

ERG

37

JANUARY 1972



THIS IS ERG 37

Now in its 13th year.

ERG is printed, produced and perpetrated by Terry Jeeves from the Stately Crumbling Jeeves' mansion, set like a jewel on the mud-flats of the Yorkshire Kingdom..which is rather like a kingdom.

but if you want to write, the Post Office prefers....

Terry Jeeves,
230 Bannerdale Rd.,
Sheffield S11 9PB

There are those among you who are not of the clan of OMMA....i.e. who do not subscribe to the Off Trails Magazine Publishers Association.

Such people, benighted though they are, have yet seen the light and wish to obtain further ERG supplies. Tis simple, send 6p for the next, or 30p for the next four issues, and lo and behold, ERG will thump merrily (or otherwise) through your mailbox at more or less regular intervals.

Be ye an American fan; then you can choose thy method...either send 20¢ per copy (five for a buck) to Leroy B Haugrud, of 5420 Queen Ave. South, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 55410, USA, or else shoot me any s-f magazines (bar Analog) in good condition. One prozine gets you two issues, and pro rata.

WANTED....by the editor.

GALAXY...Nov.69 March,1970 Dec,1970. cash or trade.

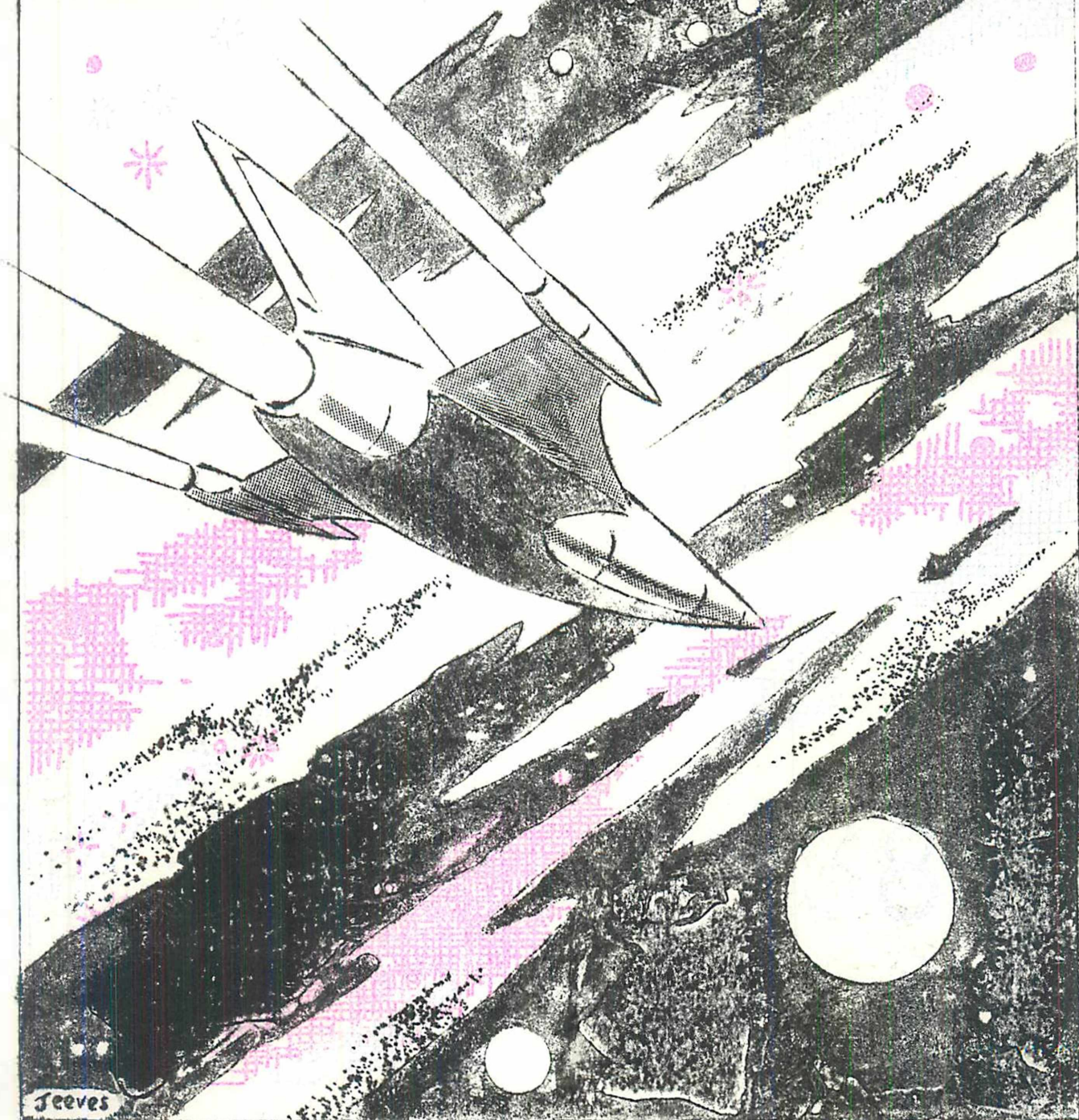
Also, Pogo pocket books.

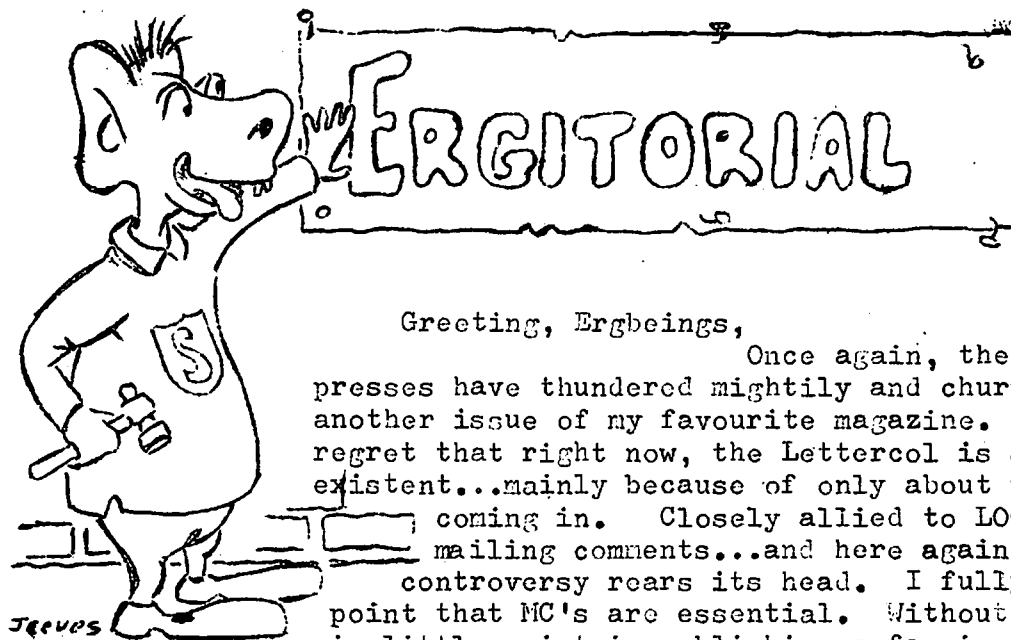
URGENT REQUIREMENT...Can any reader let me have the address of a reliable magazine subscription agency ??? Years ago, I used the 'Frederic Graham' Co., but cannot find their current address. Ken Slater can't help, as he only does mainstream s-f..and I want some non spf material..Popular Mechanics etc. So if anyone can help, mention it in your LOC...don't assume someone else has come through..you may be the only one to know such an agency... HELP.

