

This little
magazine
is modestly
called

```
*  **  *  *****  *****  *  *****  **  *****  *  *****  **  *
*  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *
*  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *
*  *  **  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *
*  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *
```

in the hope
that its
presence in
the title
will help
make up for
the total
lack of that
quality at
any other
place in the
thing.

This atrocity is perpetrated
by Lynn Bridges
7730 Pitt, Apt. #7
Detroit, Mich.
and fortunately is distributed
only thru MPA, whose members
should, by this time, be able
to stand anything.

It is the hope of the writer
that the reader likes this
little offering. If, however,
he dislikes it, there's
nothing which he can do
about it, as INSPIRATION is
written to satisfy the
egoistic whim of the editor,
who, if the truth be known,
thinks it stinks,
and is undoubtedly right.

2.....INSPIRATION

Originally, these pages were supposed to have been stapled with some additional pages by D. B. Thompson, the finished whole being called "PHANNY." Apparently there has been some sort of hold-up in the mails, as the Thompson stencils haven't arrived as yet, tho they were sent some time ago. As it's getting near the Fapa deadline as I write this, I've decided to finish up what was to have been my half of PHANNY without waiting for Don's stuff to arrive. The title change is made because Thompson's stencils may yet arrive in time to be printed for this mailing, and two PHANNYS would be confuzzin'. The name change will be permanent, as Don and I each write separate mags, tho they are stapled together for convenience. (There's still a chance that they will be stapled together this issue, provided the missing pages come in tomorrow.)

It's possible that this may not only be the first issue of INSPIRATION, but the last as well. In case anyone hasn't heard, there's a war going on; and the draft board has decided that they can use even such a physical wreck as I. The final medical exam has been taken, and I'll be in uniform before long, possibly before this mailing is sent. The future of INSPIRATION, therefore, is in doubt. If at all possible, it will be continued. It depends mostly upon what type of service I'm placed in.

The war is certain to have a great effect upon fandom, as upon everything else. A few fans have already joined the armed forces. Many more will undoubtedly do so before this thing is over. Until very recently, war was, to most of us, something which often helped make a good story; and beyond that point we thought little about it. War, in its actuality, takes on a grimmer aspect; it's something which we'd like to avoid, but which sometimes becomes necessary. And the more whole-heartedly we throw ourselves into the supreme purpose of winning, the sooner it will be over. So, for a while, ordinary pleasures, such as fandom, may have to be put aside. On the other hand, some form of escapist relaxation becomes more necessary than ever, to take minds away from the more unpleasant realities of everyday life. So it is that I anticipate a lessening or even stopping of activity by some of us; but an increase of activity by those who can find the time, which will more than make up for those missing.

The following pages are composed of junk written at odd intervals. Some of it was stenciled quite some time ago; parts aren't even written yet, tho I expect to finish the whole works within the next three hours. The use of the editorial first person plural in parts of the mag, and the singular form in others, may seem strange. The explanation is simple. At times we felt that we preferred the plural form and wrote it that way; and sometimes I decided that the singular form suited me best. It all depends on the mood we were in when I wrote the junk, as I couldn't be bothered rewriting the stuff once we'd put it down on paper. Besides, we still don't know which form I prefer.

Thinking up a new title for the fapazine was quite a job. At last it was decided that what was needed was an inspiration. So that became the title. Someone, I think it was Edison, once remarked that genius is 5% inspiration, and 95% perspiration. The title of this thing, then, furnishes the 5%. Anyone who's ever watched the writer's two-finger method of typing will know where the 95% comes in.

Once again, I must warn those who are about to read this, that I read the pro mags and that a large proportion of the stuff to come is written about the aforementioned pros. So those of you who have outgrown said prozines can now stop reading, there's nothing of interest to follow. The rest of you may as well stop too, as there's probably nothing of interest for you either. But I'm hoping that things won't be too horrible for those brave souls who do venture further into this thing.

