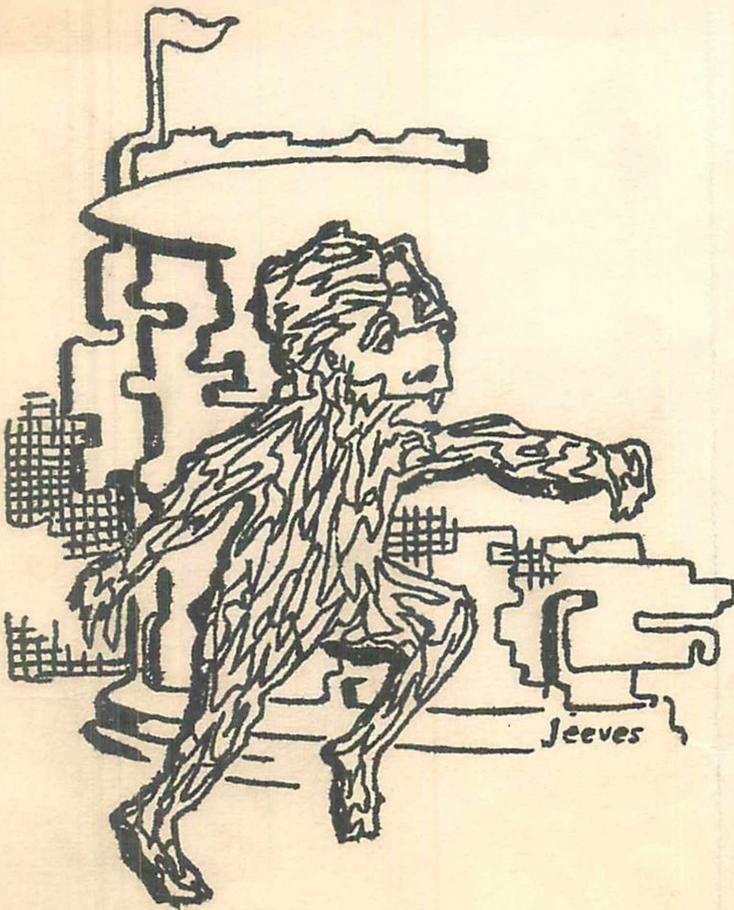


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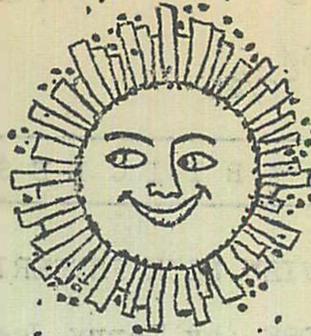
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AN INTERVIEW WITH FREDERIK POHL

(Sept. 26, 1970 — October 7, 1970)

by

PAUL WALKER



QUESTION 1:

On your Grand Tour of 2527, in The Age of the Pussyfoot, you suggest (if I understand you correctly) that, for the future, we may expect even more of today. Capitalism moves ever onward in its ever changing guises, motivated by man's desire for material goods. Socialist idealism gives way to the "corporate state," and the wonders of a Gembacchanalian technology are bent to the frivolous demands of a middle-class society. Is this to be, sir?

ANSWER:

First off, Paul, we're not going to get along very well if you ask me to defend my stories as prediction of "the" future. That's not what they're meant to be. For one thing, there is no single future. By the time our possible options are reduced to one it isn't the future any more, it's the present. While it is the future, it is plural.

My stories are not predictions at all, they are cautionary tales (or else, rarely, they are Utopian tales), describing one possible set of future events.

I don't feel any obligation to answer a question of the form "do you really think this is what's going to happen?"; or to defend myself against charges of inconsistency between stories. Of course, each story has an internal logic and I must defend that if pressed.

QUESTION 2:

Do you think our current trend toward socialism will be eclipsed?

ANSWER:

I don't think so, on the grounds that there isn't any such trend visible, so how can it be eclipsed? I see no evidence for increasing degrees of socialism, whether Marxist or otherwise, anywhere in the world. I do see, of course, an increasing trend toward statism and toward the concentration of power in semi-public institutions, but I don't think this is socialism.

Some partisans on either side of the state-power issue refer to this trend as socialism, and if that's what you mean, then I must give a different answer. But it still won't be a good one, because I don't think this trend will either continue or be reversed. I simply think it will be outmoded. This is, after all, what happens to all large-scale competitions; they are hardly ever resolved, they are simply replaced by different dichotomies.

(Some people think that these competitions get resolved because they often develop into wars, and wars usually have one side labeled "winner" and the other side labeled "loser." But this is nonsense, of course. The South "lost" the Civil War, but obviously the Confederacy now owns the rest of the country in fee simple. The Germans and Japanese "lost" WWII, but what are now the two fastest-growing economies on the earth?)

QUESTION 3:

What about technology? Can it -- has it -- altered the basic elements of human nature: the physical and emotional content of love and hate, aggression and passivity? Do you see any basic changes in the nature of man that you would ascribe to technology?

ANSWER:

Certainly technology can basically alter our life styles. It is doing so at a headlong pace right now: the computer, the automobile, antibiotics, TV have made 1970 more different from 1870 than 1870 was from the Middle Ages. The problem with using those things as illustrations is that we haven't the perspective to see clearly what is happening to us, so let me go to the past for an example.

If there is one "moral" dogma that is universally agreed to it is the stricture against "cruel and unusual punishment" -- i.e., torture. Everybody says that is evil. It is still practiced, to be sure, quite universally, including all parts of the United States; but no public figure anywhere defends it on principle.

When we read in the history books of gladiatorial games and examination "under duress" -- that is, with rack and thumbscrews -- we think how much life styles have changed. But the change is technology. Until about the middle of the last century, pain was part of every human being's life. He expected it as a matter of course, and he got it. About the only difference between being flayed alive and a normal everyday toothache was that you could survive the second, but not the first; the degree of agony was quite close. Then along came anesthesia and analgesia, etc., and pain became remediable.

So what does one say about this particular change? That it is an improvement in morality; that we are kinder now, because we don't hurt people? That it is a matter of technology? Actually, I think the explanation is that morality follows technology; what is "good" and "right" is always limited to what is possible.

*

People change all the time. They are changed the most when they think themselves unchanged at all. (See my Day Million on this point.)

What I do think is that this change does not always involve the same parameters and that it is not always in the same direction.

I don't want to talk about my work because that sort of naked vanity is embarrassing to me, so let me give you some illustrations from the real world. Compare Communist and Capitalist. Is there a difference between a Communist apparatnik and an American management man?

They think so. If you ask them what they believe in, they would even make you think so; for one would relate his life to the solidarity of the working class and the quest for world peace, while the other would refer to God and the therapeutic effects of free markets.

In practice, however, you can't tell them apart. The Communist who occupies a middle-management position in the Soviet structure (member of the municipal party secretariat, for instance) is identical with the GM or National City Bank \$40,000-a-year man in his terror of saying the non-conforming thing or losing sight of the organization goal. To each the central fact of the world is that he is better off than 99% of the people around him, and he owes it to the apparatus; and he is scared witless of jeopardizing the apparatus itself or his position within it.

So from this, class, we see that where human nature appears to be most changed it may well be exactly the same. Now let us prove that where it seems to be exactly the same it may well be wholly changed. Let us consider love.

If we see romantic dramas, perhaps Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet or Anthony and Cleopatra, we nod and say, ah, yes, to be sure, I saw that in an old MGM movie on TV last night; love was exactly the same to Hemia and Cleopatra as it was a few thousand years later to Bette Davis and Toby Wing. Well, it wasn't. Classic Greece and Rome had no tradition of sentimental love at all. Their man-woman couples did not practice tender courtship or suffer agonies at separation. When, very rarely, some couple showed what we would now consider a normal man-woman infatuation,

their contemporaries thought they had gone crazy. It wasn't until Eleanor of Aquitaine that mooning over a desired lover came to seem standard behavior even in the western world, and of course it is only since MGM that it has come to seem so in most of the rest of the planet.

Well, Paul, I didn't mean to belabor the point, but what the point is is that I don't think there is a specific direction or kind of change in human behavior for the future any more than I think there is a specific single future. Under certain conditions there will be change of a certain kind, and when I write about those conditions I talk about that kind of change. Under other conditions, I don't think there will be any change at all; perhaps only a relabeling as between Soviet and Organization Man, and when I write about those conditions that is what I show. And then, of course, sometimes I goof.

QUESTION 4:

Much of recent science-fiction is less concerned with the technological (i.e., gadgetry) and exotic (i.e., BEMs) aspect of the future than it is with creating a social awareness of contemporary issues (i.e., racism and war). In my last letter, I said I thought you were less interested in the future of man than in man as he is today; is that true or not? What does a white, middle-aged, middle-class man of this 1970, with a respect for good English and academic pursuits, have to say to, and about, those whippersnappers of the "Age of Aquarius"?

ANSWER:

The reason I didn't say I was less interested in the future of man than in man today is that it isn't true. Nor do I think those whippersnappers are as disrespectful of my long grey beard and glittering eye as you appear to be.

The long answer is that I don't think there is an Age of Aquarius, except for a tiny few people in a very limited part of the Earth. In some moods, I think it is too bad. How nice it would be if we could greet strangers in love and joy instead of looking at their hands to see if they're holding a knife. In other moods I think that even violence, repression, and industrial filth are not too high a price to pay for the rapid increase in knowledge and power the human race has experienced in the past few decades.

But when forced to think about everything together I come back to the short answer. The Age of Aquarius is a function of surplus production, and there is little reason to think that the human race can sustain the creation of even local and temporary surpluses.

QUESTION 5:

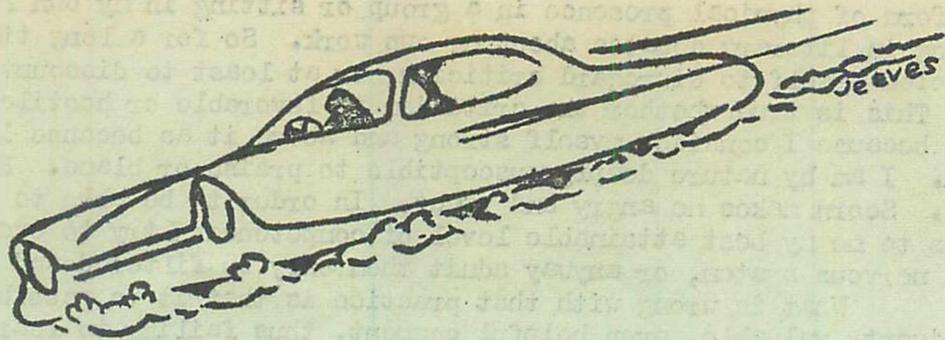
That is a most provocative response, sir. Without quibbling over any inconsistency in your remarks, I think it should be asked: What good are knowledge and power to man if they do not eradicate violence, repression, and industrial filth? In fact, are they not inimical to man if they encourage violence, repression, and industrial filth? Some suggest man would be wiser to settle for less knowledge and power.

But then, what do you mean by "knowledge"? What do you mean by "power"?

ANSWER:

Certainly technology is a force for good. Equally certainly it produces side effects which are bad. The big job for all of us is to try to retain the good parts while suppressing the evil side-effects.

Of course, there are those modern Luddites who want to give up technology completely and go on a life of tilling the soil, sitar music, and macrobiotic wheat germ bread. God bless. I don't object to any person feeling this way, although I do object to having any person try to impose this feeling on my life; I don't want to give up technology. What I want to do is separate the automobile from its



exhaust and traffic jams, the air conditioner from power blackouts, nuclear power from nuclear fallout; so that we can keep the first and avoid the second, in each case. If my stories show the undesirable effects of technology, and of course they do, it is because they are of concern to me. But I have never believed in throwing the baby out with the bath.

What I mean by "power" is the ability to change the environment, and in general to do whatever the hell one wants to do. Some environmental changes are of course lousy: the Sahara, the outskirts of any American city, Lake Erie, etc. But most are good. We can live in deserts, at the South Pole, or on the Moon, because we can change the environment or bring a new environment with us. Even our scenic changes are often good: anyone who likes England or the Mediterranean coast of France or the Bay of Naples must agree to this, because they are all artifacts; the "natural" state of all of them is long gone.

What I mean by "knowledge" is all kinds of knowledge -- you never know what particular bit of information is going to be useful. But the particular kind of knowledge that I think is urgently required is that kind which helps predict future events. You learn to drive a car. You learn right away that if you step down on the accelerator you go faster. You learn a little bit later, and maybe only after disastrous experience, that the other thing you accomplish when you step down on the accelerator is to increase your chances of wiping out yourself and sixteen other people in a crash.

That, too, is a matter of side effects, of course.

A couple of years ago I was asked to keynote what is called the "Goddard Memorial Conference" for the American Astronautical Society; the subject of the conference was the relationship between progress and technology. For the purpose, I invented a quantum unit of progress, on the principle that you couldn't relate the two concepts unless they had a measuring unit in common. The quantum unit I used was the "option". I defined as "progressive" that kind of technological change which increased the number of options available to human beings and societies; as "anti-progressive" that which reduced them.

Knowledge and power, in any sense but particularly in the senses above, increase options.

QUESTION 6:

What about the "New Wave"? What about your critics?

ANSWER:

Behavioristically, what is true of the New Wave in general is that they are deeply given to discussing their work. I'm not, or at least not in the same way. The Milford sort of thing seems to me fraught with dangers. Its attraction, to the extent that I perceive any attractions in it at all, appear to lie more in the direction of personal group therapy than in improving the individual literary skills of the participants.

I think it damages more writers than it helps, all in all, but principally I am convinced that it damages me when I engage in this sort of thing, whether in

the form of physical presence in a group or sitting in my own little room and engaging in literary debates about my own work. So for a long time, Paul, I have schooled myself to disregard criticism, or at least to discount maybe nine-tenths of it. This is true whether the criticism is favorable or hostile, and it isn't so much because I consider myself strong and above it as because I am certain that I am weak. I am by nature deeply susceptible to praise or blame. Flattery turns my head. Scorn makes me angry and upset. In order to be able to function at what seems to me my best attainable level of competence I try to exclude both from my central nervous system, or anyway admit them only in filtered and tenuous form.

What is wrong with that practice is that it is possible I miss a lot of intelligent, valuable, even helpful comment, thus failing to learn things I should know and thereby damaging myself and my work. I know this is a danger, but I have no good way to avoid it.

However, I am quite sure it is not much of a danger. Let me give an illustration. One of the most complete and perceptive studies ever made of me and my work was Kingsley Amis's. When he said in *NEW MAPS OF HELL* that I was the best sf writer around I wrestled with an overpowering urge to vanity for some time. After some traumatic spasms I came to the conclusion that he didn't know what he was talking about. The most he should properly have said was that I happened to be the one writer who was consistently performing well in one particular area of sf, the sf of social comment, and he happened to be interested in only that area. A few years later Kingsley changed his wife and his politics and came to the conclusion that I was no damn good at all.

Well, he was wrong both times, you see. And, in general, sf critics are as likely to be wrong as they are to be right.

I have spent most of my life in sf, one way or another, so you are entitled to ask what I think I'm doing in it. I am trying as best I can to learn everything I can about everything there is; to assemble the information thus acquired into patterns of relevance; and to display these patterns, as entertainingly as I can, to anyone who cares to read them in the form of science-fiction stories.

How well have I succeeded? About this I am both humble and vain. My humility lies in the awareness that, at the age of fifty, I still have managed to learn only very imperfectly the merest surface glimmering of the enormous variety of human knowledge. I have only partially and inadequately been able to form what I have learned into larger schemes; and I have failed almost wholly to convey them in stories. My vanity, on the other hand, lies in the perception that, inadequate as I am, I can't think of very many others who have done even as well, much less better.

QUESTION 7:

Apropos of nothing, I remember the poverty so vividly described in *GLADIATOR-AT-LAW*, and now here in *THE AGE OF THE PUSSYFOOT*. Your protagonists' terror of it, and their eventual realization that life goes on, regardless. I'm curious to know if this is based on personal experience.

ANSWER:

Have I had a personal experience of poverty? Sure. As a kid I swung with the pendulum of my father's fortunes, and he was a plunger. One week we lived in a suite in a luxury hotel, the next we were looking for a rooming house to take us in on credit. I don't think it scared me, exactly, but it did affect my attitudes, although by the time I was twelve or thirteen the swings had pretty much leveled out.

