jerry Merrinac didn't understand until late summer of the following year that the miracle he had written about involved him, too . . . "

THE END

LETTER - COL

BREAKTHROUGH
Henry Bitman
P.O. Box 968
Azusa, CA 91702

Dear Don:

I fail to understand how the important aspect of science fiction can "take care of itself." Are you sure? Does your zine produce itself each month -- or perhaps reproduce itself while you're not looking? I thought you're the one to blame!

Then there's the bit about "yet another attempt to define and explain science fiction." Man, you're loco on the coco or something, or just capable of fully understanding trivia. And I must apologize for interrupting your fun. But you're far from funny! What you imply is that one must not be honest, sincere, and intelligent about an important subject (an important aspect of that subject). And the time and place for fun is not necessarily in a serious essay -- which most certainly does fully develop its ideas on science fiction and go far beyond that and relate sf to all art.

Are you laughing or are you serious now?

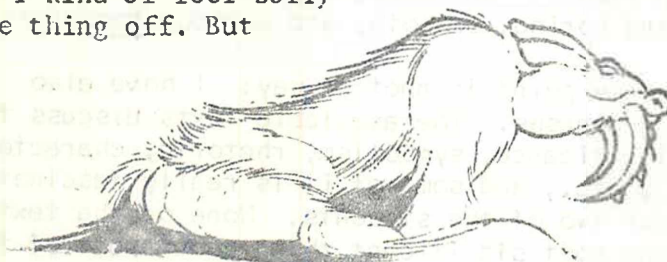
I was hoping for an almost infinitely better report from you. But find your whole attitude wrong from the start. If you can't fully comprehend a work or appreciate the author's serious and earnest effort, why knock it? I must suspect that because you can't match it or meet it halfway near its own level, you try to drag it down to yours (rather than ignore it?).

I did not and should not have taken my task lightly when properly solving the problems of sf and art. Should I have?

Another inaccuracy of yours: "The first issue of Breakthrough was only 10 pages. . ." It was 12. And why "only" 10. What's wrong with only 10, has that anything to do with less fun or?

Then you baffle me completely: "...Bitman is not a professional." Oh, my God! Need I explain that

I kind of feel sorry
whole thing off. But



one to you?

for you. And I can laugh the please get that little green demon, or whatever is bugging you, off your back. I have little or less to say about your Zine ... the continuing soap opera of Donny-o-Saurus... but accept it for what little it has to offer me on any level.

Sincerely (and seriously)

H. B.

My thought in running Henry Bitman's letter is that he deserves a public apology for the review I did of BREAKTHROUGH last issue, but no one would know what I was apologizing for if I didn't show them the complaint. So there it is, and I do apologize. I have just taken a second look at both issues of BREAKTHROUGH and at my review, and, much as I might like to try to defend myself, I find it virtually impossible. The review is totally negative and grossly unfair because I fail to explain the negative points. I do just the sort of thing that I give students D's for -- I present conclusions without tracing the line of thought or outlining any of the evidence that leads up to that conclusion. That's bad writing. And it's too late now, I'm afraid, to try to undo the damage by attempting to explain exactly what I did have in mind. On some of the points I'm not at all sure, anyway. All I'll add is the mild disclaimer that I don't really believe that fun and seriousness need be in any way incompatible. Here's another letter

Don D'Amassa
19 Angell Drive
E. Providence, RI
02914

Don:

... I'd like to see your friend Bob Alvis' library. We recently catalogued our library here at 9800 volumes, slightly over 6000 of them being sf. So he's probably at least a hair ahead of us, but I suspect we're closing fast. Between Sheila and I, we add approximately 1000 books per year. We read them all too, or at least I do.

The article on Wertham's book appeared in THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL too, complete with misspellings and incorrect "facts". I was going to write a scathing letter to the editor, but finally decided, what the hell, what does it matter?

I don't understand how scholarship and erudition pose a threat to "fun" in SF. Some people find a really well written article or book review great fun. I find Damon Knight's very scholarly IN SEARCH OF WONDER one of the funnest things going.

