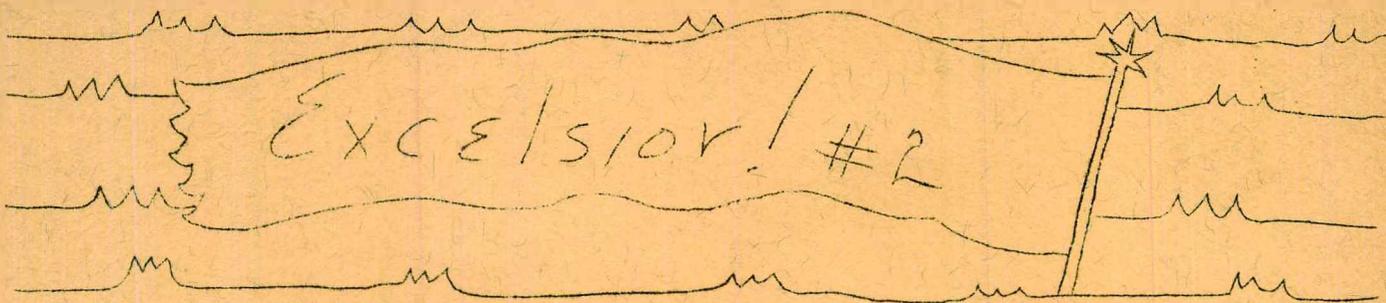


THERE IS A
HEPPY LEND,
FUR, FUR
A-WAY!!
♪♪♪



H. M. K.



"stoptheworldIwanttogetoff!"

Late April and vicinity*

Guts:

Contents, etc.	1
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Lazarette. a letter column	19
backcover kindly step to the rear of the zine..	

Cover symbol: "Many banners bear strange devices."

Cover by Ted E. White miscellaneous interiors.

Staff:

Himeo-operating editor - LeeH Shaw	Artist - Arthur Thomson
Zine-financing editor - Larry Shaw	Scientists - Young Research

Associate Editor Emeritus - Walter A. Willis

*don't forget, EXCELSIOR is an irregularly-scheduled zine.

 "All he wants to do is sit around and have his nucleus bombarded by neutrons!"

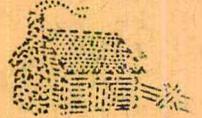
 --Talking Atomic Blues

EXCELSIOR #2, is one of the many, and comes from L. Shaw Ltd., a non-profit organization (although that was not our intention). This is a fanzine and can be had by subscription (7 issues for \$1) or by trade (whatchagot?), or to non-dollar fans for letters. Archie Mercer's column isn't in this ish because of the time-space problem of overseas communication and sudden publication. He should be back nextish. Hope you will too.



ROBERT BLOCH

"Forty Whacks"



It is somewhat hard for me to realize that, as of April 5th, 1957, I shall be forty years old.

As a matter of fact, I have no intention of admitting it. When people ask me point-blank, I generally fob them off with some ambiguous remark -- such as saying, "Yes, I am a member of the Fortean Society."

But the cold truth confronts me, and I can only confront it in turn.

Forty.

Up until recently, it seemed an incredible age for anyone to attain. Being forty years old was something which only happened to other people, like Forry Ackerman, or which might happen to others, such as Jack Benny. In the latter case, I wouldn't feel much pity, since Benny is at least compensated by his wealth. In the former case, of course, I'd feel no pity at all, because Ackerman is an agent and nobody wastes pity on an agent.

Actually the forty problem didn't really bother me until a few weeks ago, as the fatal hour drew near.

Then suddenly, everywhere I went, references began popping up. Picked up a paper and there was a mention of Pitkin's LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY. Opened a book, and out popped the Lizzie Borden quatrain about "forty whacks". After burning the newspaper and the book, I hastily turned on the TV set to encounter a cartoon about Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. Smashing the picture-tube, I sought consolation in the Bible. What happens? The first line I encounter reads, "And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights."

In despair, I fled to Chicago to deliver a lecture and a less formal talk. The latter was presented to the University of Chicago Science Fiction Society. It's a bright, youthful organization and I've always enjoyed myself when visiting with its members. But when I rose to speak I was introduced by the President, one Sidney Coleman, who immediately remarked to the audience that, "Bloch had his first story

Bloch (2)

published before I was born."

Now I don't know what he meant to convey by that remark; maybe the idea of coupling two calamities in one sentence seemed appropriate to him.

But for me, that tore it.

Ever since I've been brooding over the future, and so far I can discern only a single ray of hope.

Other fans will turn forty, too, in the decade to come.

Misery loves company, and believe me, the WELCOME mat is out.

I can't wait until we're all in the same boat, and bailing like crazy.

At first I was going to give up fandom -- or at least the most important aspects of fanning (viz: hot-rods, rock-and-roll, progressive jazz, and boycotting INFINITY). I was even seriously thinking of giving up conventions: after all, a man can make a damned fool of himself at home, too.

Then I began to realize that before too many years have passed, the majority of convention-goers are going to find themselves in the same age-bracket.

Against that day, I respectfully submit a program for the 1967 WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION AND G.A.R. RE-UNION, to be held at the Old People's Home in the suburbs of Fort Mudge.

OPENING SESSION: 1 PM.

Introductory remarks. Sam Moskowitz
(ear-trumpets will be provided to the audience for those who wish to hear Mr. Moskowitz plainly.)

Address: "Science and Senility" Wilson Tucker

Auction:
(Souvenir canes, wheel-chairs and other valuable items of interest to present-day fandom will be offered at attractive prices.)

EVENING SESSION: 6 PM.

Banquet:
(Milk-toast optional: however no solid food will be served unless fan provides his own teeth or rents a set from the Convention committee.)