I no longer worry much about poverty, partly because I've made a reasonable amount of money and partly because money isn't what I want anyway. (The one great good thing about my life is that I don't have to do anything just for money, because it has turned out that people will give me money for doing things I would gladly have done for nothing anyway.) If I became poor I would be seriously annoyed, at least temporarily, because it would mean that I couldn't take the kids to Europe or fly the whole family to Bermuda to get out of the cold weather or keep three cars and six TV sets any more; but in the long run what it would probably mean would be that

we'd sell out and move to some cheaper, but quite likely pleasanter and more interesting, place.

QUESTION 8:

It is not uncommon for a writer to say he writes to clarify his thoughts to himself, as well as to stimulate and entertain. On the other hand, we have D. H. Lawrence's perspective that his thoughts arose from the material at hand. Do you think of yourself as a social observer utilizing the medium to express your opinions — or would you write if you had no opinions whatever?

Also, what is your apparent fondness for the short story?

ANSWER:

I can't imagine what I would be like if I had no opinions (I can't believe that a person with no opinions is even human). Someone once said that the proper title for any literary work is "How to be More Like Me." I agree that this is so; I write for the same reason any other writer writes, because I feel that I have something to say that should be said.

The material shapes my thoughts as much as my thoughts shape the material. I can distinguish between the two in other people's work, sometimes, I think. I am sure I can't very well in my own.

In the same way, the decision to write a novel, a novelette, or a short story is in part because of the material and in part my own. I can't give up a general rule, because each case is different. Let me go back a little bit behind your question and talk about how writers write.

A professional writer seldom sits down to write because he is inspired to say one particular thing at that particular time. His head is always abuzz with bits and pieces of things he sort of wants to think out and put down, and what makes him write one thing rather than another is ordinarily an external force such as an editor or publisher; he is asked to contribute a short story to a magazine or a book, or he has to fulfill a book contract, or he sees a market and tries to find something to sell to it.



The advantages of this are two: First, financial; he stands to make more money by producing something that someone is known to want to buy than by producing something that he thinks is worthwhile, but that has to sell itself to a customer. Second, it causes him to write in the first place.

The disadvantages, however, are severe. I have a stack of about twenty sf novels that I've read, waiting to be reviewed, and frankly I haven't the heart to review them because they are so uniformly lousy. If they have one thing in common, it is that none of them, not even one of them, is quite worth the space it takes up. Most of them are worth very little because of incompetence on the part of the writers; it appears that anything that is called sf and comes out to at least 50,000 words will get published by somebody, sooner or later. But even the ones which have some good qualities are fat, bloated, stretched out, milked. The reason for this is the pressure of the market; there is little market for short stories and novelettes, an insatiable market for novels.

So if you are a writer of moderate talent and standing, what do you do with your short story ideas? Why, you do what everybody else does: you pad them out to 60,000 words, whether they can stand it or not.

For various reasons I've been under less pressure than many writers in this way; so I've been able to resist the temptation at least part of the time. I'm not really particularly fond of the short story qua short story, but I've been able to avoid the necessity of turning all my short story ideas into jumped-up novels.

QUESTION 9:

Aside from short stories, you write novels, essays; you edit magazines and attend fan functions; you lecture and do stints as a panelist on radio shows: Do you feel at home in any one of these activities more than the others? Or do you feel that familiar restlessness when doing one thing, to being doing another?

ANSWER:

Well, first and foremost, I consider myself a writer.

Anything else I do has to accommodate itself to that fact. When occasion permits, I enjoy lecturing. I'm ham enough to get a charge out of making 1800 people laugh or think about something they've never troubled to consider before. I find a hell of a lot of useful feedback from lecturing, too; the questions from the floor, the casual comments afterward, the opportunity to interact with non-literary types -- all this is good stuff for me, and probably would be for any writer. But if lecturing interferes with writing I lay off lecturing. In fact, I have done so for most of this year; apart from teaching a couple of college courses and one or two previous engagements that I couldn't get out of, I've accepted only about half a dozen lecture invitations in calendar 1970, and each of them for a particular reason. It had simply reached the point where I couldn't do some of the writing I wanted. (Currently, there are three books and two magazine projects, including a series of interviews for PLAYBOY.)

Editing is another matter. If I had to choose between editing and writing, either one to the exclusion of the other, I would have to think a little harder. I probably would still choose writing, as a general principle, but with more regret. However, I don't have that freedom of choice in any realistic sense. I gave up editing not because it was interfering with writing but because editing itself became unattractive under the conditions currently open to me.

An editor is a middleman between various pairs of imperatives. Between the publisher and the writer; between the writer and the reader; between art and the marketplace; I could go on multiplying yings and yangs indefinitely. The interests of the opposite pairs are often incompatible, so the editor has to work out the least damaging compromise.

This is pretty abrasive on him. John Campbell once lumbered over to me at a dinner party, grabbed me by the lapel and said, "Fred, do you realize that every editor who doesn't work at science with his hands goes crazy in three years?" Well, I had several answers to make to that, of course. But editors, particularly sf

editors, do operate under a bitch of a strain. Half a dozen of them have cracked up, one way or another, and a lot of others would have if only they had had the perception and the diligence to accept their responsibilities.

Most things worth doing include strain; but it seems to me of late the job of sf editor, at least of magazines, has become increasingly stressful and less rewarding. I may be wrong. It may just be that I'm getting older. But thirty years ago the only difficult part of my job, as editor of ASTONISHING STORIES and SUPER SCIENCE STORIES, was getting writers to give me stories I liked. Two years ago that was only one difficult task out of many; I also had, as editor of GALAXY and IF, to try to get distributors to put the magazines out where people could find them, printers to set type with only a few errors and print pages without getting very many of them upside down, advertisers to kick in a few bucks for space, and so on. All of these tasks were just as difficult as dealing with writers, and an awful lot less fun.

The way around those particular tasks is to work for a large publishing house that maintains a staff of specialists to do all that miserable stuff; John has that going for him at Condo Nast, for instance. That option was not open to me, at least not without a lot of other disagreeable involvements, because I also happen to feel that there's no point being an editor unless you can make all the editorial decisions yourself. Few large publishing companies allow their editors this freedom.

At some future date I may find the right combination to edit sf, either in book or magazine form, again. When I'm not doing it I miss it; I love the creative parts of it, the finding a format in which to publish a story for maximum effect (cf THE DRAGON MASTERS), the bringing along a writer who makes it (cf Larry Niven, R. A. Lafferty), the providing a showplace for kinds of stories that haven't been available before (cf INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FICTION) and so on.

But most of it, I don't miss at all.

QUESTION 10:

While editor of IF/GALAXY, you are reputed to have said that your readership consisted of fourteen-year-olds and their parents, and that you would print nothing that would offend the parents. Is this true or false?

ANSWER:

Frendly, Paul, it's a damn silly question. I mean, you've seen copies of GALAXY and IF. If it were true that I tried to keep out of them any matter which might be offensive to fourteen years olds and their parents, it is quite clear that I didn't succeed very well. I don't know of any "sensitive" subject that was not dealt with in numerous stories in GALAXY and IF during my tenure. Sex, race, religion, politics -- if there is something I prevented people from writing about, could you possibly tell me what it is?

I did, of course, from time to time cut out certain specific words which seemed to be offensive. There was no hard and fast rule about this; a word which might be undesirable in one context would be obviously necessary, and therefore left in, in another. And we are talking about a time several years past now; I'm not sure I would feel as strongly today. But I'm not sure I wouldn't either. I would have to judge each story on its own merits.

The principal reason for making editorial changes is to please readers -- or to avoid displeasing readers, which comes to much the same thing. On the record, I was pretty good at that. When I took the magazines over, they were bi-monthlies running in the red. When I left them they were both monthlies running in the black. I won the editing Hugo for three years straight. Every year there were more stories from my magazines winning Hugos and Nebulas than from any other. So, as far as these things can be measured, I think I did about as much as I could at pleasing readers.

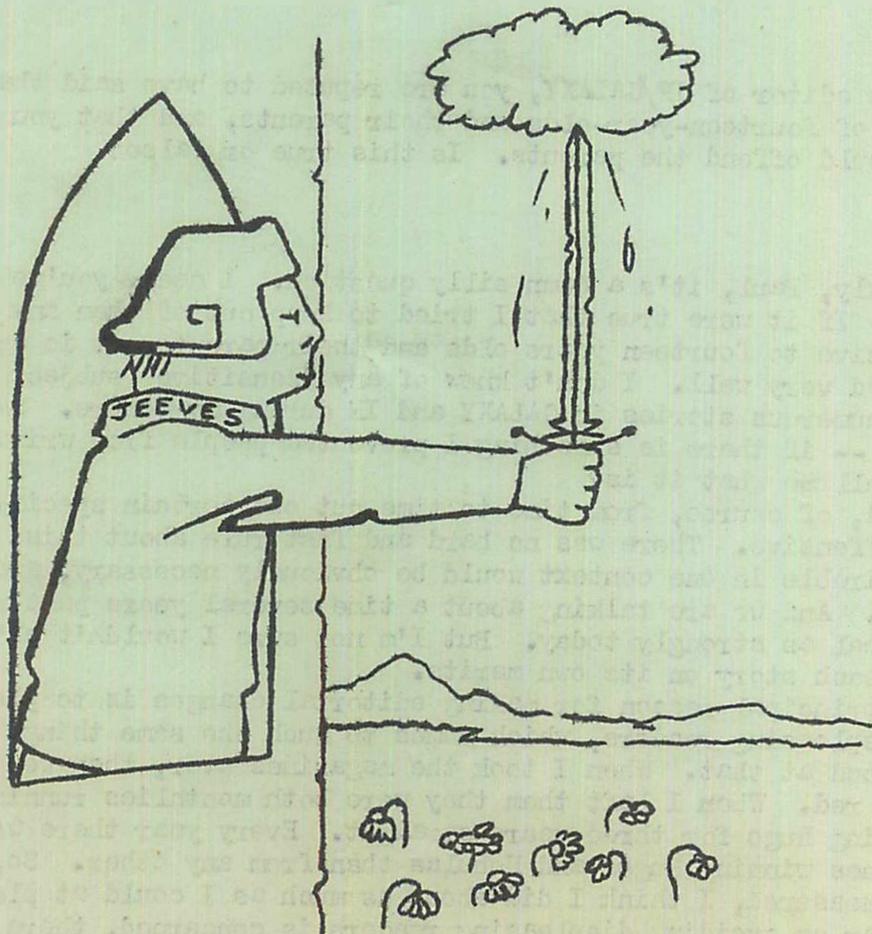
As far as avoiding displeasing readers is concerned, there aren't as good measures to be made. The only way you can tell when you've really displeased readers is when they take the trouble to write you about it, perhaps cancelling subscriptions. That didn't happen often. The only story that produced any sizable number

of complaints was Brian Aldiss's THE DARK LIGHT YEARS, dealing with aliens who regarded moving their bowels as a sacramental act, and the complaints were not particularly violent.

The most violent complaints we ever got were not for a story: they were about Lester del Rey's lightly unfavorable review of 2001. One of the reasons why I am not over-fond of New Wavers is the organized lynch mob that sprang up among their hangers-on at that point; we were threatened with all sorts of retribution, in violent and stupid terms. But that's a separate problem. I often disagreed with what Lester, A. J. (Budrys), and other columnists had to say; but I never censored their saying it. One columnist kept making gross factual errors until I dropped him; I seldom even changed them. I never once rejected a story because it was "too daring". Not once. Not ever.

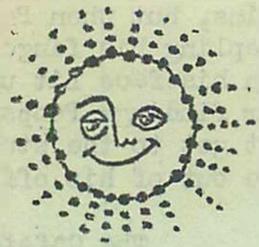
I do feel the current emphasis on sex, for instance, in sf is a retrograde movement; damn few writers have anything original to say on the subject, and most stories in that area are pretty poor stuff. But when a writer did have anything interesting to say about sex, I think he was more likely to be able to say it in GALAXY and IF than in any other professional sf magazine. When they were good, I printed them, even if they were dirty. When they were bad, I bounced them, even if they were clean. Or anyway I came as close as I could.

f i n i s .



PSI NO MORE

TERRY JEEVES



Hiram T. Poopsnaggle was preparing breakfast. He spooned a dollop of sugar into a mug of watery coffee while absently wondering what to do with his first million once he managed to make it. A curl of black smoke marked the start of a protest demonstration by the neglected bread in the toaster. Hastily rescuing the burnt sacrifices, Hiram liberally smeared them with a half inch layer of gooey butter topped with a dollop of strawberry jam.

With his salivary glands commencing their limbering up exercises, he carried the feast into the sitting room, tripped neatly over the cable to the standard lamp, and hurled the trayfull across the room. The coffee went over the cat, which signified its disapproval by vanishing out of the window. The slices of toast described neat parabolas and landed on the carpet — gooey side down....SPLAT!

Hiram made the cortico-thalamic pause to calm his nerves, then followed it up with a lifetime's collection of assorted adjectives. He bent down to retrieve the debris from the Axminster. "Blasted stuff," he grumbled. "Why does it always land sticky side down?" It was then that Hiram had his flash of inspiration. He dashed into the kitchen, grabbed a loaf of bread, a hunk of butter and a pot of jam. Quickly toasting the bread, he smeared it with butter and jam, then dashed back into the sitting room to begin his investigation into a strange anomaly in the laws of chance. Pushing back the furniture, Hiram happily began tossing toast into the air.

Two hours later, he stood amid the debris cluttering the carpet and totted up his experimental results. He smiled as the figures confirmed his experimental hypothesis. 94 tossings of toast had resulted in 87 cases of "jam down" as against a measly 7 of "jam up". Ever a stickler for experimental accuracy, Hiram hauled out a coin and tossed it 94 times. 49 "heads" against 45 "tails" confirmed that whilst coins followed the normal laws of chance, buttered toast did not. The next step was obvious to one of Hiram's intellect. He began tossing buttered pennies. The result was a walk away win for "gooey side down," and a walk away loss for the much battered carpet.

Poopsnaggle scratched his head, neglecting the jam which made his hair stand up in spikes. There was clearly an affinity between jam and carpets. He squelched across the room and flopped down in a chair to consider his next move. A softer, more subdued squelching told Hiram that he was sitting on a chunk of toast left over from the first experiment. Clearly then, jam had a strong affinity for trousers seats. This, must be checked.

Hiram hurried off to the local park just before the office lunch hour, taking with him the remains of the butter and the last of the jam. It was a matter of moments to run along the empty benches and smear random samples with goo. He retired behind a bush to keep watch, realizing that the presence of the experimenter could easily ruin the test. Half an hour later, with the lunch hour rush into the park well under way, Hiram watched gleefully as a crowd of angry people struggled to wipe butter or jam from their posteriors. A quick count indicated that out of a possible total of over a hundred sitters, 98 had chosen to sit on the remains of Hiram's breakfast, and of these, 84 were trousers, and only 14 were skirts. Clearly thought Hiram, the affinity acted to bring trousers and jam together. Further research was needed. He must get a grant.

Dr. Phmitt, Principal of Hai University, was at first skeptical of Hiram's claims, but when Poopsnaggle presented his research figures, his interest quickened. Steepling his fingers together, the Head of Hai U. sat back and thought a moment. Then his face lit up. "A larger scale test, that's what we need. If that confirms your findings Poopsnaggle, then you get your grant. Come on, if we're quick, we can just get to the student cafeteria before afternoon tea." He led the way at a brisk pace out of his office and across the campus.

The Cafeteria manager was nonplussed at the request for six jars of assorted jam, but soon entered into the spirit of the investigation, and unearthed damson, plum, strawberry, marmalade and to make up the number, one of treacle, and a can of axle grease. He even unbent enough to help Dr. Phmitt and Hiram spread the seats down one side of the hall with selections from the jars. Then they retired to an ante-room to watch through a partially opened door. Hiram's thesis was abundantly borne out. Independent tests confirmed that trousers preferred jam. Dr. Phmitt was jubilant, and whisked Hiram up to his office to arrange for a large research grant to be made available. From then on, things moved quickly. Faced with such an unprecedented demand, the board of governors demanded a final, large scale test before making the money available. Dr. Phmitt thought of the annual ball game between Hai U., and the Army. An admirable opportunity.