ERG 37.....January 1972

ALSO WANTED... Tom Reamy's address (Trumpet editor) I want to get my unpublished cartoon strip...'SUPERSOGGY' for use elsewhere. Can anyone help?

HERG





Greeting, Ergbeings,

Once again, the mighty ERG presses have thundered mightily and churned out yet another issue of my favourite magazine. However, I regret that right now, the Lettercol is almost non-existent...mainly because of only about two letters coming in. Closely allied to LOC's are the mailing comments...and here again, I see that controversy rears its head. I fully support the point that MC's are essential. Without them, there is little point in publishing a fanzine. Should we sweat and labour, only to mail our zines into a vacuum? If so, why not just dump them in a dustbin and save postage...or not produce them at all, and thus save time, money and energy?. For the last few issues of ERG, I have tried to raise the standard as high as spare time industry permits me. The result? A handful of LOC's from outside OMPA, and from within...?? I think at a rough check, I got eight sentences of comment. Now friends, surely one aim of a faned is to communicate, and this is a two way process. If for some reason one side goes missing, we are in the position of a man yelling from a hilltop. Putting out much effort to little return. Can this be why OMPA is in the rough?

Another energy wasting source, was a recent all night tussle with the M.1 motorway and two airports...Luton, and East Midlands. Val and Sandy were due back from Austria, and drove the 130 miles down to Luton to pick them up at the airport. On arrival, the airport was fogged in, and I was told that their kite was being diverted to East Midlands. Back in the car, and eighty miles back up the M.1, finally getting there at eight p.m. After waiting an hour, I was told that their plane had not yet left England to go to Austria to pick 'em up, so there would be an eight hour delay. So I got my head down in the car for a nap. Around 1 am, I went to check on what was happening, and was told the aircraft would be landing at Luton after all, at 3.a.m. Back in the car, eighty miles down the M.1. to find Luton still fogged in. An obliging hostess informed me that flight 497 would be diverted to East Midlands...so another eighty miles back up the motorway. After a two hour wait at the barrier (The speakers at both airports were incomprehensible) Val and Sandy finally came through the barrier... at 7 am, 12 hours late. Wouldn't it be nice if only the ground staff could be as efficient and helpful as we normally find in other walks of life?

Our faithful Cortina suffered a further indignity at the beginning of October. On the way home from picking Sandy up from her music lesson, I halted at a pedestrian crossing to let an old lady (bag) across, and barely had she reached the front of the car, then there was a violent thump in the rear, and I was shoved forward on to the crossing, narrowly missing the aofresaid bag. And why you may ask, do I call her a bag? Because when I jumped out of the car and asked her to be a witness, she said, "Mad drivers, It's none of my business" and scurried off into the wild blue yoner. However, the other bloke's company paid up, but for five long weeks, we were carless whilst a dozy garage dithered over the repairs.

I watched another episode of UFO the other Saturday, and once again, was baffled. Right away, let me say that the model work and special effects are superb. No wonder they took that cruddy old Star Trek off in America if UFO quality is around. Incidentally, does anyone know how they work the shot where a rocket plane takes off from the sea. Not only does it look like a real full size plane, but the normal give away is absent...the water doesn't ruin the scale effect. Bow waves, spray and splashes are all realistic... How ??? Nevertheless, I'm baffled. The programme timing puts it right in the children's slot...Saturday from five until six. Yet the story line makes absolutely NO concessions to that age level. So far I have only seen 2½ programmes as tea-time telly is one of my pet hates..BUT UFO could easily get my devoted telly watching were it at a better time. It is a far better programme than Star Trek...so now heave your brick bats.

Since writing the first part of this Ergitorial, my plea for letters has been answered before it appeared. Brian Robinson has come through with one of his marathon..fanzine-size LOC's, so if there is enough material for a lettercol..we shall have one.

Rob Bennett..Ghood man that he is, came across with the piece in this issue on the life of a comics dealer in a far-flung corner of our Empire...this is actually a reprint from a fanzine..the name of which Ron kindly supplied, and which I inadvertently lost. So my thanks and apologies to all concerned.

Speaking of 'Civil Rights' and the Belfast bastards, is there anybody around who can twist their sophistry to whitewash the latest crop of bombings in the troubled Isle? No doubt it is only right for the poor hounded IRA to plant bombs on pub doorsteps, or in Post Offices and other buildings, after all, they are only expressing themselves in their glorious fight for freedom. Nuts! I don't know what the answer is, but I'd advocate shooting every rioter (yes Mabel, including those darling kiddy winkies whose parents ought to have more sense) and offering £3,000 to every IRA sympathiser who wanted to move his home south of the border. Howl 'reactionary', 'Fascist' and other stupid epithets if you like...but how would YOU like a bomb-up your hooter while sitting quaffing your ale? It is very pretty to spout stupid theories about 'Freedom'...but true freedom demands self discipline. Not much of that is apparent among the yobbos.

Meanwhile, Bess twitches to all of you. Terry.



LORD OF HIS DOMAIN

by

Ron Bennett

As a science fiction and comics dealer I'm often asked to give authoritative verification of supposition, legend and doubt. And all too often I'm made painfully aware of the narrow limits of my own knowledge. I can, however, write with authority, without any fear of contradiction, on one particular aspect of comic collecting; the comic dealing in Singapore.

My interest in comic dealing began when I visited a second hand bookshop and noticed a pile of old comics. In those days I didn't know a Sad Sack from a Famous Funnies but spent a few moments rippling through the pile looking for any title such as Tom & Jerry which might interest my son. No luck, but I did catch sight of a few titles from the Fawcett stable of which I hadn't heard -- not surprisingly! -- since my own comic reading days a quarter of a century earlier when I had been as au fait with the field as any Ditko fan of today.

After some days of considering the situation I returned to the shop and bought up all the old titles I could find. I spent the remainder of the day visiting every bookshop and roadside bookstall on the island, twenty six in all, scattered over an area the size of the Isle of Wight. I filled my car with comics and after cataloguing them, no mean task, I was in business. I had some unique ideas on comic values in those days, listing a 1943 Blondie at 10/- and a 1947 Captain America at half that price.

The Singapore dealers had themselves an interesting method of pricing their comics. Virtually all comics from a 1950 Batman in good condition to a month old Sgt. Fury which was falling to pieces, were exactly the same price. Slightly higher priced were the newer, more popular Marvel range of superheroes, which, incidentally, were banned in the Republic the following year. Within a very short time of my taking an intensive interest, comic prices began to soar. It appeared that there was an Englishman on the island who was crazy enough to pay the increased prices...and unlike the majority of customers, he did not follow the tradition of bargaining for the comics he bought but had even been known to amaze storekeepers with a cheery, "Keep the change!"