Part of the reason sf is considered a backwater (with a great degree of justification) is that very lack of serious consideration. Of course, there is a point where sercon becomes pretentious, but it doesn't have to be.

....

peace,

Don

Well, I guess maybe I had better explain some of my attitude toward science fiction scholarship. Basically I have nothing against it, and I do read a great deal of it. I too enjoyed Damon Knight's book, and I enjoyed James Blish's Issues at Hand, and I've enjoyed all of Sam Moskowitz's historical studies, even with their occasional inaccuracies and misrepresentations, and I've gotten a lot of use as well as enjoyment from Bailey's Pilgrims Through Space and Time. (I have mentioned before, haven't I, that I teach a course in SF at Metropolitan State College? It was the first in this area; there are a half dozen or so now in colleges around here, and I have served as consultant in establishing some of them, including the one at the Air Force Academy). Lately I've been reading almost as much about science fiction as I have of the fiction itself. And okay; some of it is very good. But a lot of it is pretentious and boring, or both; and boredom does kill enjoyment.

But let me see if I can make my point in another way: I have also taught Introduction to literature courses. The available texts discuss the stories and poems in terms of significance, symbolism, rhetoric, characterization, plot, theme, form, etc., etc., and some of it is really fascinating stuff -- to me and maybe to one or two of the students. None of the textbooks mentions what I consider the most significant thing about most of the stories and poems -- namely that they were not written (for the most part) to be significant; they were written to be enjoyed. People read them for fun! Most of the authors were writing for money, and the money was paid only because some publisher thought the public would pay to read the stuff -- for enjoyment.

Speaking just for myself, I don't really want science fiction to become so respectable and so thoroughly accepted by the academic community that they do the same thing to it that they have done to other branches of literature. And some scholars are trying to dissect and analyze all the living juice from science fiction so they can display it as a desiccated corpse comparable to the 19th century novel. Too many academics don't know how to handle a subject that's still alive and changing. They can't examine its circulatory and nervous system while it's still twitching.

Henry Bitman's article reminded me of some of the stuff I've read by some of those impatient academicians, and it was them, not Henry, that I was accusing of taking the fun from SF. But I didn't explain that, did I?

Ken Gammage Jr. Dear Don: Many thanx for Don-o-saur Coprolites. (I got 7865 E. Roseland Dr. a good laugh when I looked that last up in the dickshun-La Jolla, CA 92037 ary--who says that fanzines are worthless?!) Um...I was kinda bugged by your remarks on smoking dope. I don't, never have, and probably never will, because contact with it at theaters and concerts has fucked up the lining of my throat. I see no reason to be ashamed of this, and I certainly don't look down on people who do -- several of my close friends are heads. Does all this make me a "super-straight" too? ...
Peace and all that.

Ken

I used the term "super-straight" in specific reference to Pete Chronis (and only because I was almost certain he would not take offense; it didn't occur to me that someone else might) and it was in the context of his shock at learning that I had smoked grass, not the fact that he himself doesn't. And I'm not really a head or a doper myself; it's just that occasionally (damned rare occasions; I just don't have time to get stoned), at parties, etc., if a joint is going around I will not refuse to share it. I wouldn't want to smoke marijuana regularly or heavily because it does dry out my mouth. I did LSD once, and I consider it one of the pivotal learning experiences of my whole lifetime, but I've never seen any need to repeat it.

* * *

ALGOL

Andy Porter

P.O. Box 4175

New York, N.Y. 10017

Dear Don:

Thanks for the issue of DON-o-SAUR. What the heck is D'APA? Another of the interminable apas that happen on the scene and pass away into fan history?

Your enthusiasm for MileHiCon is almost contagious--

I can remember the first few conventions I went to where the contagion of excitement caught me the same way it seems to have caught you. Of course I was a lot younger back then and my fannish energies hadn't been stretched out the way they are now. Getting two or three hours of sleep a night didn't wear me down like it does now. It certainly was a wonderful thing, I guess.