Bloch (3)

Mail Address: "Why I gave Up Psionics and
Turned to Geriatrics John W. Campbell Jr.

I could go on for a three-day session, but I'm quite sure that the attendees can't. As a matter of fact, the evening session will probably close by 8 PM at the latest. The lights will go out by nine -- not that it matters, because nobody will have the strength to take advantage of it. I doubt if there will be any "incidents" at all: I can hardly see anyone trying to break down the door to Harlan Ellison's iron lung.

In a way, come to reflect upon it, this new era in future fandom may be a good thing. Like it or not, fans will attain the respectability and dignity of maturity. No more of this business of tossing bags of hot water out of windows: most of us will think twice about dropping out hot water bottles, even if we can still open a window. We'll have a little peace and quiet for a change; leave the rioting to kids like Doc Smith.

As for me, I'm content to join all the loveable old codgers at the Hydra Club -- folks like Uncle Bob Silverberg and Science Fiction's beloved Elder Statesman, Randy Garrett.

Maybe I'm a little bit too self-conscious about the passage of time, but I can't help thinking that our microcosm is coming of age. The helicopter beanie, once a standby of active, youthful fandom, is due to be replaced by a more appropriate symbol.

May I suggest a jet-propelled truss?

--Robert Bloch
March 1957

A WAIL OF WOE FROM THE PRODUCTION DEPT:

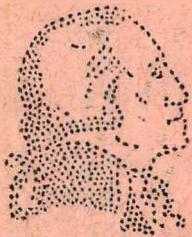
Never, in a long and weary life behind the mimeograph have I, LeeH, had as much trouble with one issue of a fanzine as I have had with this one. Never!

Of course most of the trouble thish, like mimeoing wrong pages on the backs of other wrong pages, etc. etc., were due to my own stupid carelessness, but BY GHU, how many stupid mistakes are par for one fan on one issue of one fanzine?

I am thwarted, disgusted, and miserable. Of course, you can't see most of the mistakes, because I corrected them, (at no little expense) but I know. I have the heartaches and heaps of ruint pages & to remind me..

"Grrrr"*

*from Robert Browning.



Harlan Ellison

A Profile

BY T S ELLIOTT

Harlan Ellison was born in Cleveland, Ohio, a little less than 23 years ago. He became a professional writer approximately two years ago. In his case, becoming a professional writer did not mean, as it does in so many cases, selling one story. When Harlan started selling, he did so with a bang, to all sorts of markets simultaneously. It was only by pure luck that INFINITY was first to reach the stands with one of his stories, "Glow Worm".

Since then, Harlan has sold a tremendous amount of material. It seems silly to quote statistics in his case, because they change so rapidly. It's more to the point to say that he works full time at free-lance writing, which is rare in itself; sells his output to a wide variety of markets including some definitely high-paying ones; and lives very comfortably on the proceeds, which is **very rare** indeed. He is known in the field as a man who can produce exactly what an individual editor wants, on short notice if necessary.

None of this, of course, is unique. Other fans have turned pro; other **ex-fans** now make their livings writing and are highly respected in the field. Harlan happens to be one of the most recent examples--but he also happens to be one of the best that could be chosen, regardless of time. Few other examples could illustrate so perfectly that the single basic key to success in professional writing is sheer hard work.

As a fan, Harlan was one of those hyper-active individuals around whom fannish controversies invariably center--but without whom fandom would be deader than a birdbath. He published a fanzine which began life as a club organ but became his own personal zine and always reflected strongly the personality of the editor. He also turned out huge quantities of material for other fanzines of the period, and in doing so learned a lot about writing.

He spent a year and a half at Ohio State University, majoring in English and minoring in geology, but the main thing he learned there, he says, was how not to write. In a sense, Harlan says, he did not learn to write at all--he just "picked it up". He credits Hemingway with a great deal of influence on his work, and thanks Algis Budrys for a lot of practical and helpful instruction. Otherwise, he learned to write by doing it, which many writers and critics maintain is the only possible way.

When Harlan decided he was ready, he came to New York, and settled down to writing and marketing his work with a vengeance. To stay alive

Elliott (2)

before the checks began rolling in, he worked at various odd jobs. Usually these were at least indirectly related to his primary goal; for instance, he spent some time clerking in newsstands and bookstroses.

One of his major interests is juvenile delinquency--and he also managed to find time, during his early days in New York, to do some genuine research into this subject. Since this research consisted of actually running with a kid gang for several weeks, he should know the subject inside out. Anyone listening to him relate some of his experiences during his period, however, might also decide that he was lucky to have come out of it alive!

Within a matter of weeks, or perhaps even days, after he started to sell science fiction, Harlan also began selling detective stories. A little later came stories and articles to the semi-slick men's magazines. He has made a name for himself in all of these fields (incidentally, he uses a pseudonym only in highly exceptional cases). While he has an agent, he does a lot of his marketing himself. He apparently finds direct personal contact with editors invaluable. They, in turn, seem to find direct personal contact with Harlan invaluable; because of the way he circulates around various publishing offices, he often knows what is going on in the field before almost anyone else. It is interesting and important to note, however, that Harlan never butters up or kowtows to an editor--for better or for worse, he remains himself at all times. He learned long ago that sales depend on the product; if an editor wants to buy what he's selling, that's fine; if he doesn't, it doesn't matter.

As this is written, Harlan is preparing to enter the army. He is to report for duty on March 29th. What will happen to him next is anybody's guess, but it seems safe to say that he will turn his military experiences to good advantage, and establish himself even more firmly as a polished and versatile writer as time goes by.