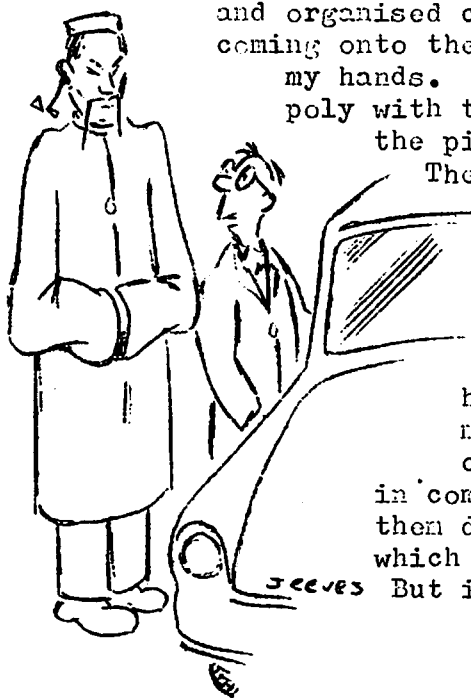
It soon became evident that the majority of the more important dealers were buying their supplies of old comics from the same single source and a little stringent footwork put me in contact with their supplier, a Chinese from the Katong district, who soon realised that he was sitting on a steady source of income. We quickly came to a mutually beneficial arrangement. I would call in every two or three weeks and he would give me first refusal on any old comics he had managed to obtain in the interim, and of course I would pay an inflated price for anything I purchased.

I never did discover his sources. Nor those of some of the dealers, for of course I continued to look elsewhere, too. Two or three months would sometimes drift by without my being able to obtain comics more than a year or two old and I would tell myself that I had finally denuded the island (as I really had done in the science fiction field within a few months of arriving), and then, unexpectedly, a dealer would unearth twenty, thirty or forty golden age comics.

One dealer telephoned me without warning. "You want old comics," he said, "I have." Two statements of fact. "What are they?" I asked. "You come see," he said, "customer bring in. You want, you pay, I save." I agreed to go along and see them and said that I would pay a high price for any I bought. In the Orient one makes a purchase according to a set of carefully laid-down but never mentioned rules and one does not, at such a juncture, rush out excitedly to examine the wares. One has to show disinterest. I managed to show disinterest for an entire twenty-four hours and then rushed out excitedly. "I just happened to be passing," I told the shopkeeper, "so I thought that I might as well call in." That's the way to play the game. He wasn't impressed. "I see if I still have em" he said with his experienced brand of one-upmanship.

In a considerably short time I had the monopoly of the entire island, as far as being the middleman between Singapore and organised comic fandom, and estimated that any comic coming onto the market stood a 99% chance of passing into my hands. I also tried to establish a similar monopoly with the comics circulating in Malaya, but there the pickings were erratic, to say the least.

There are two shops in Johore Bahru which deal virtually entirely in Charlton romance titles. Malacca boasts the Riverside Book Shop whose few comics are offered at prices you wouldn't wish on a rival collector. Kuala Lumpur, the Federation's capital, must be able to claim the highest incidence of bookshops per square mile in the entire world, making the tourist's conception of Charing Cross Road as bustling in comparison as the Gobi desert. And not one of them deals in comics. In fact, I found only one which deals in anything other than Malay textbooks. But if you go down to Tek Soong street in Penang



The most amazing incident to befall a comics dealer occurred during the latter part of my Singapore tour. I had been visiting my Singapore friend one evening and had parked down a darkened side street. I had returned to my car and was about to insert my key in the lock when a voice in the darkness behind me said, "Excuse me, you are looking for old comics ?" I turned round to find facing me the tallest Chinese imaginable. He was a double for the Japanese wrestler in the old Cagney film Blood On The Sun. I admitted that I was interested and he told me that he had a large pile of pre-code horror comics for disposal. He verified this by naming some of the titles. "Come to my house and see them", he invited. He piled them up on the table before me and as I examined them he kept pulling out different comics and putting them to one side. "This one I have not read...this one I keep for now," and so on. The pile began to dwindle alarmingly, forcing my hand. "How much do you want for them ?" I asked. He named a figure roughly twice as much as I'd estimated his ceiling price. I gasped, "Ah", he said, "I know you will pay this price. I have calculated that these comics are worth this price to you." "How on earth did you do that ?", I asked. He said, "Because I have followed you in different shops and know how much you have willingly paid for comics very much like these !" Who could quibble with enterprise like that ! I whipped round to a nearby store where Elizabeth was shopping for a new dress. "The money I gave you for the dress," I gasped, "Where is it ?" The dress had to wait.

I lie awake at night thinking about caches like that one. If, in Singapore and Penang, golden age comics can come to light with astonishing regularity and abundance, what can one find hidden away nearer to home? Just think....that little old lady living at the corner of the next street might have, in her attic.....?

It isn't insomnia which keeps me awake at night !

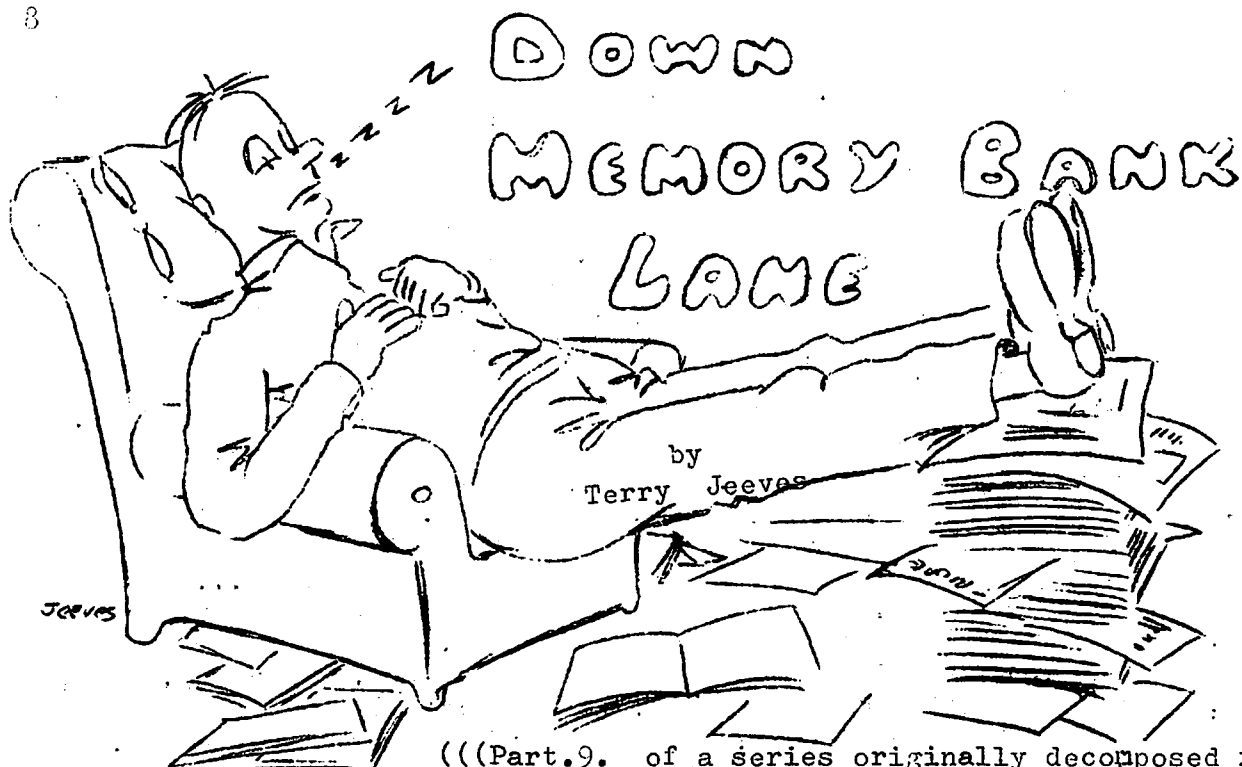
$$-C-O-C-O-O-O-$$

EDITORIAL NOTE. This article by Ron was reprinted from a fanzine whose name Ron couldn't remember. My apologies to them for lack of more positive credit. My thanks to Ron, and if YOU want to buy s-f mags, or comics, contact Ron at :-

R.M.BENNETT,
British School,
S.H.A.P.E.