[Fan age, obviously, has nothing to do with chronological age. I am 46, if you want to give any credence to my birth certificate; but I attended my first big SF con less than three years ago (Westercon '71) so in fanage I am a mere infant in arms compared to many people in their teens or twenties. Certainly compared to Andy Porter, regardless of what his chronoage is. Old Man Andy's letter continues with some information about the real Don Thompson.]

Who is Don Thompson? Don Thompson, with his wife Maggie, were the publishers of COMIC ART, one of the very few comic fanzines published by SF-type fans, which began publication before Comic Fandom as it's now developed had come on the scene. Later they published NEWFANGLES, a bi-weekly comic newszine; they also developed the Goethe Awards for the comics field. Don is suburban editor for the Cleveland PRESS, author of several short stories in the SF field, regular attendee of comic and SF conventions, contributor to Dick Lupoff's fanzine XERO, from which ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME developed. That's who Don Thompson is . . .

[That confirms what I've been saying all along -- that I am not that Don Thompson. We're both newspapermen, but the similarity seems to end there. But could someone provide me with Don's address? I would like to start sending him Don-o-Saur.]

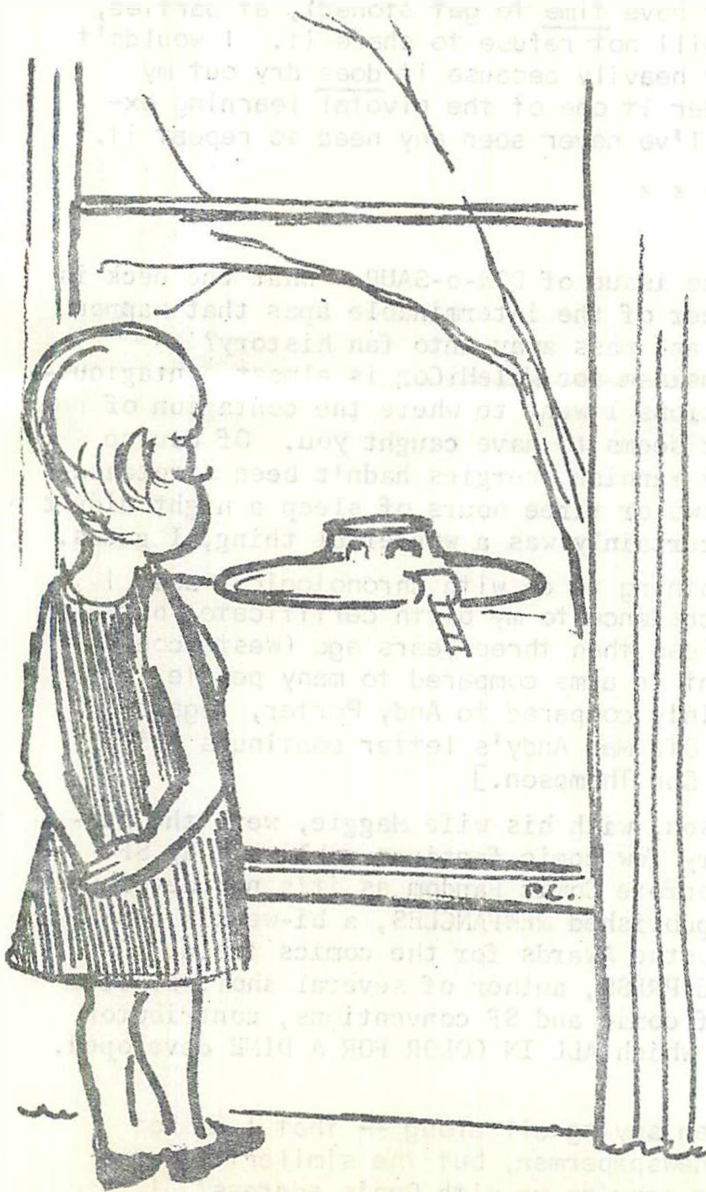
P.S. A review of the new ALGOL would be appreciated. A lot of people have the same idea you have -- that it's been reviewed a dozen other places, so why review it here--and so I get very few reviews. [Will do.]