-----T.S. Elliott
March 1957

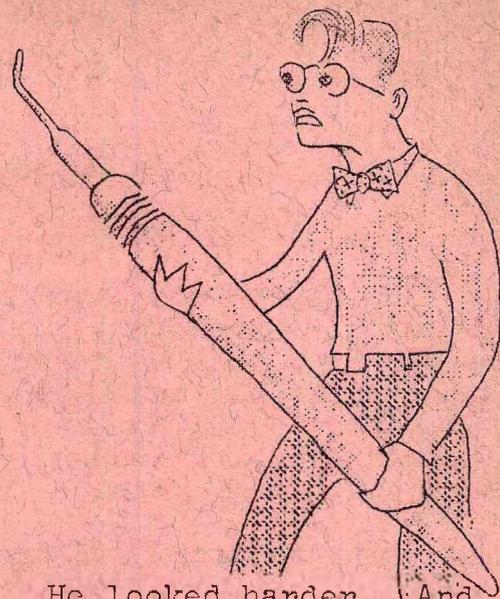
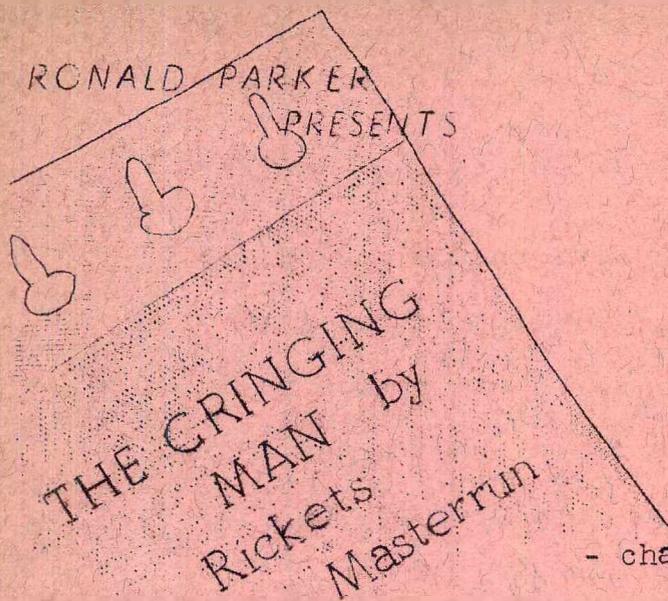
the plinth of an editorial:

Much thanks to you from us for your response to the first ish of Celsy. We are heartened. Hope you like this'un.

Those of you who got last issue and didn't get this issue can be assured that it is because you didn't send in money, or something, in order to assure you a steady supply of Excelsior. That is your problem.

Ted White recommends we accept duplicating supplies in trade for subs. Be glad to. Whatcha got to trade?

We hear Trump thumped. Sad.



- chapter one -

At first he thought it was a tidal wave. He looked harder. And harder. He was right. It WAS a tidal wave. On second thought, it might be one of Bloch's underhanded illusions to make him think he was crazy. Bloch had a habit of doing things like that. He waited for it to reach him. It was wet. It was real. It was a tidal wave.

"Eney!" he screamed.

There was no answer.

"ENEY!"

Still no answer.

He waited. The tidal wave subsided and there he lay, soaking wet. He reached for his cashmere towel. The one with the gold edgings. Then it hit him. The towel was missing. Someone had stolen his cashmere towel!

It was the beginning.

- chapter two -

The monster stumbled across the room on its shaky legs toward him. It tripped over the scattered scatter run and fell, sprawling indelicately across the floor. Feebly, it crawled to him and reached out. He screamed in terror.

"DAMN IT! Look at this page here. A Rotsler drawing with a Share signature. Can't you do a better stencil than that?"

"I - I'm sorry, Sahib White. I tried my best."

"Look, Stark, when I mimeograph a fanzine, it's gotta be perfect. I thought I showed you how to cut a stencil."

"But - but..."

PARKER (2)

"I've got a good mind to kick you off the staff of STELLAR and throw you out of my house."

"Oh, please, Mr White. Give me another chance. Please!"

Ted White looked at the young fan groveling on the floor and pleading so pathetically. He paused for a moment, pondering heavily on the high cost of dog biscuits which Larry ate rather voraciously, and tweaked his moustache, a process requiring considerable effort on his part. Deciding Larry would settle for a cheap brand of cat food if things got too rough, Ted replied, "Very well. But only because I like you. Now, go back and take another crack at it, boy."

Stark salaamed and back out of the room.

Ted casually picked up one of the back issue files of ZIP that he kept handy. He thumbed through, pausing at one of his sterling editorials. Suddenly, without warning, he saw it. In his very own editorial he saw it! It stared him unmercifully in the face. He stared back. He had spelled a word right! He shuddered.

"Eney!" he shrieked.

There was no answer.

"ENEY!" he cried out in terror.

Still no answer.

Then it dawned on him. Then he realized the awful, terrifying truth. His three typewriters were missing. All three of his magnificent typewriters had been stolen! Frightened, jumped up from the sofa and looked around the room cautiously. Everything else seemed to be in order. But no one else was there. No one. Not a...He ran frantically into the next room. The mimeoscope was lit, a stencil on it, and a stylus lying nearby. But the chair was empty. Now Stark was missing. Ted ran through the house, searching desperately. The dog biscuit supply remained untouched; the liquor cabinet was undisturbed; even the shelf of Clayton ASTOUNDINGS remained in perfect order. Wherever Stark might normally be found, under the sofa, hiding in the closet, sitting in the corner gazing thoughtfully at the jazz record envelopes, nothing had been disturbed. Ted realized the only possible explanation. Stark had been stolen! From right under his nose.

The message flashed like a neon sign through his already dazed brain. It stunned him, paralysing his nerves. It read: In Six Days You Will Be Gone!

"Eney!"