B.F.P.O. 26

[illegible]



((Part.9. of a series originally decomposed for Lynn Hickman's, PULP ERA, and reprinted herein with his blessing)))

EDUCATION MADE EASY

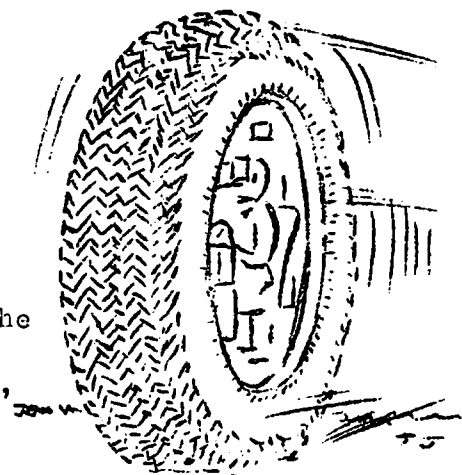
In the early days of the pulps, one of their declared intentions was to educate the masses. Whether they succeeded, and whether the masses wanted educating in the first place, are two other questions. Nevertheless, this self-imposed educational programme, though secondary to bringing in the lolly, formed an integral part of the scene.

Both Gernsback, (in WONDER) and O'Conor Sloane (in AMAZING) were fond of using their editorial pages as forums in which to air their knowledge. Hugo tending to be more sensational with his ideas as to the future trends in science and mechanics. Whatever did become of those mid-ocean platforms to aid trans-Atlantic flights, or the 'Dynasphere', that huge one wheel vehicle wherein the driver and motor were housed within the hub, and steering was via periscope ? O'Conor Sloane on the other hand preferred to parade his classical and historical expertise - or was it gleaned from a handy stack of reference books ? He would regale us with such fascinating topics as, 'The History of Measurement', or, 'Astrology'. Whatever the topic, the final paragraph was usually devoted to a conservative prophecy, and the whole shebang is liberally sprinkled with references. In a 1936 editorial, we had such gems as :- "In the words of Herodotus...", "This is a sort of reductio ad absurdum...", "A swart, sour visaged maid, as Coleridge might lend us his words". As for science, that comes in as, "a famous psychologist", and even more to the scientific point, "Applying Doppler's principle...". He rounds off after kicking the hell out of Astrology and takes a side swipe at dowsing to the effect that a hazel twig won't perform when held over a bucket of water. So in one little package you learn all sorts of interesting guff about Herodotus (Who he ?), the Oracle at Delphi, a spot of poetry, a mention

of Doppler, and for good measure, the fallacies of water divining and astrology.

Astounding managed to avoid such potted science lessons, since such editorial pages as could be squeezed into the magazine were either devoted to telling the readers how good they (and the magazine) were, or else exhorting them to go out and convert more readers.

The science lessons continued in the stories. Astounding having the (pseudo)science more or less incidental to the thud and blunder, but in the lettercolumn 'Brass Tacks' the argument waxed furious and even led to its temporary abandonment in favour of 'Science Discussions'. In Amazing and Wonder, the fiction was heavily laced with pedantic footnotes intended to clue the reader up as to what it was all about..... I misquote from a non-existent yarn of that era.



"A biting electric spark shot from the tip of the mpttryx, momentarily lighting the hawknosed face of the elderly Dr. foofniggle as he bent over the controls. "Feathered fornication !""he exclaimed, starting back."

* Doctor foofniggle is of course referring to the recent investigations by Slapp and Tikkul into the nocturnal activities of certain British birds. Ed.

All this of course meant that the science content was TRUE, and could be verified by a quick rush to your friendly down-town library. By some hefty swotting you could emulate the ICS ads by getting ahead in your job and marrying the bosses daughter.

Another favourite educational device was to allow one character - usually the hero - to display abysmal ignorance over the operation of the tri-phase, monophylchrome vacillator. When this happened, the bearded scientist (they were all bearded, it was a sort of identification badge) would halt the action for two or three pages (at a cent a word) to explain it all in words of one syllable; a technique recently re-discovered by Mack Reynolds.

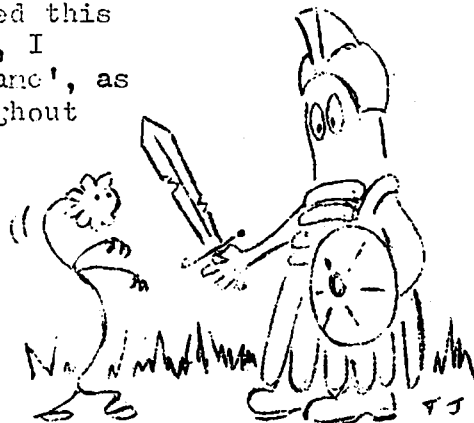
Then of course, there was the 'Test Your Science' quiz as found in both Wonder and Amazing. These involved a dozen or so questions based on the stories in that issue. In Wonder, the answers were neatly packaged in a page filler somewhere, but with Amazing, you had to work your way through college. Their system went like this :-

Q. "Which terrestrial plant is a prolific source of Slobbovakkian Iodide ? "

They then told you which story to read in order to find the answer, and left the rest up to you. By the time you had read right through, 'The Creeping Green Peril of Pongtutti', not only were you more confused than ever, but you also had a deep seated mistrust of chlorophyll, the Venus fly-trap, and any weed over six inches in height.

In case you were too highbrow to read the stories, 'straight' science articles were also used from time to time. In 1933, Asf ran a couple of 'science Forums' purporting to explain current scientific theories, but since this vanished after only two issues, it was pretty obvious that there wasn't much science which needed explaining. It was 1936 before Astounding again began to run science articles. Incidentally, one favourite series of articles of these (and subsequent) days was the trip round the Solar System. Few authors could resist the temptation to grab the nearest encyclopaedia and churn out the usual nine articles, one for each planet. Clever writers could even squeeze in a few extra by including the Sun, the Asteroid Belt, and Halley's Comet. No lesser person than JWC Jr. himself tackled this one for Asf, but as an ever recurring topic, I nominate it for the 'Pot Boiler's Hall of Fame', as it has appeared in unpteen variations throughout the years.