Mike Glicksohn
141 High Park Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
M6P 2S3

Dear Don,

If one spends any time as a letterhack in fandom, as I have done, one soon becomes resigned to having one's letters upstaged by Harry Warner who says much more, much better and much more frequently. But I have to admit that this time Harry has outdone himself; he's written the very loc I was composing as I read through this very enjoyable issue of DON-o-SAUR COPROLITES and had it published in the issue itself! I do think I'll fold up my typewriter and silently steal away ...

Like Harry, I spent the first few pages of the issue thinking you were the other Don Thompson. And I was even going to congratulate you on the neat selection of an appropriate title that fitted your name yet also shortened to DC, an obvious connection to your long-time interest in comics fandom. You wouldn't like to let the other fellow take over, would you, so I don't have to waste such an astute observation? Pity . . .



"BUFORD, HONEY, GUESS
WHO'S COMING TO DINNER"

The other point I planned to make was how insular I must have been getting that 20 issues of a well-written and entertaining fanzine could appear without my ever hearing about it. Again, my point is made by the illustrious Mr. W. But it is a remarkable feeling: I'm not completely unaware of Denver as a fan center, having spent many delightful hours with Angel last year, but I didn't realize it was a publishing center of such magnitude as well. If there are other writers with your ability to publish fanzines, then fandom as a whole is missing out on a lot of enjoyable reading material. [Paul Angel assures me that the reference was not to him, but to Judith Brownlee's dog Angel, and Judith confirms it. She gave the Glicksohns a ride from Albuquerque to L.A. in a very cramped car, with Angel spending hours curled up in Mike's lap.]

Your working schedule embarrasses the hell out of me. I teach just five days a week (high school though, so each day is full) but with evenings and weekends for fanac once preps and marking are done. I'm still falling further and further behind. I don't have time to read all the fanzines I get, let alone keep up with science fiction. And I haven't

published anything of my own since TORCON. Do they perchance have 28 hour days down there in the desert?

[That's all right; I don't know where Toronto is either --some-where up there in the Frozen North. And if you think Mike leaves himself vulnerable in the matter of geography, just wait till you see what follows.]

I'm probably one of the very few people in fandom who doesn't like cats. (Sandra Miesel once wrote that there were three of us, but she never said who the other two were). I don't abuse the beasts, or torture them, but given the choice I'd rather live without one any day. I've never seen the attributes so many fans claim to find in the petty, rather stupid creatures and have always meant to write an article about how the affection shown by so many fans to felines disproves completely the old "Fans Are Slans" theory. But I think I'll wait until I'm ready to gaffiate: for all their lack of any apparent positive qualities, cats do seem to generate a great deal of loyalty in a certain lesser breed of human being . . . (I don't have to type things like that, you know; I could go around playing chicken with trains or sticking my head in the mouths of lions if I found my life getting dull ...)

[So true, so true -- that parenthetical comment! One almost has to admire such sheer raw courage! Well, I guess it proves again the adage about everyone having a blind spot. Such handicaps are more to be pitied than censured, and I bear no ill will. In token of my magnanimity, I have not even shown Mike's letter to any of my cats, nor even mentioned it within their hearing. Still, other cat lovers have now read the letter, and I'm afraid I have no way of protecting Mike from them. Poor fellow! He was probably quite nice -- in his twisted, limited way.]

Here's another letter that touches on the matter of my identity. I had some qualms about printing this, but Phil insisted; he threatened to erase my tapes, or maybe even tell people what I'm really like!

Phil Rose
1637 Oneida St.
Denver, CO 80220

Hello Don!
Having just recently learned what a loc was, and having read your Nov. Coprolites, I decided this to be a propitious time to write one. Not, actually, so much for you as for your readers. Like them, I enjoy reading Coprolites and appreciate receiving it very much. But unlike many of them, I know you personally and in your response to the loc of Brett Cox you neglected to mention a couple of other things that might more exactly fix your coordinates in this space-time continuum.