There was no escaping the truth. He was growing a sixth of an inch a year!

- chapter three -

Finding relaxation was easy. He still had three quarts of Gin from the last WSFA meeting. It had been an off night and Castora hadn't consumed his usual quota. Ted reached for the Cointreau, soda, lemon juice, and bitters. He got a clean tumbler from the cabinet and hacked a tray of ice out of the refrigerator with a rusting ice pick. He threw the nearly correct amounts together haphazardly, trying dauntlessly to add a professional touch to the scene, though Ghod knows he wasn't a professional. Making like a dive-bomber, he dropped in several cubes of ice, leaving puddles of spilled liquid around the glass. A few twirls of a stylus which served as a swizzle stick, and he was finished. He raised it to his lips and tasted it. Very good, he commented proudly to himself. Smiling contentedly at his skill, he took a deep breath, clenched one fist tightly, and downed the remainder of the drink. On down it tumbled, forming a torrential cascade until it landed in his stomach with a dull SPLOSH.

He held up the empty glass and gazed at it. His face was reflected, badly distorted, in its curved surface. He turned the glass slowly, watching his head stretch. He frowned. Something was wrong with the reflection. Something was missing. His moustache! It was gone... stolen from right under his nose. He staggered at the thought.

Trembling he made his way to the nearest comfortable chair and leaned back. His body was beginning to absorb the potent beverage. Rapidly his mind began to fog, his memory of the terrible image fading. He was getting drunk.

Relaxed and dulled, his head nodded a few times, and he fell asleep.

- chapter four -

In Four Days You Will Be Gone.

The words pounded unmercifully at his reeling brain.

Slowly he rose from the chair, rubbing repeatedly at the pain that persisted in his forehead. Next time he'd know better than to mix his drink in one of those big tumblers that the dairy packaged their cottage cheese in at Christmas time. Staggering slightly, he made his way down to the basement den. He looked around the littered room and made his usual promise that someday he'd get around to cleaning the place up. But not now. There was so much to be done.

As he started toward the mimeograph, kicking an empty ink can out of his way, he realized that something was wrong. He stopped dead in his tracks. The corner was empty! His new paper shipment from Master's was gone! First his cashmere beach towel, then his three typewriters, then Stark, then his moustache, and now his paper. Twenty reams of the stuff. Gone! He searched his mind desperately for an

Parker (4)

explanation, but there was none.

He went upstairs, back into the house, considerably more sober than when he had so recently left. Dazed, he found his way to the bedroom, and fell across the bed. Burying his head in a pillow, he sobbed quietly for several minutes. He tried to regain his composure. Even as his sobbing stopped, he could feel the words pounding at his brain: in THREE DAYS you will be gone.

Who was doing all this? Who was working against him like this?

Who?

It must be Mike May!

- chapter five -

He clung to the edge of the open cracker box, looking in with dazed, unbelieving eyes. They were gone!

It couldn't be May. He detests spoiled crackers.

Maybe it was Bloch after all. Bloch had a habit of doing things like that.

Or Shaw, or Grennell, or Tucker, or ... WHO WAS DOING THIS TO HIM? WHO?

His mind reeled as he recalled all of his old enemies and the pleasure he had derived from making them. But none of them fit. He couldn't grasp a single explanation. But it HAD to be someone! It couldn't all be his imagination, could it? A dozen explanations raced through his throbbing brain and an equal number of conflicting answers followed them. But there was nothing to discount the truth. He had to face the facts. Growing a sixth of an inch a year?

Insanity!

No! There had to be some other way out. Frantically he called out, "Eney!" But it was no use. There was no answer.

71"

Maybe this new fangled eighth fandom was working against him. They had a habit of doing things like that.

But who was to say seventh fandom was dead? He couldn't answer.

In TWO Days You Will Be Gone.

"Shut up. SHUT UP!" His voice echoed back through the house, and all was silent once more. He looked at his hands. They were trembling. He didn't give a damn.

Cursing restlessly, he went back into the kitchen and mixed a small nuclear fizz. Not too much. VERY SMALL. An old milk bottle did to mix it in. Just a quart. He had to stay sober. He HAD to,

- chapter six -

"Oooh. What a hangover." Ted groped around the floor and then pulled himself to his feet. It was then he saw it. Or rather, didn't see it. His fifth of Vodka was missing. He had planned on using it when the Gin was gone, but now he was out of BOTH! A wretched state, indeed.

Who was doing all this? Who was working against him like this? Who? It must be Ray Palmer, he thought. Maybe he's trying to get even for all that artwork I sent him. Damn it! And I contributed the beautiful stuff too!

- chapter seven -

One bottle of booze beloved. He snickered. Perhaps all was NOT lost. Perhaps...perhaps...oh, what the hell! Admit it! The fun's over. You've had it. An awful thing to fact up to, but it must be met. It was over.

In ONE Day You Will Be Gone.

"SHUDDAP!" he screamed in protest and fell to his knees, sobbing. "Oh, Ghod. Why does it have to happen to ME? After all the wonderful, unselfish things I've done for fandom. Why ME? Why...?" His words trailed off, choked by the tears that streamed down his cheeks.

He managed to regain his composure to some degree, and staggered into the living room, where he fell exhausted upon the sofa. A pile of ZIPs still lay where he had dropped them and in sheer desperation he snatched them from their resting place and hurled them across the room. They hit the wall and fell back in a torn and scattered pile. He had never done that before. He had once heard how some BNFs got a thrill out of such an act, but he felt no new emotion. Only remorse, disgust and contempt for his own personal delays. He recalled an old story by Bloch about How To Run Barefoot Across Rotsler Drawings or some such, and he even contemplated that. But he decided the trouble it took to clean off all that blue ink wasn't worth the effort.