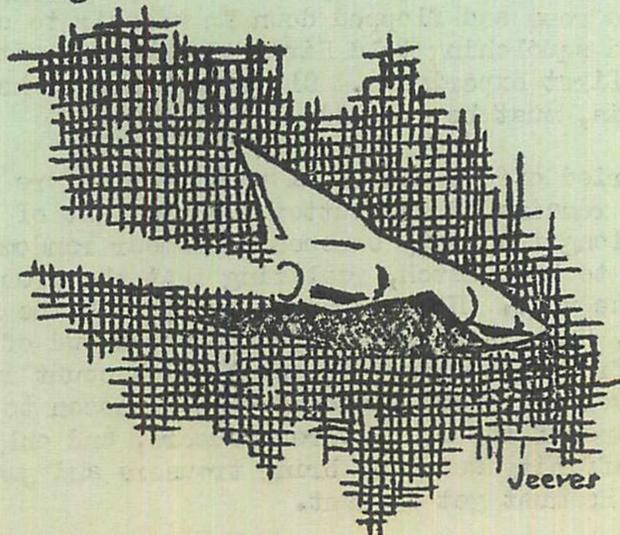
The day of the great game dawned. Hiram, Dr. Phmitt and the canteen manager had been hard at work since first light spreading selected seats through the bleachers. The gates were opened, and in flocked the crowd. Within half an hour, Hiram's hypothesis had been proved an undisputed fact. Flushed with enthusiasm, Dr. Phmitt grabbed the P.A. microphone and told the crowd the great news of the "jam-down" preliminary experiments and the resulting breakthrough in random anomalies. The thousands of intellectually emancipated listeners were astounded to hear of such a surprising discovery.

Bubbling over with enthusiasm, groups with sticky pants waylaid Dr. Phmitt, who after gentle urging delivered Hiram into their hands. Their numbers growing by the second, they hoisted Hiram overhead where he was borne along as on the crest of a wave to the most logical spot in all of old Hai U. -- the swimming pool, which was empty.

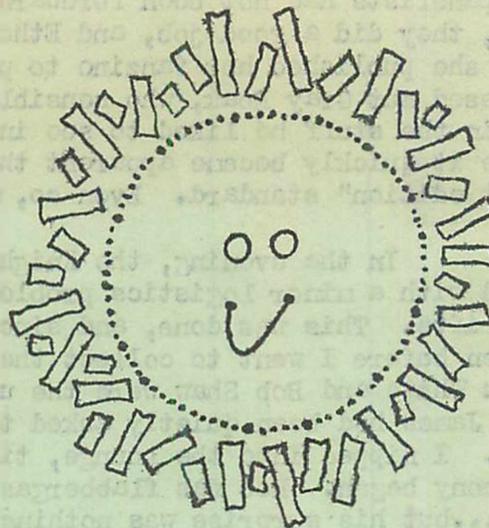
There, laid flat on his back on the highest diving board, butter and jam poured onto Hiram and he was flipped up, up and away in a fitting climax to the experimental chain.

Miracle of miracles, the topheavy psi-run ended! The "gocey side down" rule was broken! Hiram lived!

He stuck to the ceiling.



THE
1971
WORCESTERCON
by
TERRY JEEVES



The Worcestercon has rolled around...and a goodly time was had by all. The Giffard proved an excellent hotel...the lifts never broke down except when the odd twit held the doors open for half an hour while having a cosy chat with a friend. My own room was very good, complete with fitted wardrobe, 5 sound channels (all playing pop music...or so it seemed), bathroom, shower, washbasin and toilet. The food was very good too, and wonder of wonders, so was the banquet...which was even served hot! Hotel service was always of a high quality, and my only complaint was that the hot tap in my bathroom was a trifle stiff.

I had a great time meeting old friends and making new ones in between catching programme items...which had the unfortunate habit of getting re-timed without any apparent warning. For my own taste, the con was too heavily loaded on the s & c side. Panel and speech were followed by speech and panel. However, that is very much a personal matter, and of course one could always wander off in search of more fannish pursuits when such items were on.

Driving down from Sheffield, I clocked into the Giffard at 11:20 on Friday, booked in and in short order had met up with Keith and Wendy Freeman, Dave Kyle, Ella Parker, Ethel Lindsay, Noman and Ina Shorrocks plus their offspring...who had sprung up quite a bit since I last saw them. The con started promptly at 2-o'clock with an announcement that kickoff was postponed until three. Exactly on the dot of 3-11, Phil (voiceless) Rogers introduced fannish faces from the audience. Next came a lecture on "Life In The Solar System," a fascinatingly frenetic lecture by Dr. J. Cohen. After a superb dinner followed by several drinks in the lounge (Why did a cup of tea cost as much as a glass of lager?) I laughed my head off at the fabulous films produced by the Delta Group (organizers of the Blackpool con for 1972) and attended an Opa cambozine collating session with the Pardoes, Ken Cheslin, and several other equally nice people whose names I never caught. A short St. Fanthony meeting wound up the evening, and I got to bed by 12:30.

Down to breakfast at 8:30, I was joined by Eddie Jones. Later, John Brunner gave a terrific talk which held the audience from start to finish. Later, Pamela Bulmer gave a masterly talk on s-f criticism. Her opening was marred somewhat by a character wandering all around her plonking microphones in strategic places, then changing his mind. This obviously hampered Pam's style for a while, but once the wanderer settled, she got into her stride and fully justified her programme time. She did have one other interruption however...Brian Burgess meandered among the listeners happily glogging neat pies and bottles of milk.

The fan panel, graced by Malcolm Edwards, Ethel Lindsay, Peter Roberts

and Darroll Pardoe was another good item, but suffered from the fact that it seemed the panelists had not been forewarned as to their field for discussion. Nevertheless, they did a good job, and Ethel Lindsay echoed by own sentiments by saying that she published her fanzine to please herself, not her readership. Back there, I missed out Gray Boak, who sensibly said that he published a fanzine so he could put in the stuff he liked to see in a fanzine. This was followed by the auction, where it quickly became apparent that most material was not of the "rare quality first edition" standard. Even so, most fan got good material at reasonable prices.

In the evening, the Knights of St. Panthony met on the 6th floor, and were faced with a minor logistics problem in getting everybody down to the Con Hall via two lifts. This was done, and since everything was running late, it was after eleven before I went to collect the two candidates for Knighthood from the bar. James White and Bob Shaw were the unsuspecting recipients, and by a cunning stratagem, James had been quietly asked to make sure that Bob Shaw was inveigled into the hall. I nipped into the lounge, tipped James off to bring Bob down, and the ceremony began. Bob was flabbergasted to find the Knights collecting him from his seat...but his surprise was nothing to that of James White when HE was also collected. After the ceremony, everyone was invited to the joint party thrown by the Knights of Saint Panthony, and the Heicon committee in the form of Mario Bosnyak... a great guy and a worthy Taffman to boot. The party finally wound up around 4:30 and I was able to get a few hours sleep before another 8:30 breakfast with Eddie Jones.

After breakfast, we staggered into the lounge to recover. The little men with mallets were busy boiler-making inside our skulls as we joined Brenda Piper for a spot of silent meditation. It was short lived, as Irene Boothroyd joined us to discuss famish affairs. We went for a walk to recover.

Eric Bentcliffe arrived in the afternoon in time for the discussion as to where the next Con should be held. Blackpool won the day, and since no bids were forthcoming for the 1973 Convention an argument was mounted as to whether or not Britain should bid for a Worldcon before 1980. To my simple mind, the various arguments pro and con seemed so much hot air, as it seemed academic to bid for a convention if we didn't have any group prepared to put it on. Nevertheless, the debate reged in ever decreasing circles, and finally fizzled out without a decision being reached...perhaps as well, as it would have been most embarrassing to have put in a bid, won the Worldcon, and then not been able to find a host city or committee.

On Sunday evening, the banquet was a great success, as mentioned earlier, the food was excellent, and served piping hot...and with none of the long waits between courses which are so often a feature of such affairs.

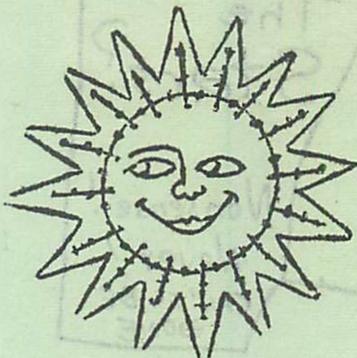
Eric Bentcliffe had suggested to Phil Rogers that it would be a good idea to let each TAFF candidate make a short platform speech as had been done at previous conventions. Sad to say, this never took place...and even worse, TAFF itself never got a proper plug. There was one brief reference to the candidates, but to any fairly new fan present, it must have been a most perplexing experience to be asked to vote...and pay for that vote...in an election whose meaning and origin had never been explained to him. TAFF is a good thing, perhaps the greatest thing that fandom has produced as a combined effort. It IS worth continuing...but unless it gets publicity as to just WHAT it is, then we may find it sink slowly beneath the waves it seeks to overcome.

Many excellent films were shown throughout the convention, among them being Charly, and "The Man With The Glass Hand". I'm a bit unsure about the latter, but if it were an amateur production it was terrific...if produced by a professional company...rather corny. I missed several of the films and slides which I had wanted to see, owing to alterations in the advertised projection times...but I gather that Gerald Bishop operated the projector for the whole lot.... If this is the case,

then he deserves a KING-SIZED vote of thanks for a job superbly done.

All in all, it was a thoroughly successful convention, and the rough spots mentioned herein, were only minor in what was a really happy weekend. I had great pleasure in meeting up with lots of new (to me) faces and people...Peter Roberts, Gerbish, Gray Boak, Ian Williams, Mark Aldridge and his wife to name a few...plus of course meeting up with all the good old friends...Ken and Pam Bulmer, Norman Weedall, most of Lig, most of Delta...and scores of others. If you missed it this year, why not get your name down now for Blackpool??? The hotel even has its own pool. Plans are afoot to flood it with Blog.

---Terry Jeeves.



READ THIS AD:

READ THE NEW ELLIPTIC! Elliptic is a tempest in a teapot, a bi-monthly 20-plus page fanzine printing opinion, fan events, pro activities. Past issues, all available, have had: Ray Bradbury's "These Unsparked Flints, These Uncut Gravestone Brides" (a poem), Perry Chapdelaine's King of Space Opera (about EE Smith), "Selling the Stuff", a series of essays on selling sf by Chapdelaine, Richard Wilson, Leingang and Glycer. We reported Bradbury's speeches at USC and Beverly Hills, Harlan Ellison's appearance at a banquet in Downey.

In the latest issue, NE #8, is an assortment of every fan activity, and pro as well. It's women, children, and SF pros over the side first as Perry Chapdelaine says "To Hell With The SFWA!". Andrew offutt reports fan life at the launching of big 14 in "Apollo 14: A Very Personal Look". Robert Moore Williams discusses his 35-year writing career and his new battles with SFWA in an interview by Glycer. Bob Gale reviews THX 1138 and The Andromeda Strain, the latest SF movies, including comments by their creators made at USC's Film Conference in March. Richard Vadholm surveys "Science Fiction In Rock". Florence Jenkins reviews fanzines in depth, YANDRO, LOCUS, and FOCAL POINT. The NEW ELLIPTIC is everything you need in a fine cigar. To see why send 25¢ to publisher Mike Glycer at 14974 Osceola St., Sylmar, California 91342.

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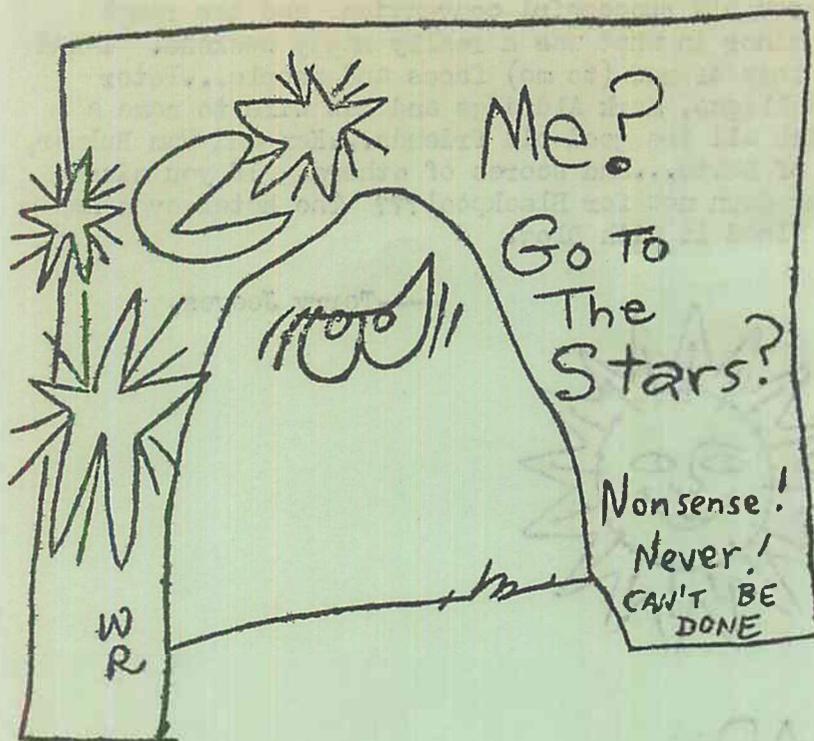
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C H A M B A N A C O N

1971

C H A M B A N A C O N



FORECLOSING

ON

THE

ORACLE

AT

DELPHI

BY

MICHAEL GLYER

Science fiction is the predictive genre, the farsighted genre. Science fiction writers have foreseen it all. From the horse and buggy days to the space age, SF writers have unobtrusively led readers by the hand. Vending technological dreams that today have all come true, and today extrapolating facts to shape tomorrow, they have like monks put it all down on paper. For years shunned as perpetrators of cheap pulp zines blazoned with poorly-drawn naked women or eye-popping monstrosities, science fiction authors have today stepped into the mainstream limelight to be recognized for what they actually were: scientific seers.

So they tell me.

People connected with science fiction, however vaguely, including writers, fans, critics, TV personalities, studio press agents, and New York garbage men who pick up the trash for Universal Publishing, will at the drop of a ray pistol emphasize the way scientifiction boosted things that are today major features of everyday life but which were ignored before. SF readers have established their literature as prophetic gospel far better than religion because it seems **SCIENTIFIC!**

This whole image of prophecy has been built on a delusion, though. Like SF itself the reputation is more fancy than fact. Science fiction isn't especially predictive. Its successful forecasts are rare; like correct astrological predictions they are blown up out of proportion. Its predictions are usually incomplete, misleading, and only minor parts of a larger incorrect vision.

The examples of prediction most eagerly flashed on listeners to show SF is prophetic are the atomic bomb, television, and the manned landing on the Moon.

Buck Rogers first conceived of the atomic bomb. We all know that. We've heard it mouthed by pros and nostalgia buffs for years. And what they have been claiming is the sheerest bull: if nostalgia buffs held more sentimental longing for Einstein's 1905 Theory of Relativity than for coupon-bought ray guns and 1930's comic strips they'd see what anyone who can read sees. If Buck Roger's author was

a seer, then Albert Einstein must be a Biblical prophet, long hair and all. The Theory of Relativity first brought up the idea of the power locked in matter. Said Einstein, if the total nuclear energy in a pound of matter could be released, it would yield the same explosive force as ten million tons of TNT. This tidy ten megaton blast was made practical when Fermi first split the atom in 1934, and Buck did nothing but add a Sunday-supplement name for it.

Science fiction relied on reality to supply the idea of the bomb, and the Manhattan Project was on its way to the final product when a writer in Campbell's Astounding successfully described an atomic explosion. The widely-known legend tells us that the FBI paid John a friendly visit to see if they could arrest anyone for treason -- which shows that the only extrasensory power displayed was clairvoyance, if that. When you predict by only a few months, it doesn't mean much.

Television wasn't predicted by SF. It preceded it. Invented in 1927, television was just a little younger than Amazing. Considering the age of the inventor when he first got the idea (in his teens), the real story is more fantastic than any fiction could be. (In fact, teenage geniuses like Darryl Dumm and the Home-work Machine usually get booted out.)

SF writers have tried everything else with it, though. Three-D, or the stereo tank, is a cliché. In truth it's an impossible fact. Television can be given depth, but from only one angle of vision, and not for sale. The 2-way wrist TV of Dick Tracy is improbable: flat screen TV is almost in production, but the miniaturization needed to condense a flat cathode into a wrist-sized package is beyond us today, and may never be worth the years of trouble needed to work out. Lastly, the picture telephone is something novelists took for granted. The phone has been available for ten or fifteen years and has been displayed at several World's Fairs. But nobody wants it! You can't have widespread use of a phone when nobody wants it. The price tag isn't worth the view, and since the majority of users couldn't afford (or want to afford) a picto-phone, buyers would have limited use of their toy.