To begin with, let us consider the name, Don Thompson. I cracked up at your line about not only not being the Don Thompson, but not even being the other Don Thompson. Of course it is all a matter of perspective. I personally know a fellow named Harry Cobb. He, as you can well imagine, took much gas over his name. Then there are people whose name seems so intertwined with what they are associated with that people do not believe it is their real name -- e.g. the founder of the Mythopoeic Society and editor of Mythprint and Mythlore, Mr. Glen Goodknight.

Back to the main issue. You mention you are an aspirant pro writer but neglect to add that you have had at least two stories published in prozines. [That's only two; big difference.] As to your collection of magazines and books, it is the largest I have ever seen (with the possible exception of Chuck Hanson's) and from what I am able to understand it is at least one of the largest (particularly magazines) in the area. I should also mention that you are and have been for some time a regular volunteer reader and

monitor for Recording for the Blind Inc., an organization that reads college level texts on tape for blind students. [That's where I met Phil; he is a paid RFB worker in addition to being a full time college professor (math, at Colo. Women's College) and a devoted student (and scholar) of adult fantasy.]

And finally, the thought that prompted me to write this letter. I have known collectors of books before I met Don, but not just (or primarily) SF and Fantasy books, and oftentimes they are less than eager to lend their books out. This is understandable where costs, difficulties in obtaining certain books or editions are considered, etc. As regards books, I have never known a more unselfish person than Don Thompson. I cannot count the number of books he has lent me in the past two years and the number of authors he has put me onto and hence given me much enjoyment from. From his newest to his oldest and dearest books, he has gladly loaned them to me, happy to share the pleasure that these books have brought him. I was pretty much of an ignoramus as regards SF and what little extent this situation has been alleviated over the past couple of years is primarily due to Don Thompson. I should add that I have heard similar testimony from students of his.

[Could a Rose by any other name discourse as sweetly? Phil makes much the same point my mother used to try to make when she told me: "You are generous to a fault ... If only you didn't have so many faults to be generous to ..."]

I do think you should list your favorite authors as Brett requested. It is always great fun to see what other people enjoy reading. My own favorites you know well -- C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and the Master, J.R.R. Tolkien. Also David Lindsay, Mervyn Peake, Evangeline Walton, T.H. White, Peter Beagle, E.R. Eddison and Thomas Mallory! Best always,
Phil Rose

All right. I will respond to that question, especially since Brett Cox also refuses to let me get away with my attempt to brush it aside. But first here is Brett's letter (only slightly edited, this time).

Brett Cox Don,
Box 452 Hi ho, most distinguished faned! So you're a college
Tabor City, N.C. prof and a newspaper copy editor. Wellawellawella... not
28463 bad. I wouldn't mind doing something like that, only maybe
 hopefully possibly somewhere like the College of the Virgin
Islands, all right! Nice warm weather!

I forgive you for editing my loc; I went through the same bummer yesterday when I got my copy of DIEHARD 4 from William Rupp (4018 Marlesta Dr., San Diego, Cal. 92111) with an edited loc o' mine in it. (Loc-o'-mine, sweet loc-o'-mine...) But just because I forgive you doesn't mean I approve. Always run the locs whole if possible. I've gotten letters from Doug Leingang and Tony Cvetko and Sheryl Birkhead and I know that even their off-the-subject ramblings are worthy of print. Even if they do talk about cats. (I'm a dog man myself). [And you saw what happened to poor old Mike Glicksohn!]

However, I am sore afraid that you contracidt yourself when you praise Tony for reading the prozines and then reply to my question as to your own sf tastes by saying, "Hell, who has time to read sf?" Practice what you preach, suh! If you don't read sf now, what did you like when you did read it? If you're another of those anti-"ncw wave" people I'm gonna be terribly disappointed. Bug Jack Barron WAS TOO a great book! (So was Starship Troopers. Ain't nobody gonna accuse me of factionalism!)

You're a writer? Good! So am I. Have you sold anything? [Not lately.] I haven't. I have gotten a whole lot of rejection slips from New Worlds, F&SF, Haunt of Horror, and Penthouse, among others --I do get around. The

best reply I've gotten yet has been an encouraging letter from Charles Platt, pointing out the good points as well as the mistakes.