A sad, touching event took place since the last mailing. We got rid of our ancient Remington. We'd long been tired of stooping over, picking up the pieces, and reassembling them every time we struck a key; but after all, the machine had been in the family for years, and had performed noble service. It seemed like deserting an old friend to part with it, but progress must go on! We're not certain whether or not our Remington was the first of the species or not, but it must have been close to it.

Anyhow, we shelled out the cash for a new portable, making the mistake of getting one with elite type. This means 78 spaces to the line instead of 65, and 6½ lines to the inch instead of 6. Thus, where we used to write 100 words, we now have to write 130 to fill up the same amount of space. And we had more than enough trouble writing the mere 100. (We use a 6½ inch wide line instead of the usual 7, on the theory that the extra ½ inch of space on the stapled edge of the page improves appearance and makes for easier reading.)

Much as we were attached to the old typer, we must admit that we like the new one. It's a cute little affair, almost small enough to carry in the vest pocket, which may come in handy in the near future. And, since we've now got small type, too, there's no longer any excuse to have Don cut all the stencils, so we're cutting the stuff in this half of PHANNY ourselves.

A short time ago, we'd have been the first to say that women can't write science-fiction. They can, and do, write excellent fantasy; but when it comes to a science-fiction story, I'd have said that the female sex was completely lacking in those writing qualities which make up good science-fiction. But that was before I'd read C. L. Moore's "There Shall Be Darkness."

The tale took us completely by surprise, for it is one of those rarest of all things, a "perfect" story. By "perfect," we mean a story with no readily discernable weaknesses in either plot or writing. (That word "writing" takes in a host of things, including the very important one of characterization.) Above all, a "perfect" story must be blended, just the right proportion between plot and writing, and it must leave something to be remembered long after the story has been read. "There Shall Be Darkness" does all of this. The philosophies and customs of Moore's Venusians are clearly and unforgettably set down in print, and at least four of the story's characters are going to be remembered, by this reader at least, for a long time to come. The excellent and vivid characterization in the story is probably the main reason we rate it so highly. Characters, to most s-f writers, are things to carry out the action of the story; but the characters, Quanna, Jamie Douglas, Vastari, and Ghej, seem to live. Indeed, the characterization at times almost submerges the plot, but not quite. The plot, too, is strong and above all reasonable. In short, we're quite nuts about the story. Or maybe we're just nuts.

One of the regrettable things about the s-f mag field is that a story such as this could appear in only one mag. We venture to say that every magazine on the market with the exception of ASTOUNDING would have rejected "There Shall Be Darkness." Palmer almost certainly would not have used it, at least not without editing out most of the characterization and inserting a few comic book action episodes. The Standard pubs, too, would have found the tale lacking in the action they require. Lowndes, while he might have appreciated the writing, would have discovered the ending to be too morbid for his better world tastes. PLANET is a possibility, tho. At times Reiss has shown quite admirable qualities in regards to experimentation in stories, but we think the "not enough action" theory would have caused him to turn the story down. As for Norton, the story would have been too long. While ASTONISHING and SUPER SCIENCE have used comparatively actionless shorts, their longer stories have invariably been the action type, with the hero rescuing the heroine and everyone living happily ever after ending. It's little wonder that ASF is our favorite mag.

From a science-fictional standpoint, the current war is something of a flop. No rocket ships, no death rays, not even so much as an atomic bomb has thus far been used. But the suggestion put forth in a recent American Weekly is certainly one to delight the heart of the most ardent science fiction fan. The idea is no less than that of setting off some of Japan's many volcanoes, thereby bringing havoc and destruction to the islands. We can't recall ever having heard of this plan in any story we've read. Of course, Atlantis has been repeatedly sunk by enemies who used the great internal fires of the earth to turn the trick, but apparently no fictional writer has ever bothered with the simpler and more practical system of using a ready-made volcano for the job.