Another source of sugar-coated science were the Posi and Nega stories of J.W.Skidmore. Appearing in Amazing, they concerned the doings of two subatomic particles. Their adventures hinged on the reactions taking place in the molecules of which they formed a part, and in case you missed the pitch, Posi was always there to flaunt his masculine superiority by explaining everything to Nega, his female companion. In later years, TWS featured the 'Tubby' stories. The hero, a self-taught, popular science addict, invariably fell asleep during lectures and then experienced fantastic dreams inspired by the topic. Asf had no parallel to these 'science' stories...thank Ghu, since the story level was fit only for 'Chick's Own'. However, Campbell would often shovel large gobs of elementary science into his Seaton and Crane stories before extrapolating the principle way out of sight.



'... a deep distrust of woods'

By the mid thirties, Asf was the unchallenged master in the field. Both Wonder and Amazing having degenerated into heaps of long-winded, dusty dull stories, where even the science bored one to tears. However, in 1936, Wonder was taken over by Thrilling Publications, and became THRILLING Wonder Stories...an event accompanied by a high pitched whirring noise as Jules Verne rotated in his grave. The stories per issue increased, their style less pedantic, and so action-packed that they creaked at the seams. Illustrations improved in number and quality, although Marchioni produced some ghastly work. A department of science questions and answers supplemented the usual quiz, and the overall level became far more juvenile, but what really set the fans on their ears was the appearance of the cartoon strip, ZARNAK, by Max Flaisted. The science was non existent, drawings poor and the story level suitable only for morons...Zarnak sank without a trace a few months later.

I had hardly recovered from the metamorphosis of TWS, when Ziff-Davis took over Amazing and gave it a shot in the arm. A mixture much the same as with TWS, but with better art-work, plus a facover for

good measure. However, despite the quizzes and a department of questions and answers, the science content of the stories fell lower and lower as the 'popular adventure' element crept in. The females in the illos developed both cleavage and shapely legs; and in the stories they often displayed 'brief flashes of smoothly curving limbs'. Sex was starting to rear

In contrast to all this, Asf under Campbell's able handling now held and carried the educational torch, with at least one article in every issue. The story content was also far above the level of the other magazines in the field.

Looking back, it is obvious that with all this sugar-coated science floating around, I should have rapidly become a sort of pocket Einstein. The trouble was, that apart from my innate laziness, I had little or no interest in the vast majority of information offered.... biology, zoology, archaeology, geology, all bored me to tears. I had a liking for mathematics and physics, but sad to say, most of the material in this line was way over my head.

Nevertheless, the stories, quizzes and articles, while probably not of any great scientific value directly, were certainly a stimulus to make one read the popular technical and scientific books which were to be found. They gave some idea as to which lectures and courses to attend, and even which lessons at school were likely to be worth staying awake for. In this direction at least, I feel that the s-f magazines have fulfilled some sort of educational function. Had I not met frequent references to Einstein, I would never have ploughed through sundry books in an effort to find out what his theory was all about...or what the Lorentz-Fitzgerald contraction theory might be...or the Michelson-Morley ether drift and light speed experiments were all about. The list is endless, but the point short. The s-f magazines gave me a heading. I wonder how many minds, more able than mine, who are now the scientists of today, were given their first interests in their chosen fields by an early exposure to the 'trashy pulps'? 'As the twig is bent, so grows the tree', may well be the final epitaph of the old style s-f before it finally flounders through a moronic morass of mindless muttering to a haven in the mainstream of general literature.

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EUROCON 1 If you're interested in the EUROCON, it will be held in TRIESTE in JULY 1972. There is already a membership with a list of countries as long as your arm, so if you would like to join them, drop a line to Jean Muggoch, 99 Saling Village, LONDON W.5.

TRANSIT is a new German science-fiction magazine according to the hand out. (I presume that doesn't mean a kingsize fansine) and the editors want the copyrights of old s-f short stories, plus new stories from well-known authors. 'Free contributors' are wanted, which I again presume to mean you won't get paid. Nevertheless, if you have a yen to get into print, write to Gilbert Kapkowski, 5868 Lotmathe, Unterfeldstr.3 West Germany.

and of course, when writing to any address...please mention ERG

Who's on Fandom

If you would like to appear in this section, just mail in the relevant details.

JAMES GODDARD. Woodlands Lodge, Woodlands, Southampton. Age 24
Height 6'1" Occupation- works in optics. Interested
in still photography, walking; collectiong fine editions of books
(Folio Society); modern history; psychology & philosophy. Publishes
CYPHER (Qtly.) Currently preparing 2nd edition of J.G.Ballard
bibliography. Member BSFA, BASRA, National Book League

LISA CONESA 54 Manley Rd., Whalley Range, Manchester M16 8HP. Over 21,
Member of;- BSFA, DWFA, Tolkein Soc. Orbiter, and Far and
Wide Taping Soc. Interested in music, classicl, and electronic. Art,
(abstract); Poetry and Chess (Are you there Ron Bennett ?)

JEAN LINARD 24 Rue Petit, 70-Vesoul, France. Age, 20-45 Occupation,
Civil Servant. Hobbies, Music (guitar in particular),
poetry, reading, writing and correspondence (write if you're interested)
Pogofan, Tape-recording. Former Fapan and fan pubber.

Gian Paolo COSSATO Cannaregio 3825, Calle Fontana, 30121 Venezia, Italy.
Age 29, Occupation, Hotel administration, and
occasional translator. Literary agent. Co-founder of Italian s-f club,
CCSF. Co-pubber of CCSF Notiziario (Italian newszine) Public relations
manager for Eurocon.1. Member BSFA. Hobbies, stamps (Astronautical);
photography, table tennis, s-f books and fanzines..reading and collecting.

NICHOLAS JOH. SHEARS (Nick) 52 Garden Way, Northcliff Ext.4.
Johannesburg, South Africa (Ph. Johannesburg 46-2368
Publishes 'EN TROPION', fiction, poetry and articles in various zines;
syndicated column on SA fandom, SFSA member. Emigrated from UK in 1966.
Interests include swimming, chess, drama, public speaking, sex, music,
metaphysics and music

GEORGE W. LAKING Age 24, of 37605 Lakeville, Mt. Clemens, Mi. 48043,
U.S.A. or direct to :- JV3 G.Laking, B983015, Box.2
NAVSTA ROTA. FPO NY N.Y. 09540 (At least that's how I decypher it)
Member of Wayne State University S-F Club. Occupation, newspaper
reporter. Fan, writer of s-f and fantasy, likes meeting fans...and
would also like fanzines and letters.

JERRY W LAPIDUS Age 22 54 Clearview Drive, Pittsford, New York, USA 14534
Occupation, Dramatist (actor/director). Member, APA-45,
Slanapa, The Cult, TAPS. Publishes, 'Tomorrow and...', 'The Legal Rules'
Hobbies, reading, music, stamps, photography

LONG, SAM 49 Park Close, Oxford OX2 8NP. Age, 26. Occup. Air Force Officer,
weather forecaster. Member, OMPA. Hobbies, reading, cycling,
writing, fandom, spelunking, music &c. Publishes, Qwertyuiop, Csteen
University Review. Alet. address - Box 401, APO. N.Y. 09378

LETTERS

// With editorial comments
marked thus //

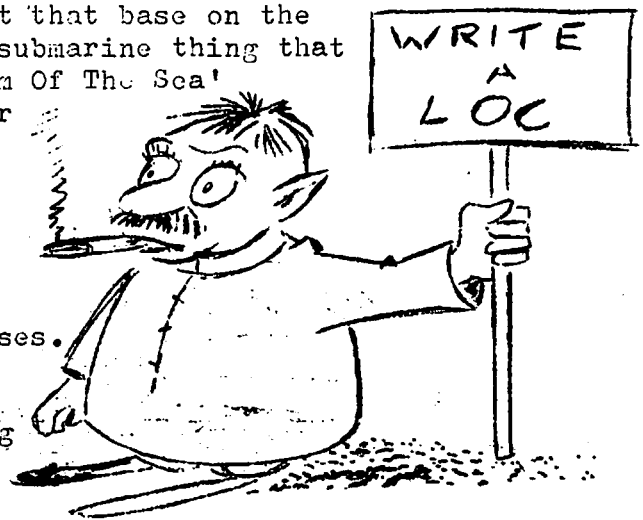
This time, lovely Lisa kicks off.