I think you were a bit rough on Wertham. While he richly deserves stomping for his ugly, self-righteous views concerning comics (they never did me any harm, Neither did violence on TV), I don't think he's out to destroy fandom or anything. He likes us--what's wrong with that? And really--how many people are going to spend ten bucks on his book? How many libraries will purchase copies? About that many (rapidly diminishing space between thumb and forefinger). So don't worry--fandom is safe from the Outside.

. . . [portion edited] . . .

Oh yeah, this is a loc to your zine, isn't it? Well...I liked your fanzine reviews. They were concise and to the point, and gave the reader a good idea what the zine in question was like. Keep this up.

Your con report was good as con reports go. I never care too much for them for the nasty reason that I've never been to a con, and therefore have no real idea of what the writer is talking about. (There's an off-chance that I might get to Discon in '74--a mere 400 miles from here--but at this point in time, as they say, it's a very off-chance indeed.

That's about all for now, I guess. Keep sending COPROLITES. Das vedanya. Honk for Impeachment, Brett

The reverse side of Brett's letter contains the enormous letters:

H O N K !

All right, now: about my favorite authors... Well, wait. First, about writing; the only advice I can give you, Brett, is to read Robert Heinlein's editorial in the January Analog!

Now? Now. To begin with, I acknowledge J.R.R. Tolkien as The Master. I don't know of anyone who has been able to combine writing skill with imagination any more powerfully and effectively. I am even now in the process of giving Lord of the Rings a commemorative re-reading as I promised myself I would when I learned of Tolkien's death. Among the other authors that Phil mentioned, the ones I respond to most positively are David Lindsay (Voyage to Arcturus is one of the most baffling yet compelling things I've ever read -- and I've since read commentaries on it (particularly Colin Wilson's) that make it less baffling; well, and Phil himself wrote an excellent review of it for Fantasiae which helped clarify it for me); C.S. Lewis (but all I really know of Lewis is the Ransom trilogy; I am a stranger in Narnia); Evangeline Walton, T. H. White, and Peter Beagle. And of those last three, particularly Peter Beagle, and particularly The Last Unicorn. That one comes very close to weaving the same sort of magic spell as LOTR.

But that's just a very skimpy beginning of any list I might draw up of favorite writers. The list just goes on and on, and it covers the entire spectrum of literary styles and modes and categories. Some of the writers on the list aren't generally thought of as being SF or fantasy writers at all (Talbot Mundy, for instance; Tros of Samothrace is very high on my list of all time favorites, but I don't know how to classify it except as historical adventure).

There was a time, seven or eight years ago, when it was part of my job (as book review editor for the RMN) to try to keep up with developments in the main stream of contemporary fiction, and I tried to read as many of the new novels by Mailer, Roth, Nabakov, James Jones, Wright Morris--Jesus! even Jacqueline Susann!-- as I could. But at the same time, almost surreptitiously, I was reading the science fiction magazines and some of the paperbacks. And I was forced to the conclusion (granted that I was already predisposed in that direction by long-standing personal tastes) that the stuff being published in Analog, for instance, or F&SF, or even in the Ace Doubles, was

one hell of a lot more entertaining than the main stream stuff. (And, yes, I'll willingly accept the assertion, should anyone care to make it, that SF was more entertaining because it was more important. On the crucial levels, science fiction was able to deal with issues of far greater import and consequence than any main stream form of writing can. I don't want to labor that point; I assume that most science fiction readers would agree with it. What I started out to say was that I seldom read anything from the main stream now, and hardly any of the main stream writers whose works I was so familiar with a few years ago have a place on my list of favorites. One exception that pops immediately to mind is Vladimir Nabokov; I do admire, and thoroughly, his word mastery! I used to think highly of Norman Mailer, and I still think he comes as close as anyone ever has to giving journalistic accounts universal significance. But I haven't had any strong desire to read Mailer for quite some time now.