SF writers then tried to work out television's impact on society. They have pushed the notion of Welfare-owned citizens sitting in a posture-deforming stupor before the telly, sucking a trunk, watching some moronic program. SF writers, like a lot of other people, figure the massive use of television can influence viewers to do anything.

No one knows for sure the impact of TV: they just assume there is one. But is there? Statistics, rather than agreeing, disprove the assumption. Does TV advertising cause cigarette smoking? Now that such ads are banned, tobacco sales have gone up! Does that sound like TV has an important influence? The Great Pastore, senator from Rhode Island, ran an investigation on the TV industry. He concluded that the violence on TV harmed children. Supposedly the shows are now toned down; superheroes have bit the dust. But the crime rate keeps rising and I still hear about 6-year olds joining in bank holdups. A freak example or two is all, but it never happened before the past four years that I heard. (Which still means nothing.) If TV has an impact on the outlook of children, and damages their view of reality, then I suspect that far from blaming violence for distorting their outlook you should look to the notion that the good guy always won, and that you can always tell who was right and who was wrong. In the American society you don't get to choose who's the good guy, because there aren't any. The best you can do is choose the man who appeals to you, and cheer on muckrakers like Nader. There are honest people, honorable and generous people, but nobody is honest, honorable, and generous all the time; most of the time we can't get the data to decide, and we really haven't got any right to hold human beings up to godlike standards anyway -- as the TV heroes (and fiction generally) would encourage.

When Armstrong left the print of his Ozark swampstomper boot on Lunar soil in 1969, the science fiction community took it as a personal triumph. Yessiree,

said fans and writers, we knew they'd do it all along. Now we're headed out into space, nothing can stop us now!

Well, anybody who reads a paper can see where we're headed: back into the welfare business. Yet the notion that SF writers predicted the landing is just as wrong as the idea we were headed into space. Anybody with one eye still in his head, who's looked up at the Moon and wondered if we'd ever go there, did as much or more than they did. There's a glory in it, a dream, but SF has no monopoly on it. The exploration of space was launched under the ancient Greeks with project Icarus, run by that famous scientist, Dr. Werner von Daedalus. Unfortunately it melted away after the initial flight...

Science fiction writers, try as they might, didn't even predict the mechanical form of our landing. To them it was always the same rocket leaving Earth, making the voyage, landing on the moon, then coming back and landing on Earth. Many previewed the step system, the multi-stage rocket. But even the most scientific psychics, Heinlein as technical director for the movie Destination: Moon, and Ley in his many books, never admitted need for a LEM.

The three big claims for SF, the predictor of Things to Come, are flops. These flops belie our nonexistent ability. Furthermore, Ray Bradbury narrates the following missed opportunity for conjecture:

"One hundred years ago most people could not imagine that someone would invent a science fictional device which would result in deaths and injuries for millions in its day to day use."

The device was not Hitler's Improved Gas Oven. It is the automobile, and it has killed more people than all the wars we ever fought.

You don't need to look back 100 years. You don't have to look back fifty years. I don't think until twenty years ago people realized what a killer the car was bound to be. They did nothing about it until three years ago. All this time SF had been sitting on its laurels, never trying to fictionalize our murderous turn-pikes. And we are seers?

Then there is pollution.

I don't count as very predictive the copying of the guesswork of the Sierra Club and other, less reputed, more hysterical, sources. If you want to claim that MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM! by Harrison is predictive, or that Stand On Zanzibar -- which Brunner admits was gleaned from newspapers -- is a vista of the future, then to hell with you. I Will Fear No Evil by Heinlein is more literary in its crystal-gazing than either of those two. The Earth simply won't support the population Brunner and Harrison propose. Productivity will either succeed in making a crowded America livable, or will collapse, incidentally lowering the population via starvation. If authors want to be clever and foresighted they ought to find a place from which they can view the terracide problem intelligently.

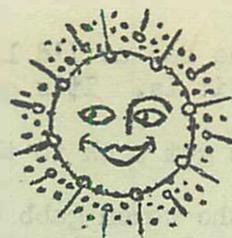
SF never had a pollution story until pollution became the favorite topic of Americans. In fact, SF traditionally has backed the idea that technology overcomes our problems. Social crises result from science, yes, but the idea that progress would be its own undoing physically was given hardly a thought.

SF: the great oracle. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, it was this great oracle that told us how Dianetics would become the mind-science of the future. God save us from the Cleared.

However, there's one consolation that American citizens can take from this foreclosure on Delphi: Writers from CM Kornbluth to James Elish, Heinlein to Spinnard have predicted that the US will be dominated by Russia within the next hundred years. They say that the commisars will have their way.

Shut down the army, boys! Save yourselves 70 billion in defense! SF is always wrong -- the odds are in your favor! ■■■

LETTER TO LOBO



April 20, 1971

Dear Lobo,

It's been so long since last we heard from you that I'm writing this letter to find out what's been happening out your way in Dallas; it's been----what---
---a couple of months since last we heard your epic in the Void. What exactly has
been / is in your head? I hope this letter reaches you and finds you well.

Loretta, Sara and I just got back Monday afternoon from a weekend with the Hamricks, Loretta's family . . . father Stacey, mother Phyllis, sisters Jean and Mary, brothers James, Robert and Richard----Richard and his wife Barbara and their first baby, Melody (nearly four weeks old), gave us a lift; they live in Decatur, and Bloomington is right on their way to Wyanet, Illinois. It's reunion time in the Midwest!

Our own little Sara, four months old, was wide-awake all the way----100 miles----which blew our heads a little; riding in cars (or any other means of transportation) used to put her to sleep, but no more; she's too interested in everything that's going on now to keep the Sandman company; (way back when on Sara's one-month-birthday she slept nearly all the way to Chicago on the train when we went to attend Gail's wedding.)

Anyway, digressions aside, we had a big fam meal when we arrived, and Richard and I drank coffee while everybody goggled over the babies. When Loretta gave Sara her bath, I hopped in the pick-up truck with Stacey, James and Richard----it was time to search for wild mushrooms.

We turned and twisted about a mile down the dirt roads. We found a place to park, and walked several paces behind the railroad track in the woods-&-bush country.

It was between 75-80^o, and the sunshine felt good on my head.

This "wilderness" area consisted of several kinds of trees, profuse foliage, and twice we stopped deer tracks through the briar tangles. We also spotted such neat things as cowshit and several patches of some wild flower, which none of us were ever able to identify: six white petals with little stems of yellow in its center; they stood in clusters from three to nearly six inches tall. (I picked some and carried them all the way back.)

Seven or eight miles were put on our shoes that afternoon. We walked around two separate ponds, over hills and down little-used trails. When we went over the rise to discover the second circular pond (which was only about four-foot deep) we spotted wild black cattle----who immediately got paranoid of human creatures and loped away. There were only three of them. "Don't be afraid," I told them. They didn't even look back. We'd disturbed them near the pond. It disturbed me that we'd come stumbling through the woods to disrupt their routine. I don't like to do things like that, and I never get used to it. Anyway, it was plain to see there could be no mushrooms in the area, having concluded it was too early in the year, and that it hasn't rained enough to give root to and support those wonders. Sure was a neat walk in the woods, though, which was what I was really digging on in the first place, and I kept flashing the thought: wish Lobo was here, he's in love wholly & truly with the woods, and I know he'd sure dig it here with us, even if just the two of us were out looking for the magic mushrooms. Illinois has some wild, beautiful country, my friend.

If / when you come see us I'd like to take out for the hills and let you see how really beautiful it is. It's good karma; even seven or eight miles of it.

When we got back to the farm we had another big meal, yum-yum.

While the women gabb and google over babies the men are doing something, I don't know what, I wasn't paying attention; I'm in a rocking chair reading Sturgeon science-fiction and drinking hot coffee.

Saw this old flick that Saturday night on the picture-box called Dracula's Daughter; I'd seen it once before and know what to expect. The acting was quite unconvincing and the plot failed to thicken. Real spacey. For an old vampire flick, it was nowhere.

Sunday afternoon Loretta & I bundled Sara up against the wind and took a stroll around the farm. Loretta counted twenty-seven baby lambs! I took a Kodak picture of wife & daughter over by one of the stalls. We wandered around the yard and I took another Kodak picture. It's gonna be neat to have rustic pictures come from out a roll of film otherwise devoted to Us In Bloomington.

Well, to shorten this adventure with the Hamrick family, we left Monday after lunch with Richard's little family, arrived without incident, and plopped ourselves down on the bed. . .

*

Well Lobo I'm drinking coffee in my eternal big white coffee cup, thinking of you and writing you a letter. Sorry if this seems spotty in places ---oftentimes, as you well know, I tend to ramble. But you pretty well know where my head's at, this day or any other.

Quite another reason for this particular letter in this particular form is that I feel it's educational to dig up things I wrote years ago to see how I look at them in the Present. When this letter to you finds its path in a fanzine I fully intend to set it aside for a space and re-read it, say, five years from now . . . twenty years from now . . . to see where I was and figure where I am (in relation) and get a little brighter perspective (perhaps) out of the life of Bill Wolfenbarger; and to see how my literary style fades from view.

When I finish this letter I'm going to read some Lovecraft (I told you a few things about him, remember?) wherein he describes the un-describable and names the unnamable concerning horror in New England and Arkham and Kingsport, where rats gnaw the ancient walls, where moonlit graves offer outre nourishment, where Cthulhu moans vast and chilling in the deep.

Stay well, dear friend, and keep in touch with us. Loretta and I miss you a whole bunch and Sara is anxious to meet you. Don't become a stranger. Keep your head up and keep the Void open. Please write us soon and tell us all. Please send us your poetry to liven our heads.

Peace and Love,

Billy Ray

-----Bill Wolfenbarger / Bloomington, Illinois.

TAKE OUR HANDS...TAKE OUR LUNGS

Oh, yes, I've got gray hair. It's cut short, too. I like it that way, short, I mean. I dare to be a non-conformist in an age of longhairs.

The cover of MT #8 poses some questions. I have identified. It is your hand that will take mine. I think it's my hand that is implied. And a child shall load. Okay. But where? To what?

To the better life? I mean will I give up my hot and cold running water that spouts like magic from my silvery spigots, or will we grasp the old pump handle and work together? Will I erect the old half-moon house in the backyard? I'd hate to walk barefoot to work -- it's about 11 miles one way. Maybe your land never heard of work?

Sure, we old gray heads shot some poisons in the air, the water, and the sea. That's because we aren't yet smart enough to save the poisons and put them to work for us. We aren't going to shut down. Some of us are figuring out ways to use all that stuff you don't like. We might have sooner, but no one wanted to pay more for our products.

To the better land? Hell, there's wasteland by the unmeasured mile -- desert, snow, cliff, and ocean. We'll find a way to make it blossom. Anyway, you could put all the people in the world, living and dead since Adam and Eve, in a cube one mile sized. All the people in the world could be put in the state of Missouri, and a family of four as an average could have a four room apartment if the structure was just three floors high.

People like to be crowded. Didn't you know that? Fun times are usually big gatherings, and people go where the crowds are. A space of privacy no larger than a big closet is aplenty. In fact, the john could serve as the quiet retreat.

I hope to hell you weren't talking about leading us gray heads to a better science fiction.

Some writers seem to think sex is a discovery. If it wasn't for us old gray heads, how in hell do you think you got here? Maybe we didn't write about it much unless we set out to write a sex story or a bit of pornography. Why dilute good sex with science fiction? And vice versa.

True to life, you say? Face the facts of life? That's not what science fiction is all about. Enough has been written about what science fiction is -- by us gray heads, so you know what I mean. There has to be a sense of wonder... oh, hell, why go on.

Leave me here.

With my old science fiction books in which the mysteries of the universe shimmer and sparkle in my faded old eyes.

And say, listen, I don't have that many wrinkles.

Or if I do, as you'll probably say, don't you realize that my wrinkled surface has more exposure to air poisons than your's -- your young, smooth face? And what I soak up, you won't catch?

DARN MY SOCK...THERE IS A HOLE...IN IT

My heel sticks through. Now, where in the hell did that hole come from? Eyes half-closed, I touch it. My fist goes through. Yes, there's a hole in my sock. I laugh. I expected one hole. That's the one my whole foot goes through. Somebody in Taiwan made it that way. But the hole in the heel -- that's another story. I cuss. Not loud. I'm up early; everyone is sleeping.

I expected a good sock.

Then I hear that rustling in my garden. I peek out the window, hardly moving the curtain. I see my newly planted tomatoes; even a row of two inch high corn plants. That's what I expect to see, but I grab my kid's beebee gun that I keep loaded and waiting for just such a sight. I carefully slide the screen, take air, and the shot plunks resoundingly into the cottontail's rear end.

Really I expect my garden to grow without supervision by any cottontail; but as I said I did expect such a thing. I was ready, though.

I met this guy Harry. Man, he could squeeze your hand. He had a joke in his eye all the time. And his grammar was excellent. We struck it off, played golf together a few times. Played a little cards in the clubhouse. I expected a friendly game. I didn't expect him to cheat. So you beat me at golf, too, I said. Harry really had me fooled.

Tonight I sat down to read a collection of science fiction stories. The editor's comments were a kind of Charles Fort style. Hints of thought, but nothing you could put your mind to. Some quotes, some mention of the English professor who suddenly hit it rich with electronic rasher lines. Oh, well, let's see what it's all about. The first story was hardly larger than a page number at the bottom. I read it and turned the page for more. There wasn't any. The editor filled the gap in mouthing mush about the next story. So I turned back and read it again; didn't take long. Actually, it was a joke. The whole thing. So I started and finished the next one. God knows why. It was junk. It was a crumpled up dirty picture some kid lost in the gutter out of his grubby hand. Maybe it was a joke, too. I mean, blobs from the sea feeling sexy toward a movie actress, and all the playing around in a deserted abbey with our vicarious peeper coming to take photographs. I had to look to see where the story was originally published. "Cavalier" magazine. Wow! I admire the agent that sold that story to the editor of the collection.

But I did expect science-fiction.

So I'm not reading anymore of that book. Is that one of the "New Wave" things?

I mean the guys that discovered you could take a wild west story and change the horses to galloping grizdas on Mars -- that was bad enough. Since when does a joke make science fiction? And that's the second story I'm talking about. Oh, Riders of the Purple Wage, my sock has a hole in it. Get the symbolism?

Dam it!

MY CHICKEN HAS THE ITCH

I knew a guy that wouldn't admit it was raining if his barometer was high and rising. He'd just wipe the raindrops out of his eyes and take another peek at his little old barometer. No; it's not raining, he'd say.

He's the same guy who carries his latest scientific equipment with him -- a blue cabbage head. See, he bought this red cabbage in the grocery and soaked it in baking soda. Turned it blue. Now, he says, if the air gets too polluted with sulfurous fumes, the cabbage will turn red again.

He used to read Sloane's AMAZING STORIES.

I used to give him holy hell for reading that trash.

He's bald-headed now and has the drugstore save him a copy of PLAYBOY. I said to him once -- yes, when it was raining -- after he pinned the centerfold behind his barometer, I said, is it high and rising? The damn fool looked.

They say PLAYBOY used to be about girls and queers with nice clothes on. That was a long time ago. It's now right down the center of the mainstream. Yes, it is a science fiction magazine. You can't tell the girls from the rocketships and the big sea blobs.

The lead-off story is a rewrite of H.P. Lovecraft's "The Outsider". The character has never seen himself in the Versomirror. I hate to give away the plot but the character sees for the first time all of his stuff hanging out, like intestines, etc. The Versomirror is a self-diagnosis viewer so that you can count the cholesterol chugging around, etc. The main character is a lovely young lady, of course. The shock is amplified when she notes a fetus gurgling in her uterus.

The rest of the magazine is equally good.

Forgive this diversion to PLAYBOY. Let's get back to the guy with the cabbage. Perhaps you are wondering about the chicken with the itch.

Forget it. If you buy science fiction that ain't, you aren't the type to worry about any old chicken with the itch.

You'll read this. You won't even say, what the hell?

Wish you would.

Please.

-----Donn Brazier.