LISA CONESA "Ah, at last I thought - at last I get to see the famous ERG; made so famous in these parts by one Whalley Range Brian Robinson who has driven us all MAD singing Manchester M16 8HP endless cantos of praise about ERG and its editor. Most infuriating it was to sit there listening to him going on about something which one's never been honoured enough to see for oneself. In other words, to sit there and say nothing // I thought silence spoke volumes ?// At least now I can sit there nodding, instead of nodding off....

Yes indeed a very nice little zine, full of a lot of friendly people and chat // we're even friendlier if you buy us a drink// I -articularly enjoyed Alan Burns' 'Musings'. Being a neo of the greenest variety, it is always a pleasure to learn of the good old days and fen. I liked your editorial very much too //You're lovely// not only for its direct and friendly style, but its good to fead ones own thoughts expressed on the current events, like Apollo and Taff. You seem to have a very balanced zine indeed //Yep, on a razor's edge sometimes//.

Talking of NUTS, who is Paul Skelton ? Does he really exist ? And if so what is he going on about in his LOC ///A man, yes, I dunno/// Sticky Tape ? Envelopes ?...Gee, could someone explain please. ///It would seem that you have yet to receive your ERG in a Government reconstituted envelope...a pleasure yet to be experienced///

BRIAN ROBINSON "I like watching UFO, despite the lousy material they have. I have to agree about the action shots with the interceptors and UFC's. They seem to have blown up the same vessel about twelve times so far. Do you think that any advanced civilisation would develop the self-repairing space ship ? ///No/// One thing that bother me about that programme is the date, I think its supposedly about 1980. Accepting the change in cars, clothing and hairstyles, I can't see our having developed space technology to the state where we could put that base on the moon, with the interceptors and that submarine thing that they pined from 'Voyage To The Bottom Of The Sea' ///I agree with you..I'd put it nearer the year 2,000, but that submarine thing has been under development by the USA for several years now/// I agree with you on what you said to whatsisname who does Psywar.."All of us like to believe in the hereafter" Utter balls, as I'm sure he now realises. As you say, the only thing that will change my mind, is proof that I find acceptable. Paul summed up my feeling perfectly in his review in H.2.



Before the Robinson, there was no Robinson. After the Robinson, there will be no Robinson. /// And that goes for Jeeves too.///
We got a nice letter from Benters. The thing that surprised him about the Triode article was that you didn't mention what he called the 'Jeeves Snooker Table Gambit' of choosing material when you had too much (material, not drink) and numbering the pieces to correspond with numbers on the billiard balls, and proceeding to print the potted ones. That is nothing short of brilliant. ///Well you can't get everything in, as the actress said. For instance I also missed out the 'Corner Snooker Play'..our front room was L shaped, and the end of the snooker table that stuck into the L was very limited for space..once in there, you had to use a midget cue only 18" long. The standard snooker shot was to leave the white ball down that end.///

///Brian's LOC was an extremely long and interesting one, but had to be drastically pruned to fit in here...a shame, but ERG gets overweight///

JOHN PIGGOT: John forgot to sign his letter, but the filing
17 Monmouth Rd., system solved the problem for me.
Oxford OX1 4TD

"I must confess I split my guts laughing at Alan Burns' piece ///Instant Hari Kari/// my mirth was mitigated only by the fact that I wasn't too sure whether he was being serious or not. I know it's unfair to lift phrases out of context, but just for a laugh I'm going to do it ///Yes, you do that///

"I reasonably believe that fandom is dead" says Alan. But if he thinks that, why does the latter part of his article exhort fans to do things ? Surely a dead fandom can do nothing ! ///Maybe like John Brown's body..the soul goes marching on///

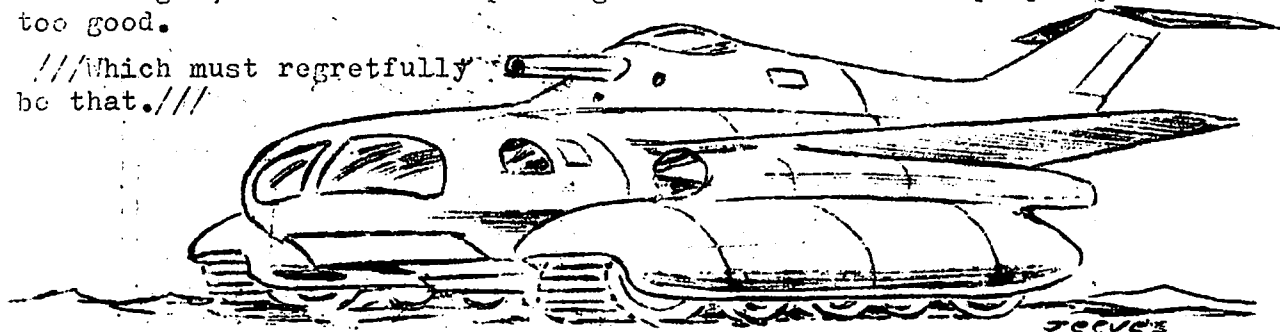
"The progress of science has become exponential"...wasn't it always ?

///Nope, not until man invented science...before that it just oozed///
"Science Fiction... was once a predicting literature." Oh ? When ?

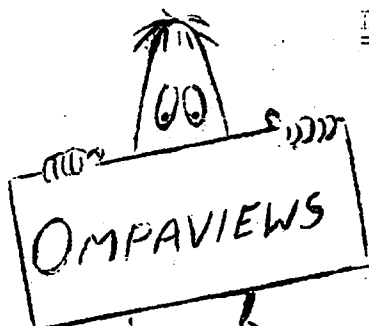
///Once/// Science Fiction, all that ballyhoo about moon missions and such being b-f come true' notwithstanding, has in fact had a remarkably poor record of predicting future events and discoveries ///So have the weather forecasters, but we still call 'em 'forecassers' rather than bum guessers/// Most of these have been by the Shakespearean monkey principle (or a variant thereof). If you try to pin the tail on the donkey thousands of times, you're bound to get it right sometimes. ///So what ? spf can be a predicting literature without being one that predicts correctly. Nostradamus was a famous prophet but I doubt whether he ever got anything right///

Most science fiction writers from Vargo Statton and Festus Pragnell, right up to Ellison and Zelazny, have never bothered to get their scientific facts right, so it's not surprising that sf's record of prophecy isn't too good.