He was startled from his thoughts by a knock on the door. No, it was more like a gentle tapping, as of someone gently rapping, gently rapping, at his chamber door. He sprang to his feet, brushed off his clothes, tried to look his best, and walked to the front door. Opening it, he was confronted with, "ENEY!"

"Hello, Ted." Eney's voice was soft, but vibrant.

"Dick, what - what are you doing here?"

Parker (6)

"I felt I'd better come up and break the news to you myself, Ted. You see, it - it's too late. Your time is up."

Ted stared incredulously at Dick Eney for a few moments and then fell upon his shoulder, weeping quietly.

"I - I know how you fell, Ted. It's really rough."

"How could YOU know!" Ted cried contemptuously "YOU've never been kicked out like this!"

"I've seen others, Ted. I know how they take it. Some of the worst cases crack up altogether. Their minds play tricks on them. Why, I can remember the day Lee Shaw left. She just wandered aimlessly, seeing things that weren't there, and imagining things were disappearing. She even accused Tucker of cheating at poker! And later - later I heard she'd been down at the stable all day, taking the hurdles...without her horse. It was bad, Ted, really bad."

"But," Ted whimpered, "didn't she always wander aimlessly, seeing things that weren't there?"

"Never like this!"

"It - it just doesn't seem right, Dick. After all I've done for FAPA. To be kicked out because I didn't have time to publish a lousy eight pages. They only gave me three hundred sixty five days to do it in."

"Those are the rules, Ted. You have to take them like all the rest of the members."

"Oh, Dick! Oh, Ghod!" Ted fell against Eney's shoulder and began sobbing with even greater effort than before. "I meant to...I just couldn't...I couldn't..."

"There, there," Eney said, patting him softly on the head, "Don't take it so hard, Ted. FAPA's not the only group. Why, you might even get into the N3F."

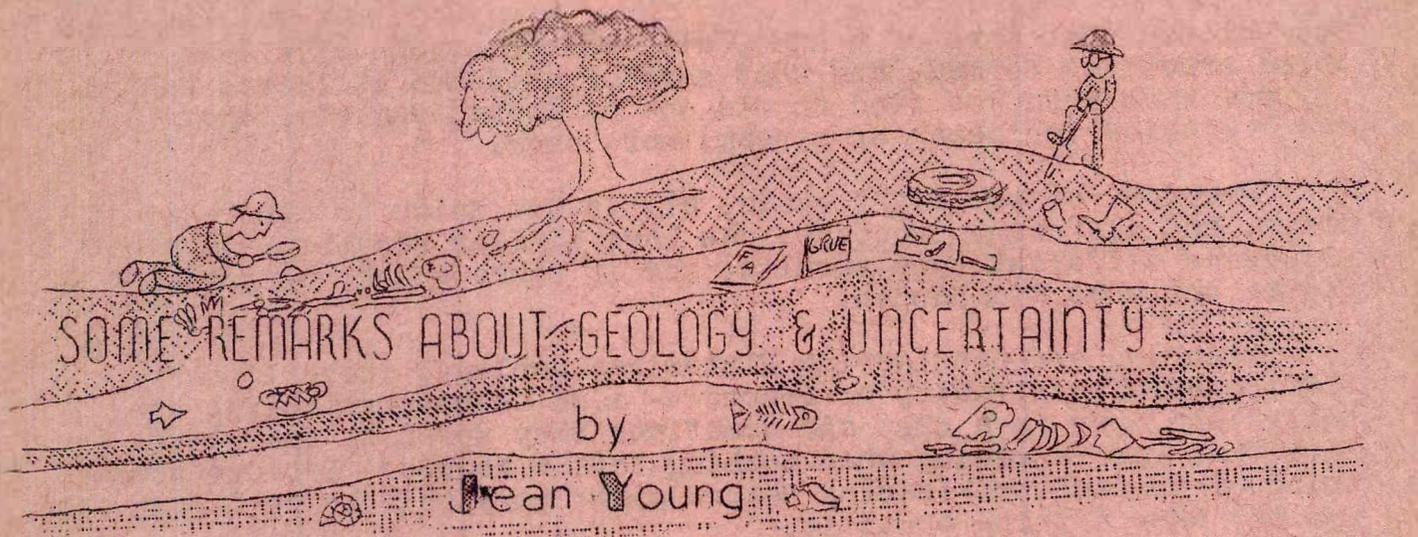
"Dick! Good Ghod!"

"Things could be worse," Eney's voice was deep, philosophical. "And, after all, the N3F's not half as bad as you think. Why, you might even learn to spell!"

Ted pondered that. He never had been able to spell. He wondered why. He shrugged it off as Bloch's fault and continued sobbing. Bloch had a habit of doing things like that.

"I've got to ship off this mailing, Ted. But remember what I said. And - this won't make any difference in our friendship, either. Not

(cont page 15)



There are various ways in which the sciences resemble each other, or are supposed to -- they all use the famed Scientific Method, which everyone has had thrown at him in High School or earlier, and they all try to Find Out Things about things.

However, some sciences, or sub-sciences, are still essentially descriptive, rather than interpretative, and some are field sciences rather than laboratory sciences, and some deal with things that are within the common experience, and some don't.

In Physics there is a thing called the Uncertainty Principle, which s-f fans have heard a lot about, and which Andy described in his article of the Quantum Mechanics. This Principle has bothered a lot of people, because they'd ever so much rather be certain than uncertain, and they don't care to look at things in a statistical manner, or even in a mathematical manner, but want to be able to visualize the quantities and objects they use. It's a natural thing; the sciences got started through people watching actual things they could see.