On the other hand, I can pick up Bob Silverberg's Up the Line, to take an example almost at random, read a few sentences on the first page, and be almost literally pulled into the book. Not that I consider Up the Line a terribly important or significant book, but it was an awfully lot of fun, and certainly Silverberg must be considered an important writer. He's on my list of favorites, but then so is Fredric Brown, who never projected any sense of considering himself important.

Here's another start on a list of my favorite writers: (In alphabetical order, not by preference; I'm trying to make it a little easier on myself):

Poul Anderson, Isaac Asimov, James Blish, Edgar Rice Burroughs, John Brunner, John Boyd, Robert Bloch, Arthur C. Clarke, D. G. Compton, Edmund Cooper, Sam Delany, Philip Jose Farmer (high, very high!), Robert Heinlein, R. A. Lafferty, Henry Kuttner, Fritz Leiber, Anne McCaffrey, Michael Moorcock, Barry Malzberg, Frederik Pohl, Clifford Simak, Cordwainer Smith, Clark Ashton Smith, Bob Shaw, Robert Sheckley, Theodore Sturgeon (extremely high), Olaf Stapledon, Jack Vance, Kurt Vonnegut, Stanley G. Weinbaum, Leonard Wibberly, Philip Wylie, John Wyndham and Roger Zelazny.

And here are a few that I missed because I was glancing over at the SF section and was neglecting fantasy:

James Branch Cabell, John Collier, L. Sprague de Camp, Lord Dunsany, Robert E. Howard, H. P. Lovecraft, and George Sylvester Viereck & Paul Eldridge.

But bear in mind that this is just a start. Also that it is today's list. Yesterday's would have been different, and certainly tomorrow's will be different. My interpretations are always subject to change. (For example, Gail Barton has just informed me that Tros of Samothrace is too fantasy because it sure as hell isn't historical. I won't argue).

But now let's move on. Obviously this is going to be a 20 page zine. Honestly, I didn't know that when I started, else I never would have started. But I've still got a stack of letters here, and I just can't print them all. But I damn well insist on printing at least parts of some of them. As follows:

Jackie Franke	... I've read several MHC reports, all glowing, all re-
Box 51-A RR 2	marking on the surprise visit of the Dentons. They must
Beecher, IL 60401	be a terrific couple to relate to -- I've already seen
	what ghodd people Frank is in print so don't find it too
	surprising that he's equally nice in person. Hope someday to get a chance to
	view this marvel in person. [You will not be disappointed].

Especially appreciated in your report was your comments about parties and drinking. I'm a con-nut too, a party-lover of the first water! It was a trait entirely unsuspected in myself until contact with fandom but well recognized by now. A kid can look forward to Christmas with no more anticipation than I do to a con or a party. Fandom can't schedule enough -- or within our driving limits actually -- to sate my appetite. It's surprising, considering the with-

drawn antisocial person I am in mundane situations. But boy! do I ever soak up the sauce! In fact I got so smashed at my first big con, Midwestcon in 1970, that I was all set to drop fanac out of sheer embarrassment! I still haven't quite decided if it was fortunate or not that the few fans I mentioned it to talked me out of it. I get smashed too often at cons and I still get embarrassed about it (though certainly not to the same degree) *oh well.* The problem is, or I hope and suspect so, that I get a contact high too--combined with a few drinks and -- blowie! There goes half the party! I apparently have a fine time, but heck! a good deal of the fun at a party is remembering the conversation and people and feel of the whole thing the next day. It's such a waste when you can't recall the entire evening! There have been times when I've contemplated going through a con weekend without drinking, but it's been on a mild "what-if" level, not with serious intentions at all. Reading the similarities in your experience led me to consider dropping the alcohol with new insight. It's seldom that a fanzine perform a service . . .