RECENT NEW FANZINES

SCYTHROP 22: from John Bangsund, Paragon Books, GPO Box 4946, Melbourne 3001, Australia. This is listed because it is new--newly revived--in spite of being #22. (Originally was the renowned ASFReview.) This ish is very fine indeed; you really should try it. (40¢, etc.).

AFAN #1: from Dave Hulvey / Rt.1, Box 198 / Harrisonburg, Va.22801. Blurbed as a fanish zine & will accept contribs in that category. This runs the gamut from good stuff to...ah...subpar, whatever the hell that means. A limited-circulation pub but you may be able to get a copy out of Dave by telling him how much you've enjoyed his letters in MT & elsewhere....

GEGENSCHWEIN #1: Eric B. Lindsay, 6 Hillcrest Ave., Faulconbridge, N.S.W.2776, Australia. (Trades, etc.; 25¢ per.) Nicely balanced contents. Pretty good for a fan's first ever publication.

ENTROPION #2: from Nick Shears (address page 46). Not quite up to the level of the first ish. Too much poetry, for one. Nick needs good, fairly short articles & stories. Send him something.

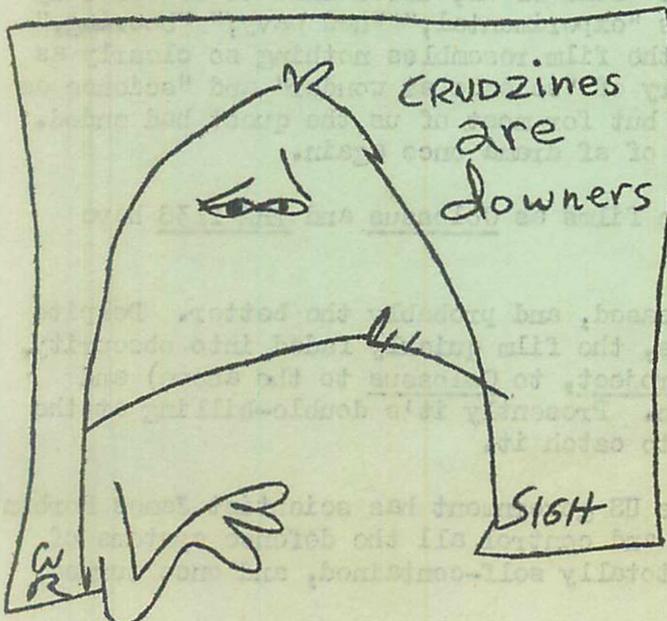
COVER X-2, X-3: from Jeff Schalles (address page 47). Very interesting personalzine, nicely written & illoed. A larger issue is planned. Stamps, money, etc., will no doubt get results.

GODLESS #1: from B.D.Arthurs, 815 N. 52nd St., #21, Phoenix, Ariz.85008. (2 times a year; 20¢, next ish larger & 35¢; available for LoGs; needs contribs of articles and artwork.) This ish has a nice article by Alex Vitok, a piece of fiction which I did not read, and material by the editor. He tells of the response he got to his request in the final ish of SFReview for the identification of a story, which turned out to be Fredric Brown's "Pattern."

ASPIDISTRA #2: from Susan Glicksohn (address p. 37). Featuring letters, editorials, excellent articles. Issued about 4 times a year for cash or the usual.

MAYA #2: from Ian R. Williams (address p. 41). 45pp, for cash or the usual; 1 or 2 pages poorly mimeod. Part 1 of a nice article by Mary Legg re the history of fandom as she experienced it; other good material & a neat letter section.

TWIBBIT #2: from 342 W. Culver #2, Phoenix, Ariz. 85003. 20¢, trades, etc. A very thin, offset issue.



PSYWAR: from Keith A. Walker, Psychiatric Training School, General Hospital, Burnley, Lancs., England. Now up to its 3rd issue, is concerned solely with oddities--from the Loch Ness Monster to the "supernatural". Repro is not the best, but contains good articles with much thoughtfood.

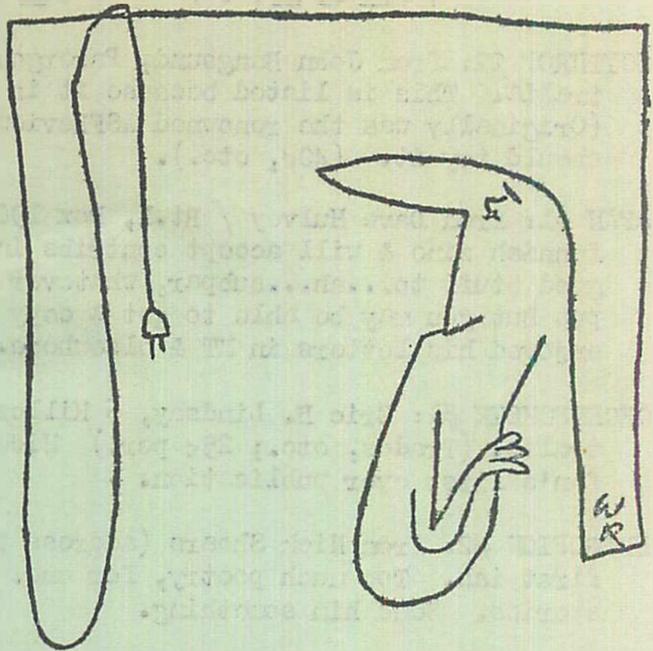
UNKNOWN: from Paul Doerr (address p.46) This is another fanzine concerned almost entirely with the unusual, such as unidentified flying objects, vampires, "magic" as concerned with the main religions, etc. Full of bits and pieces of fact & speculation. 4 issues for \$1. Worth it to the addict.

2

CURRENT FLICKS

SCANNED BY

DANIEL
DICKINSON



Colossus: The Forbin Project; a Universal Picture, directed by Joseph Sargent and starring Eric Braeden and Susan Clark. It is based on the novel Colossus by D.F. Jones.

THX 1138; from Warner Brothers. It is written and directed by George Lucas and stars Donald Pleasence, Robert Duvall, and Maggie McOmie.

There is an expression in fandom that reads "this is the film we've been waiting for." Usually, however, it's been followed with a question mark rather than a period. The sad fact of it is that there have been damnably few science fiction dramas worth the power to blow them to hell -- though the urge to try with the rest has been quite strong.

Nevertheless, despite the awful fifties, the quest for good dramatic sf went on. There was considerable (and unmerited) enthusiasm for such dribble as Fantastic Voyage and Star Trek. Then, at last, 2001 happened and the quest ended. 2001 didn't win the Oscar, but deep down in our hearts we knew that it should have. And, to our amazement, many critics agreed. Some of us, determined to be contrary at all costs, then determined that 2001 was "experimental," "new wavy," "booring," "bad," and so on -- despite the fact that the film resembles nothing so clearly as the presentation of pure Gernsbackian theory of "science as wonder" and "science as romance." Some people won't be satisfied, but for most of us the quest had ended. Now we could sit back and ignore the field of sf drama once again.

Perhaps this is why two such fine films as Colossus and THX 1138 have been virtually ignored.

Colossus was the first to be released, and probably the better. Despite good to rave reviews in the New York papers, the film quickly faded into obscurity, partly due to title changes (from Forbin Project, to Colossus to the above) and partly caused by an ineffective ad campaign. Presently it's double-billing at the drive-ins, and you should make it a point to catch it.

The plot itself is a cliché. The US government has scientist James Forbin build a huge computer designed to regulate and control all the defense systems of the United States. The computer is to be totally self-contained, and once turned

on, totally out of human control. Amidst a gala celebration the computer is switched on. Immediately it discovers the presence of a similar Russian device called Guardian, and all hell breaks loose. The two computers join up and take over. The film, of course, deals with Forbin's attempt to stop them.

You say you've seen that one before? You haven't. Sargent quickly abandons cliché, and the action becomes tense and real; a thoughtful examination of freedom vs. security. The film's conclusion, like that in 1984, brings up basic questions. Unlike 1984, Colossus doesn't stack the deck, but leaves the audience with the question ringing powerfully in its mind. This is a film that makes you think; it does not skirt questions or provide easy answers, but carries your mind along with it to the final, basic confrontation. Such a film cannot be avoided, and should not. Colossus is at least Hugo Award calibre, possibly even Academy Award worthy. It is certainly one of the finest science fiction films ever made.

THX, despite similarities in the basic questions it deals with, is a horse of a different color entirely. A nightmarish vision of the writer's own conception of Los Angeles, it is a "creative fantasy" to use his term, set in a science fictional framework.

In the story, what there is of it, a "number" comes "down" from drugs to realize he lives in an impersonalized, computerized, Brave New World culture. He is arrested for sexual perversion for making love with his mate, and confined to a room without walls to await death. In this prison without bars, THX contemplates his predicament, finally deciding to simply walk out. He does, and escapes his security ridden society. After a series of surrealistic adventures, he leaves LA, being confronted in the final scene by the same question Forbin is confronted with in The Forbin Project.

Yet I said before Colossus and THX were different films, didn't I? Let me explain. Colossus is, stylistically, a film of intellect. Dialogue is the one, single most important factor in Colossus, and without it the film would be doomed. In THX, however, the dialogue is of little to no importance. THX is a film, like 2001, that depends on experience and imagery rather than on talk. This in itself brings about some interesting questions, particularly about communication. Forbin, fleshed out by dialogue and thought, becomes a real person in our minds -- thus we fully experience him. THX, because we can only see him, remains a number. We can see the man's a rebel, but until he communicates directly with us, how can we know his soul? Thus, can we ever really experience the man or the ideas he represents? Which type of movie then, I ask you, is the movie of experience, and which is the one of intellect? I digress, I know, but the point seems important.

At any rate, primarily for the reasons outlined above, THX is not the film Colossus is. I have no doubt that the critical hoopla over THX will be great, and already some are proclaiming it a "classic." So be it. The film is in many ways worthy. It has some innovative and fascinating camera work, and the questions and ideas it poses are certainly important. It is definitely worth the time and money to go and see it, and deserves a Hugo nomination at least. George Lucas has done a fine job of directing and writing, and for a first film THX is a real achievement. Yet there is something about it I don't like; perhaps Lucas spent too much time at UCLA and the feel of the city he seems to hate has invaded his own soul. In Colossus the characters are people; in THX they are often as cold, stiff, and uncaring as the society they live in and rebel against.

-----Daniel Dickinson.



THE S-F BOOKSHELF

BILL WOLFENBARGER

Reality Doll by Clifford D. Simak; (WORLDS OF FANTASY #4, Spring 1971), comprising 115 pages, with cover & interior art by Jack Gaughan.

While this is not one of Simak's major novels, Reality Doll certainly is a good one. Vivid splashes of Wonder affirm their logical way into the planet (unnamed; and far-flung) of the White City and in the characters' heads. Simak does some mindblowing novels and stories; and this one tended me quite naturally into flashes of, say, Cosmic Engineers and The Creator.

It took me nearly half-way thru Reality Doll to glimpse Simak's imaginative powers at work. And in his creations of monsters, it seems to me he could turn hands with ease and produce many fine fantasy-adventure novels. I can see how he would have fit without much distress into UNKNOWN or even (and perhaps preferably) into WEIRD TALES—much the same as Edmond Hamilton could have become a steady author of weird fiction.

There's very little "science" in the present offering, even tho this novel contains a traditional science-fictionalized setting. The story begins with Captain Ross (the semi-narrator) (Simak is the other), Sara Foster (adventure-hunter-traveler), Friar Tuck (a blundering man who achieves religious ends) and George Smith (blind from birth, who now hears a voice in his head, genuinely). Their search is for Lawrence Arlen Knight, a legendary Space Wanderer who searched the galaxies for "something" vital. Their search is an adventure gambit in a natural-seeming and natural-feeling imaginative fiction framework.

You can fall in love with certain Simak characters—my favorite in Reality Doll is Hoot, who is a dark hump, with several tentacles extending in the "front," and whose body "tapered back, four feet or so, and ended in bluntness. It seemed to have no feet or arms. It wore no clothing." Trapped in this strange land, they search the planet until they finally find what they are looking for.

It could easily take a few pages to tell you why I like Hoot so well, and why he is my favorite character in this novel; but I won't because it's much more pleasurable (and desirable!) to find out about Hoot and all the others, including a tree culture, for yourself. It's good reading.

The Lathe of Heaven by Ursula K. LeGuin; (AMAZING, March & May issues, 1971), comprising 119 pages, with interior art by Michael Wm. Kaluta.

LeGuin's latest is most certainly a fine and fascinating science-fiction novel which could very well win her the Hugo and Nebula awards. (At least AMAZING's editor Ted White sees it as a Hugo-winner.) It concerns George Orr's "talent" of somehow subconsciously making his dreams come true. There's the notion this novel begins with. There is plot and sub-plot and sub-sub-plot. The Lathe of Heaven held my interest and attention all the way through the reading.

It probably will win a Hugo, but I'm still holding out until the rest of the year in case something better comes along.

The Verity File by Theodore Sturgeon; (GALAXY, May-June 1971), comprising 14 pages, with interior art by Jack Gaughan.

The main point Sturgeon is driving home is Love. The Verity File concerns whether or not mankind (and the individual man) has a right to happiness; feeling good. Sturgeon affirms this in his best poetic manner.

The Play's the Thing by Robert Bloch; (ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE, May 1971), comprising 8 pages, with interior art by --?--.

Nasty Robert Bloch is up to his old nasty self in this short tale of terror, where the "shock" ending is pretty well laid out for the reader, where he builds conformation above all else. It just might draw a gasp from a few gentle readers . . .

The Animal Fair by Robert Bloch; (PLAYBOY, May 1971), comprising 5 pages, with interior art by Manon Catherine Cleary.

This one is easily up to Bloch's high standards of a strange story.... I refuse (absolutely) to tell you a thing about it. Start from the beginning until you reach the end. Then probe where it left your head; it's a prime example of Bloch at his subtle best.

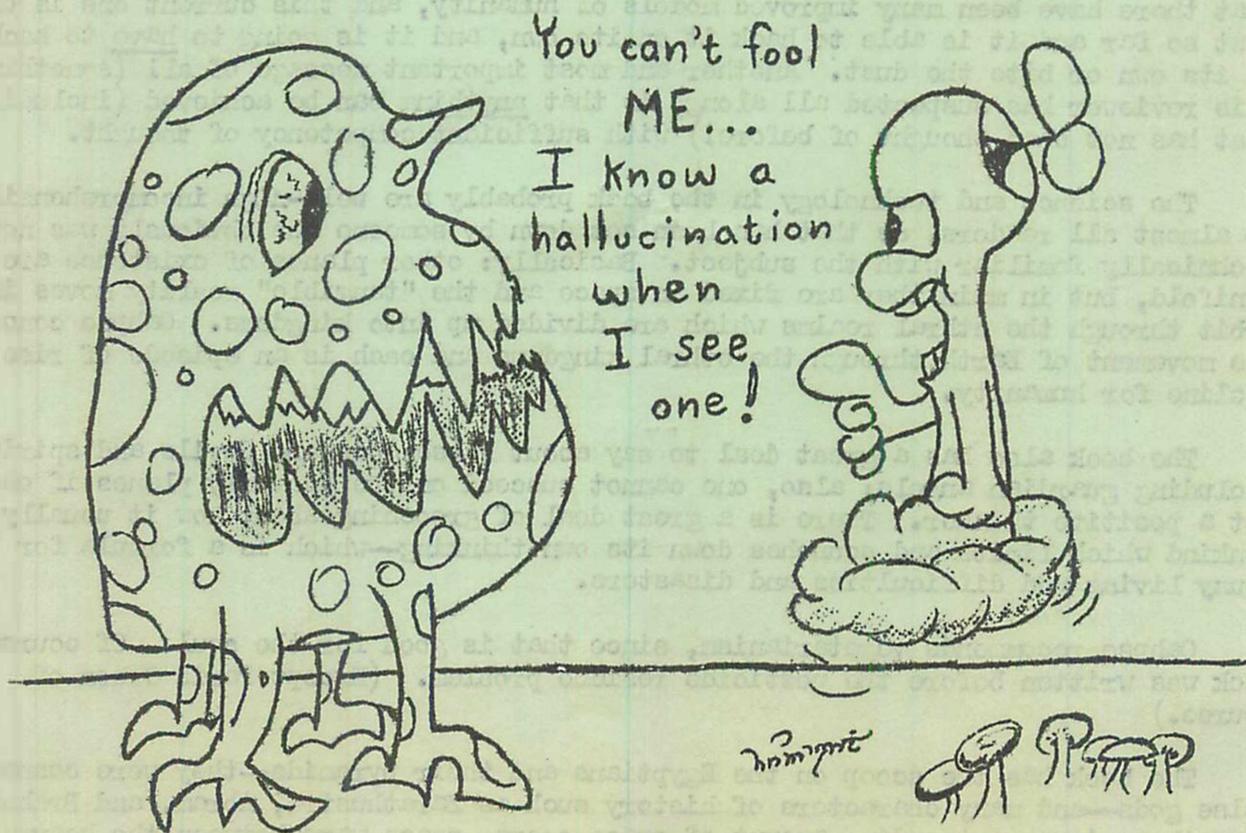
The Oracle by Robert Bloch; (PENTHOUSE, May 1971), comprising 2 pages of text, plus full-page interior art by -?..