We don't know how many bombs would be required to open a volcano, and we doubt if any geologist does either. But, if, in the opinion of those most qualified to judge, such a plan would work, it should be tried. A volcano on the loose can cause a tremendous amount of disaster, in fact the consequences of an eruption are pretty frightful to consider. But war, at its best, is not a pleasant thing, and anything which will hasten the downfall of the enemy ought to be considered. One bomb, certainly, wouldn't be enough. It would take a large number of perfectly aimed missiles. On the other hand, the top of a volcanic mountain would scarcely be strongly defended by anti-aircraft guns, so a bombing squadron should have plenty of opportunity to aim. At any rate, from a science-fictional point of view, the project is well worth trying for its experimental value alone.

'Twas recess time at the Michiconference, and a group of hungry fans descended upon a nearby eatery to gorge themselves with vitamins in preparation for the strenuous afternoon session to come. Kinn, the demon editor, picked up the mimeographed menu containing the day's specials, and read it thru intently. Item by item he perused the thing, considering each carefully. Still not satisfied, he went over the list again. Finally Dick's mind was made up. "Lousy mimeo job," he decided.

We are, at last, tiring of Doc Smith's epics. Tho it be sacrilegic, we can truthfully say that only parts of "Second Stage Lensmen" were enjoyable. It's not that Smith is slipping, far from it. His writing now is infinitely better than it was 10 or 14 years ago, his plots are better developed, his characters are more realistic, and the stories are much more smoothly put together. No, E. E. Smith is still to be rated as one of our outstanding authors. To some one reading a Smithian "epic" for the first time, we suppose they'd be great stuff. But we aren't reading one for the first time. We've gone thru the Skylarks, "Triplanetary," "Spacehounds," and the first two Lensmen stories.

There is a sameness about all these stories, and most especially about the Lensmen series, that is becoming tiresome. Civilization versus Boskonis, Kinnison against stronger and stronger adversaries, until the reader (who knows darned well that virtue will triumph and that Kinnison will emerge unscathed) begins to wonder if it will ever end. This latest story presented nothing really new, just elaborations on the previous stories.

However, things are apt to change for the next and last story of the series. At the Michicon Conference, Smith discussed the general plot of the as yet unwritten story with Walt Liebscher and myself, and it sounds very good. And there's a change in the plot! We're looking forward to it, even tho almost two years will have elapsed before it's ready. Smith is still tops among s-f writers, but we can't help feeling that it would have been as well if this latest story had been left unwritten and the time spent on it devoted to some more different tale.

In the last SOUND OFF!, Jenkins, backed up by Gilbert, wonders how anyone could like Cummings' "Tarrano, The Conqueror." The query was brought about by

my previous statement that "Tarrano" was superior to anything Cummings has done recently. Beyond calling the story "slop", the Columbia duo failed to say why they disliked the story. Well, I didn't give my reasons for liking it either, so I'll do so now. The main reason was that of characterization. As I've said before, good characterization, more than any other single factor, can put a story over for me. Cummings usually neglects this point, and I can't recall offhand another of his characters worth remembering. But Tarrano is one to be remembered. A villain who isn't completely a villain is unusual in science-fiction, even more so in Cummings' brand. And the hero of "Tarrano" was no superman, which helps make the story more believable. The plot wasn't particularly outstanding, but much worse ones have been seen.

Countless stories have been written about "alien invaders"; such things as metal monsters from Mars, or silicon slayers from Sirius, or perhaps just overgrown insects from our own terra firma. But we've never actually been engaged in a war with a really alien race. Physically, the English and Germans, with whom most of America's struggles have been, are indistinguishable from ourselves. But we're at war now with the people who come closer than any other to being "alien". The Japs are quite readily distinguished from our largely European populace, and their customs and religion are quite different. All of which makes the Japs, more than any other race on the globe, our natural enemies. This should make pacifists breathe easier. Even the most ardent of them can deny that we have a right to fight a truly "alien" race of invaders!