But the trouble with the objects to which the Uncertainty Principle applies most evidently is that they aren't like anything in the common experience -- atoms and electrons aren't like little billiard balls or pills or clouds or rings or anything really but atoms and electrons, and just aren't picturable. This seems perfectly all right to me, and is why the Uncertainty Principle (and other various esoteric Principles) don't bother me.

In Geology, it's different. We are dealing, we suppose, with things that actually happened, which, if not in the realm of common experience, are at least very much like things that are. We have a principle or two, ourselves, and one of the most important is "The Present is the Key to the Past." You look at what things are going on now -- glaciers icing, oceans pounding, streams flowing and cutting,

Young (2)

and you see what sort of a hump, dip, cut or sludge pile each of these processes formed, and what sort of evidence it leaves behind it, and then when you find an old one of these, you say, aha, there was a glacier (or ocean or stream) here once.

However, as you might guess, all is not quite so simple as it seems, and different processes can have similar results, and like processes different type results, and it takes a deal of puzzling to figure out what did happen.

When you are considering Historical Geology, there is the difficulty of continuity of record -- i.e., sometimes things were being laid down in a spot and sometimes they weren't, and how do you know what was happening when nothing left a record? Because something of an unrecord-leaving nature might very well be happening, and you not know a thing about it.

Another problem is, what do you do when something you thought was a certain age only, like some fossil, suddenly appears much higher (i.e., later) in the record, way after it was supposed to be extinct; do you say that fossil such-and-such lived longer than you supposed or do you say that formation such-and-such is much younger than formerly thought?

Suppose, for instance, that you go out and dig in the Deadwood formation of the FAPA series, and you find some marine fossils -- oh, snails or starfish or the like -- and you say, aha, the Deadwood formation is of marine origin, there must have been a sea here once, I'll call it the Deadwood Sea. And you think a bit, and you know that these things are Jurassic, and Crouton trees grew then, so the Deadwood Sea probably had all sorts of ichthyosaurs and you quick call up Charles R. Knight and say, I want a mural of the Deadwood Sea with ichthyosaurs swimming in it and Crouton trees growing all about for the south wall of the museum, and he paints you one.

Then nasty old Prof. Worlge goes out and digs in the Deadwood formation and he finds undoubted plant remains and reptile bones and allosaurus tracks and so on, and says your marine fossils were just washed into the area during storms, and this was obviously a swampy region, so the Deadwood Sea now becomes the Deadwood Swamp, and there you are, stuck with a useless mural on your south wall.

Well, obviously, there didn't used to be a sea there that magically turned into a swamp when old Prof. Worlge made his astounding discovery, so we suppose it was a swamp all along. But suppose somebody proves that old Prof. Worlge's discoveries were a fraud ala Pilt-down Man, then what? Well, there you are again, but the swamp that we thought was there all along doesn't zip back into a sea again. So we say it was a sea all along.

Young (3)

You see the problem? It must have been something all along, but it changes from being a sea to a swamp depending on who's found what there, and this is a sort of uncertainty principle, because you can never be sure that it was really like what you think it was; but it really was like something; and this bothers me.

Which is why uncertainty in one field bothers me when it doesn't in another.

--- Jean Young

Parker (con't from page 12)

even if you DO get into the N3F!" Dick Eney turned and left.

Ted closed the door and fel back against the sofa. At first his mind rejected all that Dick had said, but slowly, almost imperceptibly, the words formed again and set Ted to thinking.

He could never face FAPA again, that was certain. And he could never gafiate entirely. He had to do something. He had to.

- chapter eight -

It was barely a week later that Ted received a reply to his letter. It was a note of hello from a member of the Welcomittee, explaining the nature of fandom. The N3F had accepted him. He was in!

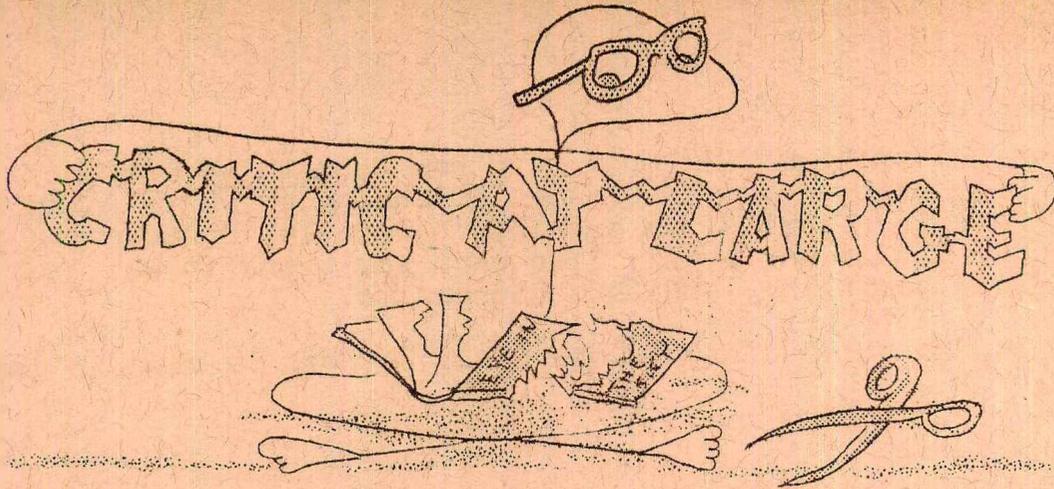
For a moment he wonders if it was for the best. Perhaps not, and then again, perhaps he could adjust suitably to find his new life even more exciting than the old. Ghu knows, it was going to be hard. But Ted was already envisioning a brand new pile of fanzines with which to dazzle the N3F. He might even consider editorship of their official organ.

Yes, he might make a go of it after all! He was willing to try.