Several madmen, a bomb, and a computer all tie themselves together in this realistic "science fiction thriller." I don't really see where this is science-fiction, tho; it's more on the order of futuristic fantasy. Anyway, it's a vast departure from Bloch's early tales such as The Dark Demon, The Cloak, Beetles and The Shambler from the Stars, and is not even in line with stories such as Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper or Psycho or The Gods Are Not Mocked. The theme employed in The Oracle is surely an old one by now, but I think it would be worth your while to see how ~~it's done~~.....huh, I mean ~~it's done~~... no, damn it, I mean Robert Bloch handles it. I rather enjoyed it, because it sets up a basic premise frightfully possible today.

Her Lover's Name Was Death by Edward Bryant; (FASFF, May 1971), comprising 8 pages.

Ed Bryant used to publish fanzines like AD ASTRA and AD INFINITUM from a small Wyoming town in the early 1960s, and his own fanzines and others' used to blush with his attempts at science-fiction and fantasy. And now here is an example of that most enthralling of all fanish love stories, a "fan" turned "pro." Bryant's present offering (his first to date in FASFF) concerns the tree nymph legend; such a single story using this theme has been tried several times, but most often without any real grit. Not so with Bryant's story. I haven't been moved by a story in this basic category since A. Merritt's The Women of the Wood. Do read this one.

---Bill Wolfenbarger / Bloomington, Ill. / May 1971.



William G. Bliss reviews:

OAHSPF, OAHSPF Publishing Association, New York and London. Available from Ray Palmer, 510 Main Street, Amherst, Wisconsin 54406, for \$10.00 plus 40¢ postage.

A history of 79,000 years, and the word from on high, the Universe God. It is a re-print of the 1882 edition which is said to be first book ms done on a typewriter, a Sholes machine. OAHSPF is not a one-sitting book as it is 928 pages long, yet the first portions of the book often suffer from over-condensing and are tedious reading. Actually, only a few things in the book can be touched upon without getting into a review that would be serial or novel length. The book is rife with messages and wisdom and drama and saga (plus Space Opera!).

The most important message from the Universe God is

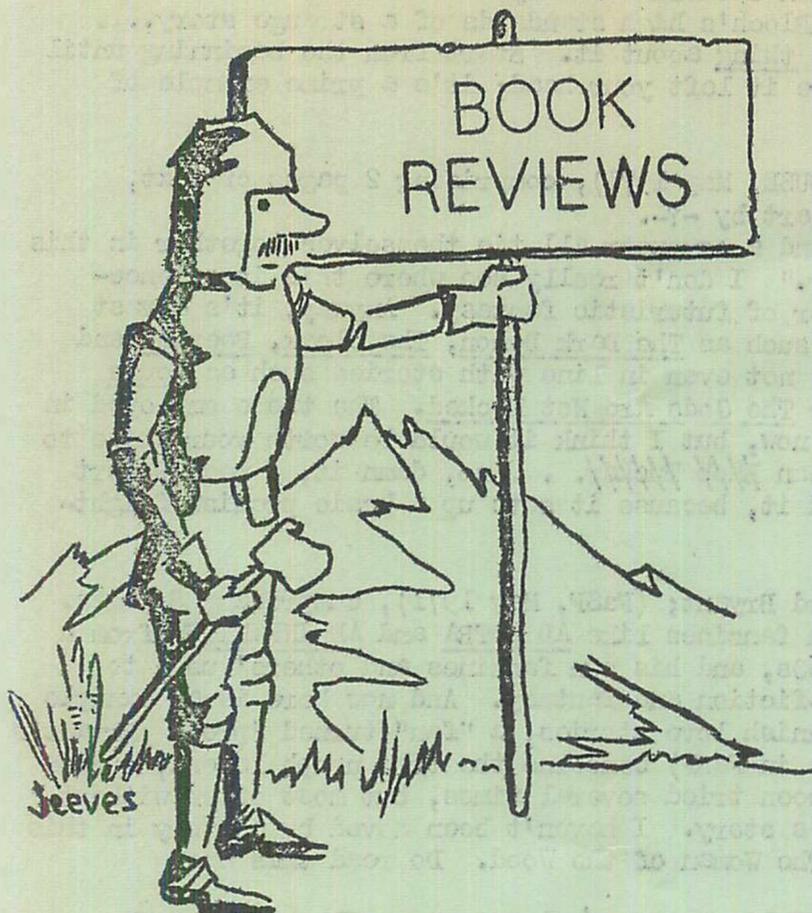
that there have been many improved models of humanity, and this current one is the best so far and it is able to hack it on its own, and it is going to have to hack it on its own or bite the dust. Another and most important message of all (something this reviewer has suspected all along) is that anything can be achieved (including what has not been thought of before!) with sufficient competency of thought.

The science and technology in the book probably are well-nigh incomprehensible to almost all readers, as that has been set down by someone who obviously was not technically familiar with the subject. Basically: other planes of existence are manifold, but in main they are fixed in space and the "tangible" reality moves in orbit through the ethereal realms which are divided up into kingdoms. Oahpse concerns the movement of Earth through the ethereal kingdoms and each is an episode of rise and decline for humanity.

The book also has a great deal to say about false gods and devils and spirits, including guardian angels; also, one cannot succeed on the heavenly planes if one is not a positive thinker. There is a great deal of grooching about how it usually is mankind which limits and scunches down its own thinking—which is a formula for lousy living and difficulties and disasters.

Oahpse recommends vegetarianism, since that is good for the soul. Of course the book was written before the pesticide residue problem. (Except Paris Green of course.)

The book has the scoop on the Egyptians and their pyramids—they were conned by false gods—and many characters of history such as Zarathustra, Abram, and Brahma. Also there is an astounding amount of space opera, space wars between the heavens;



since everybody already was dead no one could be killed, but captives could be thrown into hells (which could end up incredibly hellish), hells and the domains of false gods collapse into monstrous knots of panicked souls, a sort of self-entrapment. The less knowing (enlightened) those souls were, the greater the possibility of that happening. (How enlightened is the public these days and what is the official attitude towards that? Cross-index tv and the newspapers. Answer, except for minorities like sf fandom, the public is dangerously ignorant. Even vital information on plagues is suppressed for fear of panic.)

A groggling amount of Oohpse checks out with what is observable. The technology of ethrel space people seems to be set and if anything new pops up there, it is not mentioned in the book. They have space ships that carry millions of souls, but that raises the question of how big is a soul?

In many instances the word from on high is timely, from the Book of Judgement (Oohpse is a book of books) the word for the draft board: "Neither shall any king, nor any other ruler in all the world, impress as a soldier, any man who is unwilling to engage in war. And whosoever obeyeth not this my judgement shall not rise above the first resurrection in heaven whilst war remaineth on the earth."

These brief notes are sketchy indication of the content of the book, but it is an excellent companion volume to the works of Churchward and The Morning of the Magicians, and Epistle to the Babylonians.

-----Bill Bliss.

*

Ted Pauls reviews:

KING KOBOLD, by Christopher Stashoff, Ace #44435, 75¢.

Herewith the further adventures of Rod Gallowglass, agent in residence on Gramarye of SCENT (the Society for the Conversion of Extraterrestrial Nascent Totalitarianisms), the subversive arm of the DDT (Decentralized Democratic Tribunal). Mounted on his gallant steed Fess, actually a mobile computer with a penchant for dry humor and a susceptibility to epileptic fits, Gallowglass attempts to quietly guide Gramarye's Middle Ages culture along the path to liberty and democracy. He has more than his share of difficulties. Because the espers among Gramarye's population will eventually contribute much to the vigor and efficiency of the DDT through their ability to instantaneously communicate, the DDT's future enemies keep returning in time machines to try to stifle the culture's development. Gallowglass, who has gained unsought reputation as a warlock because of his command of a few technological devices, is aided in his struggles by the planet's espers, who are witches and warlocks, and by the elves and other similar beings whose existence is the result of a native lifeform called witch-moss with the peculiar property of molding itself into any life-form strongly enough thought about.

None of this is really credible, and it is not intended to be taken seriously. Stashoff plays it purely for laughs, and salts its pages with atrocious puns (an elf named Kelly McGoldbagel, whose ancestors supposedly emigrated from Israel to Ireland, is of course a leprechaun)....

Enter the Editor, gnashing his teeth:

((That does it. This review is much longer, but I can't go on.

((Ted loves the book and says so in language that is wondrous to behold.

((But this is one type of book I find revolting...so I exercise my sovereign right to revolt.

((Humor in fantasy or SF is OK if incidental to the story, but to debase the genre by letting it control the play makes me retch.

((Last ish Ted reviewed one book (by LeGuin) he liked, plus two Belmont piles; this ish he liked this thing, but didn't care for two others (one of which was another Belmont miscarriage). I simply couldn't bring myself to print the latter two.

((Why does Ted bother to even read books he doesn't like?
((Is he...suffering for us all?))

*

Paul Walker reviews:

Mask of Chaos -- John Jakes

The Star Virus -- Barrington J. Bailey -- ACE -- 78400 -- 75¢.

Everyone interested in contemporary SF should read, or at least attempt, as many Ace Doubles a year as they can tolerate, for the Ace Double is to SF what the New York Daily News is to the world. I'm not speaking disparagingly at all, but circumventing the general aura of suspicion and contempt in which they are held by too many fans who should know better. The editorial policies, and artistic standards, of the Doubles is conservative, and the quality is very erratic. Still, there isn't a finer source of insight on contemporary SF.

What is the latest cliché? The most up-to-date definition of hackwork? What impact has the New Wave controversy had on the field as a whole? What are the latest fads and gimmicks? Who will be tomorrow's stars? Yes, friend, the answers to these, and many other fascinating questions, may be found each and every month in the latest Ace Double.

And now and then, you will also find one or two damn fine books. Case in point: John Jakes's Mask of Chaos, and Barrington J. Bailey's The Star Virus.

Jakes is probably the most competent and exciting unknown in the field. Everyone I ask has heard of him: he is reputed to be a hack of four or five years standing; said to have had a writer's block that lasted nine months; and he has done one other Ace Double, Tonight We Steal The Stars, which I really liked. Anyway, Jakes is a thorough professional in the highest meaning of that term.

Mask of Chaos is in three progressive, yet almost distinctive parts. In "The Strangers," a good-hearted slob by the name of Mike is legally narrowed on the remote and enigmatic world of Tone. Years before, Mike simple-mindedly submitted to experimentation by slightly less than civilized researchers who left him two-thirds machine; impregnable, but unappealing to his fellow humans. On Tone, he finds himself among what he assumes to be his own kind. The Tonans wear masks of great beauty and cover their heads with cloaks. Their cities are the most immaculate and serene of any in the galaxy, and Mike finds himself going broke in the best of them.

Before the inevitable occurs, he is granted an interview with Foche, the Tonan Executive, and offered an opportunity to solve his problem and leave Tone a wealthy man. He is to be teamed with another spacer like himself in the "Game," a planet-wide entertainment. Foche gives no details, but Mike gets the idea the "Game" affords less than laughs. He leaves Foche with a "I'll think about it," and runs into the real hero (heroine) of the story, Ab, a professional woman, i.e. wife, mother, whore, mistress, who, sure enough, gets him into the "Game."

Complicating matters is an obnoxious and grotesque little man known as Swamp, who claims to be the agent of the "Downbelow," a band of outcasts who live in the bowels of the city and plot revolution. How Mike and Ab win the "Game," how they join forces with Swamp, and what happens to the revolution is John Jakes's Mask of Chaos.

I tell you all this because Jakes makes his entire story so pleasurable it is a delight to relive it. I haven't spoiled a thing, for it is his fine realistic style, his impressive characterizations, and unexpected plot twists that make the novel what it is. Most interesting is that Jakes makes a good natured slob (Mike) both credible and sympathetic. He is able to tell a well-detailed and complex narrative through the eyes of a man who understands nothing of what's going on. The same is true, but with less success, of Ab who never loses her femininity while doing all the heroic things that will delight Women's Lib.

He seems to be emulating Cordwainer Smith in Part three, and the end is ambiguous, but courageously different. This is a sheer pleasure to read and relate. If you miss Jakes, I'm sorry for you.

Barrington J. Baley is a British writer, I believe, who did a short story for *New Worlds* in 1965 called "The Ship of Disaster," that was as ambitious and disappointing as *The Star Virus*, and I think for the same reason.

He is an accomplished stylist, with a mastery of language and skill at imagery that seems singularly British. His prose is very rich as are his characters and background; too, too rich for the story he has to tell. This is the old one about the roguish spacer who steals something the mighty and mysterious aliens want and keeps one step ahead of them until he finds out what it is and takes over everything. It never really works, but it is usually fun to read.

Baley brings his big guns to play on the plot, blasting it for all it is worth, and that isn't much. He can do everything well, and he does everything to excess, which would be a good thing if the plot was worth it. (This review sounds redundant already.) Yes, it is worth a read. I finished it. I'm glad. I will read everything Barrington J. Baley writes, and I suggest you do the same. And to conclude, I will mention Kelly Freas's stunning cover for *The Star Virus* is worth a Hugo all by itself.

-----Paul Walker.

He also reviews:

The Commipaths - Suzette Haden Elgin

The Noblest Experiment in the Galaxy - Louis Trimble - ACE - 11560 - 75¢.

Either editor Donald Wollheim has taken to drink, or else there's a subversive element at Ace: their latest duo is the best I've read in years; and *The Commipaths* by Suzette Haden Elgin is singular in their entire, dubious history.

In ye far future, under the steely bureaucracy of the Tri-Galactic Federation, babies born with a "high Factor Q," or telepathic potential, are expropriated by the state and sent to the "Creche" for special training to be martyrs to the welfare of mankind; for only by telepathy can man communicate across the vast distances of three galaxies, and maintain his dominion over them.

A handful of Creche rejects have formed a cult, "the Maklunites," living in communes, and practicing the rites of brotherhood on a lonely, picturesque desert world of the Extreme Moons. There they refine their limited psibilities for the spiritual betterment of the community.

As the novel opens, Anne-Charlotte, one of the young mothers of the cult, has had her baby taken forcibly from her by the Federation, and is subsequently charged with high treason for attempting to conceal it. She cannot accept the loss, nor can the child, whose psibilities are twice the norm; and the two plot a reunion at the cost of galaxy-wide havoc.

There is a subplot involving the Federation's henchman, Coyote Jones, and his girlfriend, Tzana, and how his procuring of the child effects their escape from the clutches of the Federation.

The novel is only 110 pages, but Miss Elgin writes concisely, with poetry and depth. Her characters are lucid and real, except for a few lapses of credible male dialog, and a tendency to force understanding of the bad guys. Her landscapes are brilliantly evoked, and in fact she used all the devices of fiction with extraordinary promise. There is accomplishment here, a striving toward perfection that commands attention and respect.

Even so, the book is a disaster.

In the hands of a conscientious editor, Miss Elgin's novel might have been turned into a Hugo/Nebula possibility. As it is, the novel is beaten to death by its own artistry.

To begin with: it is a short story, period. The mother of a psychic freak has the child taken from her, she plots to take it back, she is captured, she escapes, and _____. End of fine, fine story. The Coyote Jones subplot is minor and irrelevant, except to the theme, and even so, has no place in such a subtle and balanced piece. Added to the burden of a subplot, is the use of multiple-viewpoints: six or seven at least, with "documentary" chapters of reports between

enemy agents.

Multiple-viewpoints rarely work in long novels, except when they are aspects of the omniscient narrator in pointless disguise, i.e. Dracula. They are death to the short story. Alfred Bester used them exceptionally well, but his final product resembled a magnificent anecdote rather than a story. Miss Elgin used the device perfectly, only the device defeats her purpose. It is asking too much of any reader's empathy to concern himself with six or more characters and their travails. It just does not work.