///Which must regretfully be that.///



Being comments on the 63rd OMPA mailing



Best cover...tie between 'IS' and 'HELL 2'

Best magazines... Hell 2 and Qwertyuiop

And now to individual comments.....

OFF TRAILS

Very nicely produced this time round.

As for the proposals suggested, neither is needed so why waste time proposing them? Firstly, why reduce our membership officially to 35 if we intend to raise it again? This seems daft to me. All we need to keep is the rule to send in 5 copies more than our current membership..this applies even if membership drops to 15, when only 20 copies would be needed...whereas if we bring in a new membership rule, 35 copies would be needed even if our team dropped down to three people.

Second proposal to legalise general activity in OMPA. It has never been outlawed, so why try to waste time legalising it? Our rules say activity must be '..to an extent that satisfies the officers, the work of the member concerned' This means that if the officers are satisfied with one page, then all the rest can be from Tom, Dick or Harry. In other words quite legal right now if the officers agree. Likewise, if the member produces twelve pages of his own, whatever is above that is quite legal as he has fulfilled his activity requirement anyway. So I say again, neither new rule is needed so why waste time? BUT, I am in favour of an OMPA Con if we can make it...yessir.

BINARY 11 I agree with you that OMPA can't exist without mailing comments. Otherwise why publish into a vacuum? As for Victor Sylvester being torture...I tend to agree...but how about having a wife who likes to watch such box rubbish as 'Bette Davis' or Rita Tushingham in that ghastly, 'Girl With Green Eyes'...or all the big series epics each time they are screened..(Henry, Elizabeth, Forsythe..etc.) On the other hand I don't agree with your crack about the banning of subversive literature in prisons.. 'What price thought police now?' Personally, I'd ban a heck of a lot more in prisons...and I'd hand out tougher sentences up to and including the death penalty. It's us or then mate, and if we don't see that crime doesn't pay then we're for it. Heck, no one makes these bods rob banks etc. Its about time they learned that they take not only money (or lives) but also a hefty sentence. As for Gray Boak's piece...ERG is Not a genzine..but as he says later, an Ompazine with an external mailing list...offhand, I'd bet that ALL Ompazines go to some non-Ompans. Otherwise, I enjoyed it muchly

RABBLE ROUSERS 1 Many thanks for the TAFE support...why didn't

you find a couple of hundred others of like mind.

Wish I could get my letter output down to 4 a week. For years it has been at 14 a week...and though that is only one apa...it does cover one whacking great load of fan and pro artwork produced.

WHATSIT 21 Oh Ken, What a cover ! The Gerbish saga had some good bits, (like the curate's egg), but it was marred for me by those solid pages of type, without illo or spacing to break them up. This also applied to the other item....not an illo in a bucketful..fie and like that.

HELL 2 Very nice cover and very professional looking Was it a composite of a Skel figure added to an existing owl & pussycat illo ??? or was it original Skel ? If the latter, he is GOOD. Complaint. By dropping the artist listing from VOF, you have deprived me of my moment of glory..UNLES you repent and supply it next time. I also liked the effort made at layout, and the many illos to break up the solid print. If that illo on page 11 is Lisa Conesa, reserve me a date at the next Con. Sharpe's space travel piece was too lengthy for me, the two pages of menus could well have been omitted. New Worlds and pornography. I had one of the large size issues given to me. I can't recall the number, but it included a hunk of Bug Jack Barron...and the rest of the stuff was cheap porn. I threw the thing in the dustbin (the bottom has now dropped out)

Osteen University Review I humbly thankeee kind sor for all this 'ere TAFF support...coulds't wrap it securely and bung it in ye storage until another day ?? If I'm ever nominated again. Liked your coat of arms..and a fess sable in a pear tree to you too. I doubt whether 'Carry On Jeeves' would get far as a book...but if other members agree, it might be done..with much additional material...but would it sell ??? Aye, there's the rub.

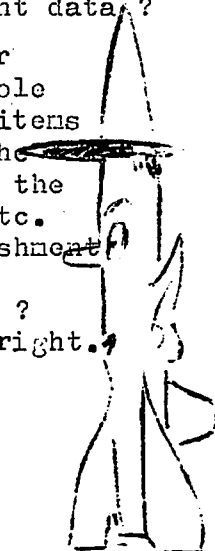
Qwertyuio Which I have always mentally thought of as 'Kwerty-op'.. that cover character missed out 'parneh' which is 5 in Urdu. Not one of 3 tom's best I'm afraid..which cannot be said very often as he is so consistently good. Magic Roundabout improved muchly once they brought it to England. I liked Buck's aircraft and I liked your picce on caving...though you'd never get me up in one of those nasty wet dangerous things. BBC2 recently ran a magnificent documentary on caving a few months ago.

PABLO #2 I can't comment on a list..but it is a very welcome item to find in the mailing. How about adding other relevant data ?

IS Nice cover..but why no title thereon ? Curses on you for only giving us crumbs of the Crumb comics instead of a whole loaf (hint) Digger Handbill...hogwash...it missed out such items as..Freedom to issue carping handbills, freedom to disrupt the peaceful life of others, freedom for noisy minorities to hog the limelight. Freedom to moan without helping rectify faults..etc. I dislike your general anti-establishment tone. The establishment may have its faults...but it is better than anarchy..or life in a Communist state. Why heave out baby with the bathwater ? Your don't have to wreck everything just to put minor items right.

Otherwise a nicely produced zine just crying out for some interior artwork and a bit more levity.

ROSE Beautifully produced, but nothing here to comment on I'm afraid. Pity because such industry could come up with some really excellent Ompawork.



THE RECKONING Who the heck cares if some fen haven't heard of you ? You go right ahead and send me a card for inclusion in Who's Who. I run it for all fen, not just BNF's. Don't get me wrong about pubbing a zine for ones self. I fully agree that it helps to develop a writing style (with most fen, that is), but the primary reason for the putting out of a fanzine is to get back comment...totherwise you might as well yell your words of wisdom to the desert air. Not so ?

YSELT I say blow a lettering style that is almost unreadable except by looking at the type@ version beneath. On the other hand if you don't have a blue halo, you can't be all bad (mine is puce with yellow spots). However, since page 2 was not present, I can't comment on your words about 'me'...shame. How about a 'sigil of seagulls' ???

DELTANE Damned A4 gets everywhere these days...when ito is unobtainable I shall hack A-bominable-4 down to size. What, NO ILLOS ? Glad you liked my 'Postal Menace'. I agree with you over lousy drawings of the female form. That's why they don't appear in ERG..I could only draw more lousy ones, so prefer to abstain....but if I had a ~~bad~~ good model... Personally, I'm against reducing the activity requirement. ERG runs near the mark each issue, and at that is only a skinny little zine. Cut down to minac, and we'd get a mailing of one pagera. By the way, in case you meant me, as a publisher of non-original material, I exceed the basic page count with original stuff (Ergitorial, 'ho's Who, Ompaviews, plus stories etc.) then I feel quite justified to use reprints over and above that quota.

FMTV 4 'Fraid the illos turned me off, but liked the coloured letters. I liked the howlers though. Michell's theory of sex/sociology seemed to oversimplified for me, and his main point remained unclear. That battle of Vega thing..ugh. imagine such a battle fought with swords and guns... worse, how do you use guñs and fight knee to knee ? I presume they have fixed bayonets, in which case, why swords. All the old blather of sword bearing barbarians in space ships. Ah well, nothing like anachronisms when poets throw up.