Those long ballad poems of Bond's in PLANET don't appeal to me overly much. But his one-line, geometric description of "Venus Nell" does. "She was flat where it flattered and curved where it mattered." That line has rhythm, it has beauty, and it makes sense; a delightfully descriptive bit of wordage, with the added advantage, rarely found in poetry, of being terse and to the point. I don't know whether the line is original with Bond or not, but it's good.

PLANET's policy of giving away illustrations for the best letters is defeating its original purpose. The scheme was designed as a method of getting the readers to write in giving their opinions of the mag. Well, the readers are writing in as per schedule, but with the prize of an illustration before their eyes, each letter is designed as a literary masterpiece in hopes of winning one of the darn things. In the ensuing struggle to make the missive as entertaining as possible, the writer invariably forgets all about such trivial matters as commenting on the stories.

I'm not quite certain as to why the letter writers want these pics anyhow. I got one of them once, a better than average Paul. The thing lay around the joint for awhile, and was finally taken to the Michiconference to be auctioned off. Well, I got rid of it alright, but I came back with a couple of Krupas, a Schneeman, a Jay Jackson, and maybe a couple of other monstrosities. Back home in Detroit, they were tossed onto a table and haven't been looked at since. There've been vague thoughts about hanging the things up somewhere, but nothing has been done about them.

Sometimes there's a longing for the "good old days" in letter box sections of the pros. Alongside those of '34 and '35, the present crop of letters to the editor seem weak and insipid. Best of any of the more recent letter sections was that of T. W. S. in the days immediately preceding Sergeant Saturn. As in olden times, a small group of excellent writers could be depended on to contribute regularly, and the letters invariably were more interesting than the stories (which isn't saying much). But alas, some bright soul at the Standard offices got the idea of Sergy-wergy Saturn, and the best of the letter writers gave up in disgust.

Some comments on items in the Winter mailing: (No, I'm not going to violate my rule of no reviews. I just want to comment on items in the mags not on the mags themselves.)

In the Fantasy Amateur, Rothman makes some comments regarding activity requirements which I second whole-heartedly. In fact, I'd like to go even further and recommend that requirements be stiffened to the point where members must contribute original material at least twice a year. This would rule out those whose only contribution has been, say, a letter or two to SOUND OFF!, or those who contribute a fanzine distributed elsewhere and consisting of but a page or two. (This latter system of contributing is nothing more than advertising.)

Surely it isn't asking too much of members to request that they write a page or so every so often. Most members have some means of mimeographing, hectographing, or otherwise printing or having printed, material; if they haven't, I'd venture the opinion that they shouldn't be members. As for time, an average fanzine doesn't take a great deal of time. Quite a bit of stuff can be typed onto a stencil in a very short time, and even the busiest fan should be able to find a spare moment now and then which can be spent on a hobby in which, presumably, he is very much interested. In the matter of finances, again I take a hardhearted attitude. If the member can't afford a couple of stencils, a few sheets of paper, and some postage stamps, why did he join? After all, membership in FAPA entails responsibility, and it should be the duty of every member to contribute as well as to receive.

(While I'm on the subject of financing fanzines, I may as well remark on Joe Gilbert's note of a couple of issues ago that the reason fanzines weren't bigger and better was because the dough, unlike subscription fanzines, must come out of the pockets of the members. Joe must be having much better success with the STAR than the average fan editor. Subscription fanzines, too, are largely paid for by the editor with the aid of but one or two other persons at the most. Yet a well-published sub fanzine costs several times as much to put out as a FAPA mag, if those I know about are any standard of measure. NOVA's editors, for instance, estimate the cost of an average issue at \$20, and I know darn well that ECLIPSE's deficit runs close to that amount each issue. And that's not counting original equipment, but just paper, stencils, ink, and postage. Do any of you spend that amount, or even a quarter of it, on your FAPA contribution? I know I don't.)