I don't blame Miss Elgin, I blame her editor.

The theme itself was obviously more important to her — I assume she's a young writer — than the drama of Anne-Charlotte and her child. Unfortunately, her refusal to portray her heroes and villains as "good guys/bad guys" nullifies her effectiveness and her meaning. She is saying that the Establishment, by its very existence, tends to corrupt basically good people and compels them to do stupid and inhumane things. The point is very good, and true, but however basically good they are to begin with, corrupt people are corrupt people, and stupid people are stupid. Miss Elgin insists on their basic goodness, then lets them do stupid things without a convincing demonstration of their capacity to do them. (That is unclear, but read the book and see.)

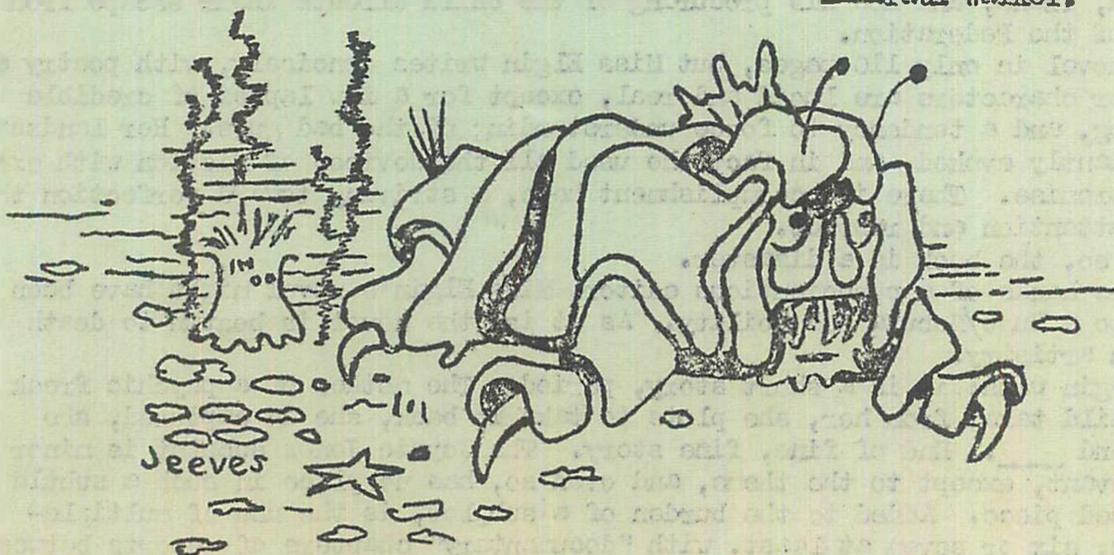
Her Maklunites, typical hippie-types, are smug, self-righteous prudes, who frankly turn my stomach. They are supposed to be the opposites of the unfeeling Establishment, yet they strike me as even more stupid and selfish. Well, I'm not supposed to let my political or cultural views interfere with my critical perspective, and I guarantee most of you will disagree with me, but there it is.

The Commipaths is still the most unusual and promising novel I have ever seen in an Ace Double, and I wish you would give it your close attention.

On the backside of Miss Elgin, figuratively speaking, is a delightful Gaughan illo for a delightful suspense novel, Louis Trimble's *The Noblest Experiment in the Galaxy*. Plot is about all it has going for it, so I won't tell you much more than that it is an SF treatment of a "hard-boiled" detective story, easy on the "hard." The hero, Zeno Zenobius, is sent by his mysterious boss to uncover the truth behind the "Noblest Experiment in the Galaxy" and meets intrigue, violence, and mystery. The tone is light. There are numerous literary references: Hamlet, Marlowe, Zeno etc., which may mean there's a whole level of satire I missed. Anyway, Trimble's prose is economical, his plot is rich in incident and reasonable on violence, his characters are slightly above stereo-types, and the mystery is sufficiently engrossing. Alas, the suspense is minimal, for he chooses to reveal too much at the beginning.

I almost forgot to mention the Josh Kirby cover for *The Commipaths* — reminiscent of *EMSH*, I think. Moving and appropriate.

—Paul Walker.



EDITORIAL NOTES

It has recently been called to my attention, by a reader requesting anonymity-- obviously (heheh) a fan--that, in view of the "tragic" (his/her word) circumstances surrounding this year's TAFF race, a revision of or addition to the rules should be made. It may be remembered that the winner of this year's TAFF, who will be gifted with a trip to NOREASCON, was also in attendance at the St. Louiscon. Personally, I have only my memory of the TAFF origins to go on & do not want to take the time now --I hope to mail out the first copies of this ish in just a couple hours--to look up the material in my files relating to the birth of TAFF.

However, it does seem to me that a very large portion of the original purpose of TAFF--to allow a worthy fan, who otherwise might never have the opportunity--to cross the Atlantic either way to a Worldcon, major expenses paid--has, in this instance, been invalidated. What do you, the interested readers of Moebius Trip, think? With enough of you sending in your opinions the balance may weigh heavily enough in one direction or the other to bring forth either a call for action or for (what else?) inaction.

By the way, it goes without saying that I do not herewith mean to suggest that anyone should overlook the fact that, regardless of circumstances, every courtesy should be extended to this year's lucky TAFF winner.

In thinking the whole matter over, my own suggestion would be that some kind of restriction might very well be placed upon future TAFF voting to prevent someone, who has just attended one Con, to win and attend the very next (where both involve crossing the ocean). Some reasonable restriction, say, like forbidding a person to run unless he has skipped, since his last visit, at least one Worldcon in the hemisphere involved.

*

Anyone interested in receiving the pub "AUSTRALIA IN '75" write to GARY MASON, GPO Box 4593, Sydney, NSW 2001, Australia. 4 dollar bill should suffice.

NORSTRILLIAN NEWS changed editors recently, now being available from BRUCE GILLESPIE, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Vict. 2001, Australia (10¢ per ish; sub \$1).

And whilst on the subject of Aussie zines, Wombat #1 is received with RON CLARKE-'S Mentor #19, the latter with a slick (previously unpublished) Finlay-nude cover. Wombat: erratic sched, only LoCs & contribs will get it. Chief item John Brosnan story of a wedding. (By the way, Mentor 19 is 66pp of neat stuff; 3/\$1 cash; Ron's address p. 41.)

*

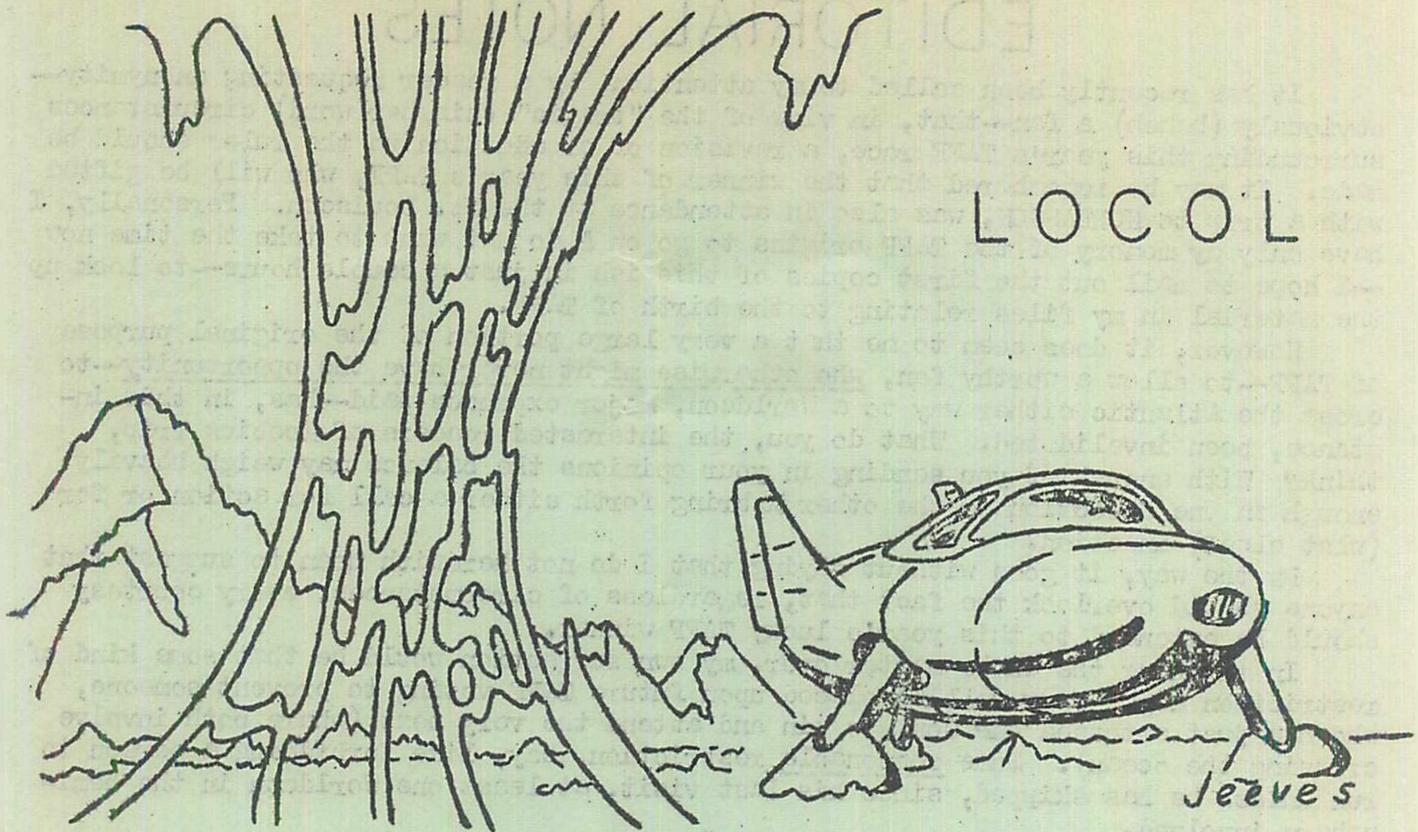
Terry Jeeves' Worcestercon report is from his OMPazine ERG. Assuage his feelings a bit at losing the TAFF race this year by sending him a buck for either a nice selection of back issues of ERG or for a subscription. (Address page 46.)

*

The "block & tumbler" cypress wood lock found near the Temple of Karnak (Thebes) in Egypt, still works fine; its principle is exactly the same as in Yale Locks today... but it was in use around 3,500 B.C.! You'll find it in the German Museum in Munich. A finely-ground plano-convex lens was found in a room in Babylon's ruins, supporting Pliny the Elder's note that "Astrologers used finely ground gems to assist the eye. They were concave, the better to collect the visual rays of the stars." And I won't go into details in re the coin-triggered machine made by Hero of Alexandria to dispense temple sacramental water. Same principle as now used in slot machines in which a certain amount of liquid is released by the mechanism (& Hero also had a device incorporated for detecting coin-substitutes!).

*

Leland Sapiro sends "The Sasquatch Saskatchewanian." (Sasquatches, or bigfeet, are said to be giant, hairy men seen in isolated high-mountain areas.) Apparently this is the official organ of the "Saskatchewan Sasquatch Seekers Society," and one is supposed to apply to John J. Pierce (!) for membership.... Is this a put-on, or what? Chief item in the issue is a long letter professing to be from Dick Kyle. The cover is reproduced from Energumen (Tim Kirk: a Sasquatch looking over a RCMP's shoulder). Is the august Mr. Sapiro up to his odd tricks, or is this all for real? If the latter, my apologies to Mr. S for thinking naughty thoughts. ***



LOCOL

ROBERT BLOCH
2111 Sunset Crest Dr.
Los Angeles, Ca. 90046

Must gently correct Roger Bryant when he says FRANKENSTEIN was the original "feel-sorry-for-the-monster" film. He's probably too young to remember Lon Chaney — most of whose starring roles were based exactly on that theme. While many are unavailable today, Bryant can still see circulating prints of The Hunchback of Notre Dame to confirm this.

Your own listing of Sherlock Holmes portrayals in films omits Arthur Wontner, who did an excellent job in British films in the early thirties. And William Gillette several times revived his stage role — right up to 1932, when he was past seventy.

The scene where the Frankenstein monster reaches for the sunlight is in the first film — I agree it is most moving and effective.

RICK STOOKER
1205 Logan St.
Alton, Ill. 62002

Unfortunately, it is a lost cause to campaign for peace in the pages of fanzines and say fans should devote less time to fanac and more to the cause of peace. The problem is not getting people to want it, but getting every (unilateral action is no answer) country to agree to it, then to find a way to enforce it. Unless Taylor is a secret Mad Scientist who has found a way to alter Man's genetic structure to curb certain tendencies (that's not exactly what I mean but I hesitate to use the ill-defined word, "instinct") that have been with us since the beginning and which we inherited from our animal ancestors; such as, the desire for territory and dominance over one's fellow man. It wouldn't be good at all to eliminate them completely but they should not be allowed to lead us to war.

It's strange that Steve Carrigan should suggest that British fandom is dead. It may be dead in Britain but in IT's Lettercol it's flourishing; nine locs out of 25 are from the United Kingdom, and three are from former colonies (not including the US). *1*

1 Of course, Britain's fandom is alive and well. Perhaps Steve's remark was largely facetious. Hum...perhaps he meant "compared to what it might be".

SUSAN GLICKSOHN
32 Maynard Street, Apt. 205
Toronto 150, Ont., Canada.

"Dear!"

"Yes, Boy Wonder?"

"Here, read this."

"But it's a fanzine, dear. You're the one who reads the fanzines while I scrub the kitchen floor."

"But it's a Moebius Trip."

"So it is, with a grungy cover. Are you and Ed Connor fighting again? Do I have to read a lot of vitriolic differences of opinion?"

"No, dear. The Boy Wonder never disagrees with anyone; he just tries to enlighten them. But this time, Ed mentions you!"

Snatch! Grab! "Where, dear? Where, huh? Wow sensawonder, I'm mentioned in a fanzine!"

"Right there. He says people should send their poetry to ASPIDISTRA."

"Wha...? Oh, no! I just finished telling people in ASP 2 not to send me any more poems, because I've been inundated. Everyone wants to write the stuff, but no-one wants to read it. I could publish a poetry zine every month if I wanted to... but I don't want to."

"So write and tell him so. And here, dear, he says you're an 'incipient tartar.' That's not good, is it?"

"Wha...? Augh! That's nean. The Tartars were a fierce, warlike tribe somewhere in Russia. They were vicious and cruel. And it means someone with a bad temper. I'm not vicious and bad-tempered, am I dear? Did ASP sound tartarish? Oooh, that's nean!"

"Well, dear, you were a little trenchant...."

"But I'm not vicious and cruel, even incipiently, am I? Well, am I?"

"Well, dear..."

"Am I?"

"Oh, no, dear. Stop kicking me. You're sweet, and kind, and loveable. Not a Tartar at all. Now you just write to that Connor chap and give him a piece of your mind. Sweetly."

"Alter Ego, what would Geis do in a spot like this?"

"I suspect he might not even use the letter --- just take the piece of mind and keep quiet."

"Hm...but shouldn't we warn Susan about the perils of Rejection? What about all those poems she doesn't want? No matter what she says, when she sends them back a few disappointed souls are bound to think of her as hardhearted. A...pardon...Tartar like editor."

"Tell her to put them in the reject file...in Limbo, to be blunt."

"No, Alter Ego, I think we should apologize for placing --- however jocularly --- that

mantle in her wardrobe, and end by asking all who get back poems to continue thinking of her as the Boy Wonder's Better Half."

"That sounds reasonable. Geis himself, with me at the height of my powers, could hardly do much better."

"Thank you, Alter Ego. Who, by the way, are you visiting next?"

"On my tour of Fandon? I plan, of course, to skip your next-door-neighbor, Indiana; the most likely spot is Pennsylvania, with Grandfalloon, Beabohena, the coming big first issue of Jeff Schalles' new fanzine. One thing is sure --- I wouldn't be welcomed in Toronto."

BOB VADEMAN
p.o.Box 11352
Albuquerque,
N.M. 87112

Leon: You seem to expect far too much out of fandon. Fandon is not, repeat NOT a tool for anything. Or at least it shouldn't be. Why should fandon be Significant, Serve a High and Noble Purpose --- other than escape from the mundane world for a few hours at a time?