Ted White ran into his new world, searching.

---Ron Parker
March 1957

SOUTH GATE IN 588



THE FROZEN YEAR
by James Blish
Ballantine Books

I hate blurbs. They were obviously designed to give editors chances to show off how clever they are, and have no other useful purpose. But the inventor forgot one important point: most editors are clever only about 3% of the time, if that often.

Bad Blurbs can insult the reader's intelligence and/or spoil his enjoyment in several ways, but the two most horrible crimes are giving away the plot and--lets call a spade a spade--lying. The blurbs for The Frozen Year seem at first to fall into the first category, the longish one on the flyleaf in particular, appearing to be a neat capsule digest of the entire plot and punchline. Actually, upon reading the book, one discovers that the blurbs are of the second sinful kind, and whoever wrote them was talking about a somewhat similar book, but one with crucial differences. In any case, they're awful.

The worst of it is that Mr Blish, himself, seems to have been infected by the germ. The book has fourteen numbered chapters which are divided, for no apparent reason, into four "books". This main body is further sandwiched between two brief sections which are not numbered or labelled at all. There is nothing wrong with the final one (the Afterword?) except that it could just as well have been the last chapter: but there is plenty wrong with the foreword or prologue or introduction or whatever. It reads as if either (a) Mr Blish wrote it before he had really decided what the book was going to be about, or (b) he added it at the last minute, after reading the editor's blurbs, in an attempt to demonstrate how misleading, confusing, and generally unattractive a blurb can be if the writer thereof knows his stuff and really works at it.

All this may be quibbling, and of course I should know better than to read any piece of fiction with preconceived notions other than those I've formed myself on the basis of the writer's previous work. But the sad fact is that I did read half or more of The Frozen Year while plagued with preconceived and completely inaccurate ideas about it, and it took a conscious effort to get rid of them when I finally realized

CRITIC AT LARGE (2)

how inaccurate they were.

The story itself (a damned good one) is about an expedition to the North Pole, sponsored (reluctantly) by the IGY and (with enthusiasm proportional to apparent direct profit) by several commercial concerns. It is led by a man who is highly personable and extremely competent in many areas, but who is also a publicity-hungry monomaniac. The personality of Commodore Geoffrey Bramwell-Farnsworth (not that of his "Pneumatic" wife, as the blurbs would lead us to believe) dominates the book. Fortunately, it is a highly fascinating personality.

The story itself is also one of those "Is it?/isn't it?" affairs. In the end, the reader is left to form his own decision as to whether it is legitimate science fiction or not, because there is no possible way for the narrator to decide for sure whether the "villain" was or wasn't a Martian, as he claimed to be. There is evidence to support either side of the argument. It is greatly to Mr Blish's credit that he makes us read this and like it, because as a rule there is little or no justification for "Lady or the Tiger?" endings. But much--though not all--of the writing and handling of The Frozen Year is downright superb; and in this case the author is to be applauded for leaving the basic question in doubt instead of capping it neatly with a comfortable cliché

I can't help but feel, though, that the best way to dispose of this book is to classify it as a contemporary novel with science-fictional overtones. (I, privately, feel that the s-f overtones are there because science fiction is so much a part of Mr Blish's life and thought: that they forced themselves upon him instead of being consciously and objectively chosen by him. Whether this is a "good" or "bad" thing for the book, for Mr Blish, and for the reading public is too big a question for me to decide. Therefore I do not intend to recount the plot here, or criticize the book in minute detail.

The following generalities, however, seem important. Mr Blish writes, most of the time, with a precision and felicity that are as fascinating as they are rare, but he appears unable to resist the temptation to insert an occasional burst of wild, good-humored exaggeration and an occasional private joke. The exaggerations are often good fun by themselves, but jarringly out of step with the tone of the book as a whole; the jokes are just irritating. Most of the characters are exceptionally interesting people, drawn with remarkable depth. The narrator is the weakest of all and many of the touches designed to make him real and appealing seem hasty afterthoughts rather than basic premises. The book is full of bits of odd knowledge and surprising insights. It also contains some of the most genuinely exciting scenes you're likely to find anywhere, although the real climax is handled so hastily and indirectly that it may leave you feeling slightly cheated.

In short, the book has flaws--but they are flaws which would not be nearly as noticeable in the average science fiction novel. TFY gives the distinct overall impression of being a major work, and this impression automatically magnifies whatever flaws it has. Also there is a vast amount of genuinely mature, powerful, and absorbing stuff here to

CRITIC AT LARGE (3)

compare the weaknesses to.

My advice: ignore all reviews, including this one, and just read the book. James Blish is a writer. Damned few people who write can make that statement.

EYE IN THE SKY

by Philip K. Dick

Ace Double Size Books

Philip K. Dick (whose name sounds more like a pseudonym for Kuttner than any of Kuttner's pseudonyms do) is rapidly becoming the Bugs Bunny of the science fiction field. You never know where he is going to pop up, or what unlikely piece of equipment he is going to use next.

Recently Mr Dick virtually abandoned short stories to write vanVogtian novels for Ace. Three in a row became progressively more complex and progressively better. None of them achieved complete unity and coherence but all were well worth reading. Now, suddenly and startlingly, he has turned to another vein entirely, and written a wonderful fantasy in the Unknown Worlds tradition.

Fantasy, it is true, doesn't sell these days, so Mr Dick has been careful to give this novel a pseudo-scientific explanation--and as such things go, the explanation is a wonderfully convincing one. But don't expect science fiction. Eye In The Sky is a beautiful development of several logically consistent dream worlds. If it had actually appeared in Unknown Worlds, it would probably have rated a B-plus rather than an A designation; as it is, we can only be thankful that it was published at all.