I hate myself for cutting Jackie's letter! She says many other very nice and very interesting things later, but I'm running out of room. And anyway I want to mention that Jackie sent me Issues 2 and 3 of DILEMMA, a very . . . well, I've used the word before, but nice is what it is . . . fanzine that she publishes. It's essentially a letterzine, but with intelligent and endearing editorial commentary. For instance, I wish I had read this before I wrote what I did about Henry Bitman's BREAKTHROUGH:

"...I believe each fanned should receive some words of encouragement. He's shown the prime requisite, INTEREST, by publishing at all and proven that he deserves consideration in so doing...To me, slurring the fanned's first effort is equivalent to insulting a couple's firstborn infant..."

That's beautiful. DILEMMA radiates that sort of warmth, friendliness, and cheerfulness. Jackie wants to keep the circulation small, so she's asking other faneds not to review it. What I just said about it is not a review -- just a casual compliment. Okay?

PERSONAL NOTE TO ROSE HOGUE (and to anyone else who was frustrated by my non-review of DENFEN DROPPINGS, particularly by the fact that I neglected to say anything about price or where to order from). Well, there's nothing said in the zine about price, but I seem to recall that it was being offered at MileHiCon for 50¢, but probably a quarter or maybe even just a polite request could get you a copy. Order either from:

Fred B. Goldstein
1428 Winona Court
Denver, CO 80204

OR Al Ellis
1025 Sherman St. Apt. 212
Denver, CO 80203

PERSONAL NOTE TO DOROTHY JONES, 6101 Euclid Ave, Bakersfield, CA 93308

Thank you, both for the very kind things you say about DC and for the check. You are my FIRST, and so far only paid subscriber! Congratulations!

I've gotten two letters from Sp4 Bruce D. Arthurs, and I do not want him to feel that I'm ignoring him, because I'm not. I think I'll sort of meld excerpts from both letters:

Sp4 Bruce D. Arthurs	...Yes, I've gotten the impression of society falling
527-98-3103	apart, too. I have seriously considered the possibility
57th Trans Co	of moving to Australia after I get out in 1975. I <u>hope</u>
Fort Lee, VA 23801	that things will get better...but I'm not optimistic
	about it.

...Yeh, I'd like to see Harry Warner work on the succeeding volumes of All Our Yesterdays, too. Especially the one on the 1970's. Why? To see if my name gets mentioned anywhere, of course. Why else?

About electrostencils: I always remove the backing sheet before gluing in the electro! I've tried leaving it on while gluing, and when I pull it off afterwards, the electro always pulls and gets wrinkled. I don't see how you could do it, and not get screwed up. [So I tried it Bruce's way -- and the electro pulls and gets wrinkled without that backing sheet to keep it straight. I don't see how he can do it that way and not get screwed up.]

...Pretty good zine. Thought the cover was gross. [This was No. 25 he's referring to, I believe: Russ Parkhurst's; surely not Sheryl Birkhead's of No. 26].

...You ramble a bit much, I think.

[Oh. You noticed that, huh. Well, I was afraid somebody would].

Bruce also has some very interesting and well-informed things to say about the situation inside the military structure, both at home and abroad, but ... No room! No room!

I also received letters from: Ann Chamberlain, who has cats and is sensitive to the rise of mass-consciousness level; Kevin Williams, who complains that in my review of THE ANYTHING THING, I neglected to insult his article, "The Amazing Adventures of David 'Looky' Thar and His Friend from Mars, Bigdude Jones:" it was pretty bad, all right, but still not as bad as "On Top of Old Fandom."

Also, arriving just today, there was a letter from Tony Cvetko, who didn't in the least mind my describing DIEHARD as a crudzine (because I liked it and said so), and he also wants to know how I got away with mailing a 16-page zine (No. 25) first class for only 8 cents; and the answer is that when you don't know you can't do something, it's easy ... sometimes.

And finally, there was another lovely letter from Sheryl Birkhead, and a card from Mike Blake, who expresses an interest in joining D'APA. (I'll talk to you in COPROLITES, Mike).

ART CREDITS: Cover by Kaiser (Who?? When I find out I'll let you know; I picked it up from the sketch table at MileHiCon. Gail Barton: P. 5; Russell Parkhurst, pp. 3,4,11; Pete Chronis, P. 14.

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Jackie Franke
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