Philosophical Gas/Scythrop I'm not going to sqjander my valuable capital letters on someone who only uses one staple in his zine. Nyaah. Interesting cover, and a very neat, though minute typeface (Ideal for comments on Locs) You seem to have mastered the process though, as my copy was immaculate. How how about a bit thicker production, as the Scythrop LOC8s were a bit esoteric in OMPA. Meanwhile, bestest to all down under.

FINITO AD COMMENTUM
=====

General Commen...Personally, my heart sinks when I see 8one-pagers' in the mailing instead of full zines. How many more would we get if we were to reduce the activity requirement...and again, with a reduced activity, we could never replace the one-page-men with bods who would really put some steam into OMPA. In this mailing, out of 16 items, only eight exceeded ten pages...between them, the other 8 mags raised a total of 35 pages. Big deal. Meanwhile, hats off to:- FMTV, IS, WHATSIT, ERG, ROSF, QWERTYUIOP, BINARY, and HELL...and please don't drag the hoary old red herring of quality before quantity, because the above zines have both. (In general, the one pagers have neither).
Bestest, Terry.

Memories

of an Old Fan

by
Alan Burns

The neofan of to-day has never had it so bad. Gone are the times when SF was a sort of underground publishing. Unlike to-days offerings from that source it had at least the virtues of literacy, understandability and reasonably legible printing. We older fan nursed it to our bosoms, read at by torchlight when we hoped the rest of the house was asleep, and it opened our eyes to the technological miracles that were popping up all around us, like regular radio, air services, even rockets that were fired on other days than November 5th.

I suppose I was lucky, being reared in a household where people were encouraged to think and be rather liberal in their views. My prejudices, which are many, come from later and bitter experience of how bad a thing too much liberty can be. But, in those days of old I was allowed to bring in anything not considered to be in bad taste by my mother. Bad taste to her consisted only of any picture of the female form not properly dressed. Hence any doubtful issue of MARVEL or Super Science had to be sneaked upstairs into storage inside a huge model boat a craftsman friend of my father's had built for me (it suffered from ballasting troubles and never sailed at all). However there were a great many respectable SF books that I was allowed to read, and the Thompson Leng books like the WIZARD (every wednesday price 2d--old pence) and the ADVENTURE (same price but mondays) were happy hunting grounds for me.

I think the Wizard first hooked me into the field of SF, with a remarkable serial called "The Lost Hordes of Tartary". Now it may be well known to some that Genghis Khan commanded armies of horsemen running into many hundreds of thousands. The story, blithely ignoring the fact that they are still there as respectable communists, postulated that the hordes had been taken prisoner by means of a paralysis ray devised by Tibetan priests (who were the BEMs of the 20's) and stored in caves under this Lamasery in the Himalayas, for the good reason that they were a nuisance to everyone. The looking after of the countless paralysed Tartars was the trust of the monks in this lamasery, but alas came the day when the chosen abbot or Head Lama had a twin brother who sought world domination

by awakening the hordes of Tartars, arming them with super weapons and setting himself up as World Dictator. Aha, but Colonel Saunders of the Khyber rifles and his adjutant had rescued the good abbot from bandits when he was travelling incognito, and so they were involved, and armed themselves with a super-super weapon called Tombis Thun, which looked rather like an anti-tank gun with a huge globular thing round the barrel. There was a lot of coming and going, until finally all the Tartars were paralysed for ever, the caves were sealed, the evil brother jumped over a cliff and everyone was happy.

Undoubtedly however, the king of boy's paper SF in those days was a gentleman called Murray Roberts who created Captain Justice (the gentleman adventurer) and his followers. There was Midge--a delinquent boy with a heart of gold. Len O'Connor, who could build a radio transmitter out of two empty lemonade bottles and a coil of wire. Doctor O'Malley, who made the experts at the Mayo Clinic look like pikers, and lastly Professor Flanznagel, years before his time as the very sane, and extremely brilliant scientist. Captain Justice had two bases, Justice Island (in the South Atlantic) and Titanic Tower, sited ditto and looking like a fugitive from Blackpool. Totanic Tower was a heck of a big construction, housing on its lowest floor (a hundred feet above sea-level) a whole aerodrome. This party went the whole gamut of SF adventures. Hundred foot tall robots, metal fusing rays, rockets into space, and many other things too numerous to mention. Their arch enemies were the Secret Service of some unmentioned European country who also had an Atlantic base called Hagen Island, from where battleships and submarines went out to destroy Justice Island, and returned as scrap metal due to the Prof's patent weapons. This was well written good wholesome reading, with the blacks black and the whites white.

The Modern Boy, the mag in which all this was published was my Saturday's delight and cost sixpence. But for that you got in addition to a collection of stories various articles about new marvels, such as the first diesel-powered American trains. Apart from the Captain Justice stories you got nearly SF works like the adventures of Smarty Piecan, otherwise Prince Beikan of Borneo who owned an autogyro, and rescued all sorts of people in predicaments and finally established his claim to his country's throne by shark-fishing from his autogyro, against the evil machinations of some Germanic type or other.

I gloss lightly over Modern Wonder, dealt with by Terry Jeeves, and go on to the day my father, an inveterate scavenger of old book shops came in bearing a couple of bound volumes of the 1921 edition of CHUMS. This was a quite remarkable find SF wise. The first volume had the complete set of parts of a serial whose title I don't recall, which dealt with a mad scientist, rejoicing under the unlikely name of Steadfast, was to take over the world using a disintegrating beam called

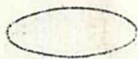
the Steadfast Ray. Two schoolboys took up cudgels against him, made their way out to Africa where they ended up in a city of benevolent scientists who armed them with a super aircraft, armoured against the Steadfast ray by a substance called (what else?) Lionsten. They took on Dr. Steadfast and his armada of aircraft carrying thousands of black soldiers, and beat the livings daylights out of him.

The other volume had a series of serials in concerning the adventures of a group of air-minded people who flipped off to Mars every so often, as casually as we go off for the week-end. Memory is very dim on these things. I recall there were evil little dwarf creatures called Grappies, who were fond of shooting incendiary bombs at all and sundry, but were always bested by the brave Earthmen.

Finally, though not strictly SF, I can't close this musing without a mention of George E. Rochester, whose special secret agent Gray Shadow involved himself in some quite hair-raising escapes and adventures during WW 1, and later Mr. Rochester regaled us with many adventures of clean-living Englishmen who foiled various unlikely plots of bearded communists to disrupt dear old Blighty.

If at this stage someone gets up and shouts Biggles, I shall answer with a yawn that Biggles was good but not SF--He was born in the Modern Boy also.

And that's about it. I've rather deliberately avoided mentioning American SF in detail because it's too well known, and tried to talk about stuff I've not heard mentioned. I notice New Worlds published a Kipling SF story some time ago. I wonder if there could be a revival of interest in early non-American SF? Let's hope so.



THIS WAS ERG 37 For January 1971. For further copies, see inside front cover.

If your sub has run out with this issue, there will be an x in the above oval....if there isn't, then you're O.K. so far, but a LOC would still be welcome.

ERG is published by Terry Jeeves, 230 Bannerdale Rd. Sheffield S11 9FE