In JINX, Jenkins makes the surprising statement that FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is "infinitely better than AMAZING." Jenkins has made that statement before, but I've never commented on it. Bad as AMAZING is, I consider FA much worse, but then I prefer science-fiction while Harry likes fantasy. On the whole, tho, I agree with Harry on his selection of good stories which AMAZING has published. "I, Robot" certainly deserves high rating, as does the second in the series. It's too bad that Binder had to continue the Adam Link series as he did; the later ones in the series destroy completely the original good impression of them. Harry only lists one of Bond's stories as among the best, tho, while I consider Bond as AMAZING's top writer, with Wilcox a close second. Wilcox has had too many cheap adventure thrillers to really deserve the top position usually given him, tho he's done some darn good work. But Bond's "Priestess Who Rebelled" is a story I'd rate near the top in any Ziff-Davis anthology, and Bond's other stories have been consistently readable.

Darned if we can figure out just why we're going to all the trouble of using even margins on this thing. The way it's finally stencilled is exactly the way it's written originally. We dummy as we write, and can't be bothered revising anything, no matter how badly it may sound. Something we've just discovered -- this typewriter clogs up with stencil residue much more easily than did the old. Last night a couple of stencils were cut, and when first used

this evening almost every key struck registered as a well-nigh indecipherable blur. I have my doubts about the legibility of that last stencil (page 5.) In the future, more frequent cleaning of the keys is promised.

In his interesting commentary of last mailing, E. E. Evans mentions Jack Wiedenbeck as a fan of whom much will be heard. I second that completely. Besides having more than a little talent as an artist, Jack's one of the nicest guys I've ever had the pleasure of meeting. This thing called fandom would be much better if there were more newcomers to the field like Jack Wiedenbeck. For that matter, the whole NOVA bunch are well worth knowing. Evans, thru his many writings and activities, is well known to all of you. Not so well known as yet are Jack and the Ashleys, but I'm expecting that they'll all be heard from a great deal.

Another fan artist I like very well is Rudy Sayn. His art work has won wide acclaim from everyone, except Rudy. Kuhn and I have often tried to get Sayn to sign one of his drawings, but he invariably says that he'll sign one only when he thinks it's a good drawing. After looking at those he's already done, I'm wondering what kind of a masterpiece it'll have to be, before it satisfies Rudy. But Rudy's always ready to help out with an extra drawing, or some extra work; even tho he's taking a night school art course in addition to having a full-time job. Considered either on the basis of personal friendship, or on the basis of ability, Rudy Sayn is one of my favorite fans.

Only a little over half a page left, which means that I'm running out of both space and time. I'm completing this page by composing directly on the stencil and letting the margins fall where they may.

Don's PHANNY stencils haven't arrived as yet, which means that this stuff will have to go by itself, without some of the Basilisk's better writing to raise the quality of the mag as a whole. The letter idea used in last mailing's PHANNY worked out none too well, mostly because I was never able to answer Don's letters within a reasonable length of time. So, for this issue we decided to go back to the original system of writing separate halves of a fanzine. That's the reason the other side of this page is blank. It's the place where Don's material was supposed to finish. I can't fill the space myself, because this is the last stencil in the joint, and by the time I can get some more from the ECLIPSE supplies, it'll be too late. Besides, I've had enough trouble filling this much space.

As I guessed on page two, I won't be around to receive this mailing. The call from the draft board came today, and I leave within a week. The things said about non-contributing members on the opposite page now strike home with painful implications, as it looks doubtful whether or not any of this junk is to be found in the next few mailings. But everything said there still goes. I still feel that it is the duty of members to contribute, no matter what the circumstances. I'm going to do my best to continue writing for FAPA. If it can't be done, my membership should be dropped as soon as anyone else's. It's not fair to the other members, to ask that inactive persons be allowed to continue receiving mailings.

The week I have left before induction doesn't leave much time for a lot of things I still want to do, and that includes writing to a lot of you fans. So, for those of you who don't hear from me, I'll use this opportunity to tell you that I'll write later. And so, until (or if) I once again write a few more pages of junk like this, so long.

MIDWEST FAN SOCIETY
EDWARD C. CONNOR
929 Butler Street
PEORIA, ILLINOIS