There is one major flaw: Mr Dick apparently can't visualize. Several examples could be chosen. To choose one: halfway through the book, six people are riding in an automobile. That is, Mr Dick says they are; but from all the evidence he gives the reader, the six people are seated in a circle, looking at each other.

The characterization is fabulously good; the plot is non-existent. The individual dream worlds themselves are what make this particular novel so good. It's an exciting romp, not to be taken too seriously. But if Mr Dick ever decides to devote plenty of time to any one book, the result should be out of this world.

--CAL

March 1957

IT'S LONDON IN '57*

For complete info, write: ROBERTA WILD
204 Wellmeadow Road,
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*The 15th World S F Convention, of course.

LAZARETTE

A department devoted
to the reader...

Keith Nelson

1133 Green Street

Marietta, Ohio

Dear Lee & Larry Shaw:

Boner number one (or is it?) goes like this:- Since THE STARS MY DESTINATION by Alfred Bester is obviously so ridiculous (sounds horribly trashy) why in the name of sanity did Critic At Large waste such an enormous lot of space on it? Agreed: readers want to know how the Critic arrives at a thumbs-down verdict. But is it necessary for the Critic to detail so many proofs of unworthiness?

Andy Young may know what he is talking about, but is he talking about what he knows? After reading his SOME REMARKS ABOUT QUANTUM MECHANICS & RELATIVITY, I am vastly more confused than formerly anent such matters.

Editorial remarks on page 8, in re simplicity, sound very sensible to me.

The names Willis, Speer and Tucker are as yet mere rumors to me. For what are they famous? Say, do you Shaws know a couple of STF notables: notables named Robert Bloch and F.A.((J.)) Ackerman? I'm told they are widely known for their very clever puns. Are the Willis-Speer-Tucker punsters too? No matter.

"Either Bloch or Tuckerman
Make a pun like Ackerman,
But Robert, och! is Willis'S peer
And Moby of the Loch is Speer."

By the way, I forgot to say that I like the way Critic At Large writes, regardless of the amount of space given to any particular review.

Oh? So Larry Shaw edits SF ADVENTURES eh? Well, I bot the first three issues and so far have read only the first. Fair stories, I thot; in spots I got a nostalgic feeling of being back in some of Burrough's stuff...Say, you know there's a great tendency to rate a story's "readability" or "enjoyment potential" solely on the basis of its literary level. On the basis of the story itself.

But what of the reader himself? Supposing he be very intelligent, perceptive and otherwise fully capable of understanding and enjoying work done on a high literary level--is he not then also capable of adjusting, adapting, rearranging his perceptive faculties so as to enjoy work of lesser literary merit? It seems to me that his very intelligent and elastic concepts should make him the very one who is able to read and enjoy a wider range of fiction on highly diverse mental levels. One might cite the perhaps weak but still legitimate analogy of the man who feels genuinely at home in any company of minds--janitor, teacher, scientist, etc. Such a man does not adjust to the company at hand merely by virtue of necessity. He also adjusts because an elastic mentality enjoys (and often profits by) placing itself in varied contexts; because he is really interested in how the world looks to other eyes.

So....is it really true that SF A will appeal largely only to "the

Fleischman (2)

Too much concentration on background is the fault. And pointless sadism --gad, this yarn is chock full of it! I suppose Bester was becoming so involved that he didn't know what to write. So he threw in plenty of sadism. Very few notices so what the hell.

Mercer was good, as are so many of the British fen. As someone recently commented, they seem to have a higher level of ability, on the average. (("... 's are the writer's.)) Marty

Andy Young & Co

10 Sumner Road

Cambridge 38, Mass.

Dear L. Shaw,

Man that Critic is really scathing, isn't he? Or she? Gee. I was quite satisfied with the nasty things the critic said about that Bester serial in Galaxy. It isn't often that I but the first installment of a novel and then deliberately refrain from getting the remaining installments.

I thought the criticism of SFA was overly harsh, but it's what you might expect from people closely connected with the magazine. You tend to be more aware of your shortcomings than other people are.

Possibly SFA suffers from the (well, one of the) troubles that plague STELLAR: there isn't enough good material of some such limited subspecies of writing available, so you either have to turn to poor material or get outside the limitations set up.

Archie Mercer was more chunky than boring. As advertised, it was mostly lightweight, but I was particularly impressed by "Would you let YOUR Negro marry a Daughter?"

Andy

George Spencer

no address given

YOU-ALLS,

...As for format, I was rather surprised to see a magazine so much like my own. That's what comes from two faneditors taking advice from the same person, namely Ted E. White. You even have the pica type. I presume, from the cleancut look of the type that you use backing sheet instead of cushion sheet, also like me. ((we use both-ed)) You say you are not lean on illustrations, yet the issue is a little stark, as many pages without true illustrations tend to be a bit...well, nekkit. Your little peepul are fine, as far as they go, but they are none too substantial, and are spread approximately one for every two features. I heartily suggest you make more use of your capable art (mit capital) editor in future.

Looking at some of the mistakes produced by your rushing* the job makes me all the happier that I take it easy and correct every error I can find on stencil without trying to beat deadlines all the time. Strikeovers are never very pleasant to read, and one usually comes out with odd sentences in the ~~xxxx~~ ((sic)) printed copy, like "Would you let YOUR Negro marry a Daughter?" This I presume is an error, but knowing fans, I am not betting on it.

Andy Young and your Critic At Large vie for first place in my opinion. Andy's article was competent for the range covered, even though the space was inadequate to go very far into either of the two subjects with any degree of competency. It provided a good introduction to the subjects as regards the bulk of conventional practical theory. I for one am glad you printed it.

((*not "rushing", but "slovernlly"--ed))

--George

SHAW
545 Manor Road
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