So we learn to communicate thru fandon, huh? There are probably several parties who'd cheerfully slice each other to ribbons over the intricate tangles their words have caused...several, did I say? More than that.

That's what comes out of taking fandon too seriously. Hulvey might indeed have learned more in 6 months with fandon than he's done in 12 yrs of formal schooling. But learned what? How to get along with people? Via letters? I'd hardly call that worthwhile since I've found that most people come off different in writing than they do in person. In knowledge? Of what and of what use is it in which circumstance?

No, Leon, we should not try to force mundane things into a hobby. And a hobby is, by definition, a thing we should like to do in our spare time. What you are advocating is turning a hobby into work, using fandon for some goal other than individual pleasure.

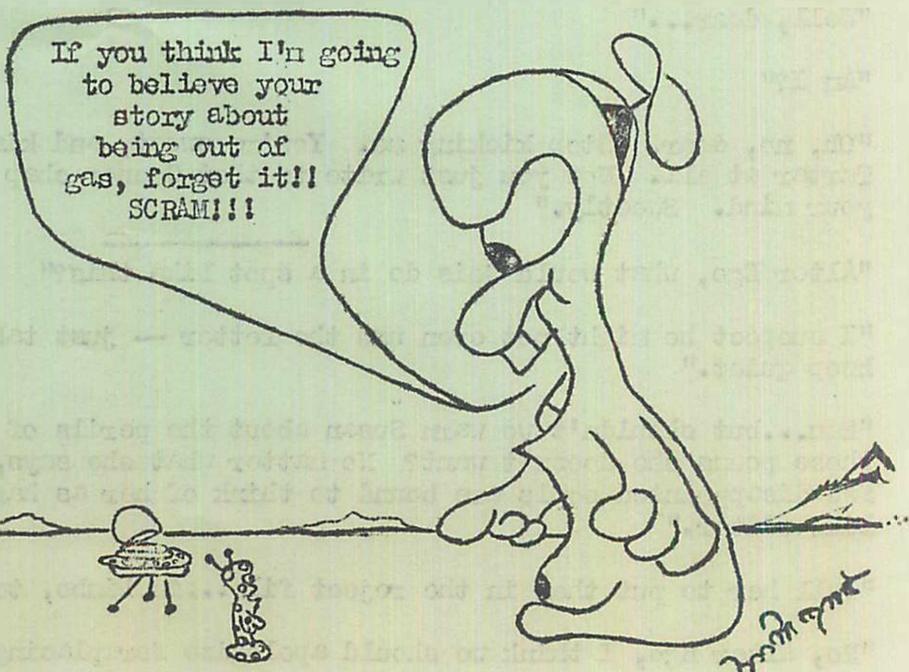
FLAGH. *1*

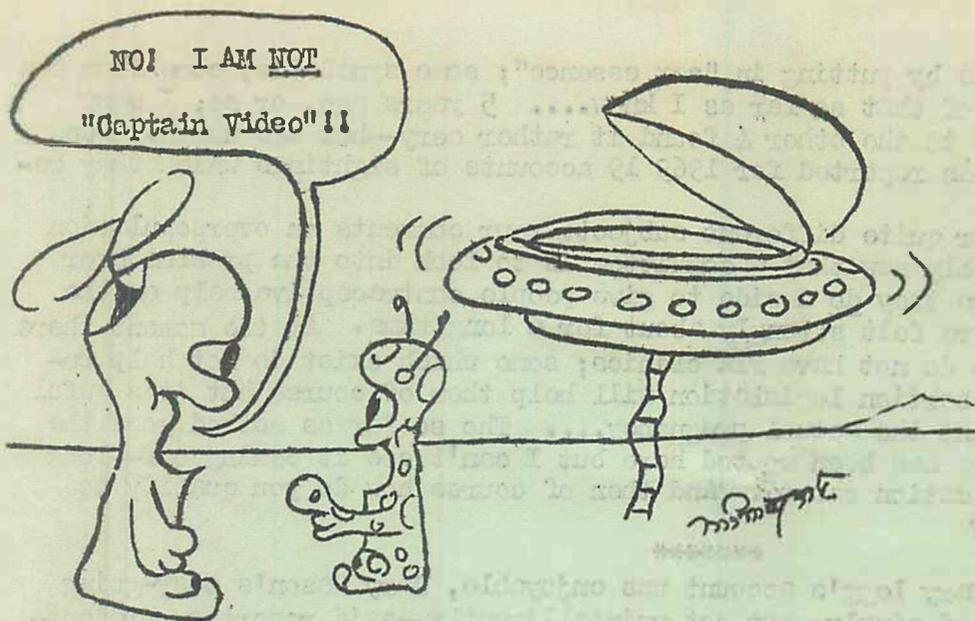
Joe Purlia is being a bit sneaky. Sure, people are hanged on the say-so of someone who is an eye witness. Evidence of evil-doings remain in the corpus, plus myriad other things like powder burns, fingerprints, blood types, footprints with Neolite on the heel, etc. The people seeing a UFO are seeing something, but what? Maybe an ET vehicle, maybe something else. I'd certainly believe someone if he said he saw a UFO, but if he said he saw an ftl spaceship, he'd better be able to prove it with corroborating evidence. The ship itself would be nice, the pilot would be even better

(provided said pilot was 3 ft high, green and had antennae or was otherwise obviously ET.

I don't doubt ET intelligences exist, I'm gut-level sure that some intelligent race exists out there. Seems likely, but I can't prove it. Would you believe me, Joe, if I said exactly 132 races with space travel existed in this galaxy? If you did, simply on my say-so, you'd be nuts. If I believe what someone sees is a real spaceship with ETs in it simply on their say-so, I'd be nuts.

So, in essence, what it boils down





to is proof. I can offer any number of instances where seeing is not believing (is the moon really bigger when it comes up than when it is overhead?). If you said, based on subjective proof, anything other than "Yes, the moon certainly seems bigger on the horizon" you'd probably be lying. Objectively, tho, if you told me the moon didn't mysteriously shrink when it got overhead by showing me pictures, etc, I would

have no alternative but to believe. (I'm ruling out the case of doctored films -- I assume you have honest intentions.)

I'm afraid what Fort did is accept purely subjective proof. To me, objective proof is digging up a meteorite with 7 completely unknown on earth amino acids. Or a 3 foot high, green Martian with antennae letting me take his picture or having him hand me the schematics for that marvelous ftl engine of his....

A,ha! Rick Stoker has hit the target right in the bullseye. The SFWA certainly does need fandom because we provide the only feedback they are likely to get. Even Harlan's best is panned by the mainstream critics (I'm thinking of a certain NYTimes reviewer and "LOVE AIN'T NOTHING BUT SEX MISSPELLED"). Snip off the couple thousand fans and, true, the bulk of the readership is intact. But that would be equivalent to a "True Confessions" writer hacking for bread and nothing else. Remember, most great artists, literary and otherwise, die less than rich. SF ain't literature -- that's what the mainstream says. Most readers don't care. Only fans care enough to even debate the point. I have no doubt that a writer can make an adequate living without fandom, but would he make as satisfying a one?

1 Isn't it a case of one fan's meat being another's poison? Anyway, the "Fandom is a Way of Life" syndrome doesn't necessarily have to be so hidebound serious, does it? (And Fandom has been a tool to some--is it possible to disagree with Jeff Schalles' experience?)

Fandom is composed of all kinds of individuals; there has been no "selectivity" in operation that might weed out ones unable to meet a minimum standard of excellence--as, say, with barbers--or a minimum standard of mediocrity--as, say, with lawyers--so all types and ages are to be found.

MARY LEGG
20 Woodstock Close Flats
Oxford OX2 8DB, England.

I was very glad to see Roger Bryant's loc in particular (among others) as I keep cuttings on various such things. Among them I've just found a letter from a friend in Newcastle who has just seen a film called Chariot of the Gods, presumably based on the book? She tells me it's a German-made film, which stated that people from outer space had landed in different places at different times in the past. Apparently the film "took you around the world" to see carvings on old walls & caves of people wearing hats like space helmets and clothing like spacesuits.... Another thing was the markings in the remoteness of Peru which from the air resemble runways, and so on....

Nessy next. Santos, the English fanartist, was one of the watchers on the summer watches organized by the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau, I think, a year or so ago. He could probably tell you about a sighting which I seem to recall he said happened during his stay there (tho it was not seen by him).... In August, there was

an attempt to catch Nessie by putting in "sex essence"; some synthetic, some from sea creatures. Nothing came of that so far as I know.... 5 years ago, or so, I went from one end of Loch Ness to the other & found it rather eerie---but saw nought. On the other hand the LNI bods reported for 1969 19 accounts of sightings which they regarded as authentic.

To go to another quite different subject: your comments on overpopulation very apposite. You probably saw that a committee is to look into the problem over here? A good sign: I hope they do decide to give people contraceptive help on the N.H.S., it's something I've felt strongly about for a long time. At the moment there are too many councils who do not have FPA clinics; some which exist do not help unmarried girls. The new abortion legislation will help them of course but it's awful to not give help to prevent the actual pregnancy.... The so far as method goes the "put it in the water" idea has been mooted here but I can't see it coming off---look at the rumpus that fluoridation caused. And then of course how do you qualify to have children if it does?

DAVID WM. HULVEY
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Harrisonburg, Va. 22801

Mary Legg's account was enjoyable, Gary Mason's easy-going and simply---but not unintelligently---said report on present-day Australian fandom sparked my interest in really getting into foreign fandom (I'm still idealistic enough about fandom to consider all fans brothers---not matter how far away they be) and Joseph Pumilia's lightly done tale of the "Ghost Road" all combined to give me a strange warm feeling inside. Even though you reject the labels---sercon or faanish---I consider these raps to be in the fine, faanish revival tradition.

Bill Bliss comments on peace make me feel a bit better when I confront the peaceniks who used to be my compatriots. Not that peace is worthless, but the ever-lasting---or so it seems---cries for "peace now" do tend toward the trite after awhile, when it's rather clear that most of the people shouting such slogans do so out of an almost ritualistic obeisance to the Message Is The Struggle, not the Struggle Is The Message. Those glorious October days of 67---and the march on the Pentagon---have become the dismal Mayday farces of 71. Sad, the antiNIXons and the antiAXnews have mirrored, but for the type of symbols they worship, the same paranoia and hatred of Mediocre Man. It was instructive to watch the HardHats and NewLeft come together with almost an identical outcry of rage over the Kelley verdict. Rick Stoker is correct when he says that many fans are "giving more love and joy to the world than 90% of the jokers we find crying 'love and peace' in the streets these days..." In fact, he hits on the major reason I became disillusioned with political movements, that is, the inability to laugh so many of the fogies, both old and young, seem to exhibit. Everything was so sercon, so totalitarian in concept, yeah "let's do everything for _____," fill in your favorite cliché, and forget about all else.

ED COX
14524 Filmore Street
Arleta, Ca. 91351.

...I found the material on Phil Farmer very interesting. Heartening to see somebody get a positive write-up in the home-town paper once in a while. Somebody from "our" notley little band, that is. Noticed a bit in the local paper around here, the Valley News and Green Sheet. Four times a week filled with 20% local news, politics, business growth, sales oriented stuff, and 80% ads, including a classifieds section that sells almost anything and fast.... Ted Sturgeon had a photo and squib (author of Sturgeon Is Alive and Well...) where he was a featured speaker at a parent's night thing at the special school where his daughter goes. Talented parents get the tab once a month (or week) at this shindy. I wonder what he had to say at that ~~thing~~ thing.

Gary Mason's reprise of the Australian stf fangroup history, especially relating to Sydney is a nice piece of history that is of interest now and ought to be useful for later historians. I wonder if there is any way we can get some enterprising young fan with access to a great and near complete store of fanzines to index all such items. It would certainly be useful to somebody, sometime. Going back a lot further than his scope in this article, I wonder what ever happened to Vol Molesworth. Used to publish material by him on Australian fan-doings in TRITON (a genzine of the late 40s).

Another fan from that era, and before, seems to have been lured out of retirement in the pages of MF. Don Brazier's little fiction pieces are succinct and enjoyable.

I guess I could look in my file and find out when I first read The Big Ball of Wax (I have the Simon & Schuster hardcover...it was that long ago...), but I enjoyed the hell out of it, feeling that this was/is truly a stf novel with all the best elements of stf plus an all too-possible look to the future by a man who worked in the area that works towards shaping such things, all in the name of marketing. I feel it belongs on anybody's shelf of basic stf novels. Along with Earth Abides by Stewart, to name another from "outside" our motley little band. The reason I mention this is triggered by the last sentence in Walker's review of the former title. I am also a Doc Savage "buff," having read the magazine off the stands since sometime in 1943 til the magazine's demise in 1949 plus the revival at Bantam. Why, then, is it "definitely not" for DS buffs? Unless, of course, there is some semblance around of that sort of philosophy of "If you ain't for me, you're agin me!" Think about it.

Re Ned Brooks' comment re Wizard of Id, etc. I fear that it and its older companion, B C, are running out of ideas. Too many times these days the gags are comment on current things and the contrast to what is ostensibly the basis of the whole strip(s) is too much of...well, you could call it an anachronism. The earlier B Cs were a delight and fantastically funny, as were the first years of WIZARD OF ID. But they ring in too many current gags and it takes the edge off the enjoyability of them. And the ant series in B C are just too much. I could do without them. The walking clans, maybe....

If Joe Punilia doesn't have time to work on that fanzine concerned with H.P.Lovecraft, he might note that people who are interested in HPL write to Harry O. Morris, Jr., 500 Wellesley, S.E., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87106, who publishes NYCTALOPS, which is devoted to HPL and the Circle, etc....

RON L CLARKE
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Normanhurst, NSW 2076
Australia.

Schalles' cartoons are classic—I hope he keeps sending them to you for future issues.... My, my, don't people these days like taking on Fandon and blowing it sky-high with well chosen phrases. I agree broadly with Leon Taylor, that you should not get too involved in Fandon, though it does give a person a good circle of friends. Some young fans here in Australia got involved in Fandon during their stint in late High School or early University—which ain't all that good—there were a few failures in critical exams. Of course there is the slogan "Fandon is just a Goddamned Hobby!"; though I think fandon is more than just a hobby—fandon is something unique in itself, and it is hard to define something unique.

Wolfenbarger's bit was good fanfic—fragmentary, though. You have some good book reviews in this ish, most of which I haven't read (the books, that is) as most of the books here seem to be reprints and I haven't gotten around lately to ordering any from Dick Witter. I liked Faust Aleph-Null in the serial and have forecast that "The Day After Judgement" will win the Hugo. Any takers?

IAN R. WILLIAMS
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Chester Road,
SUNDERLAND,
SR4 7RD - Co. Durham,
England, U.K.

I was pleased to see a prozino comment column even if it was too short. Ted Pauls echoes my own feelings about Ken Bulmer as a writer. He really is a banal and cliched hack—only two of his books have given me any kind of pleasure (DEMONS WORLD and KANDAR), the rest being minor bores. A pity, as in person, Ken Bulmer is one of the most charming and amusing people to meet at a British convention, certainly one of the most easily approachable of pros and who is willing to talk to anybody. As for Moorcock, well, like Harlan Ellison, he is a good writer but not very often. I'd also tend to agree with Roger Bryant on Ayren Davidson, THE PHOENIX AND THE MIRROR is a masterpiece, but god knows when he'll complete the trilogy, if ever.

Paul Walker: yes, he's right. Films that are filled with gore are tasteless and pander only to cheap sadism, they aren't art, nor even interesting. There is a world of difference between a film such as THE HAUNTING (it may have been

called THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE in the U.S.) which depends purely on the tension that can be aroused in the viewer by suggestion alone and the innumerable Hammer epics which overflow with severed heads, limbs, and twisted mindless monsters. The former is art and can be seriously discussed, the latter are either laughable or vomit-making. Which brings me to a pet hobby-horse of mine: violence is the only kind of pornography. As long as we live in a society where violence in the cinema and on tv is perfectly acceptable for young children to see and sex is not, this world will continue to stay in the messed up state it is in at present. Perhaps Robert Coulson might argue that violence is part of our nature and we may as well accept it. There are many parts to our nature, some of which we repress because they are socially unacceptable. It would be nice to live in a world where violence was one of those repressed parts. There can't be that many people who would sooner kill than fuck....

BRIAN WILLIAMS
'Kenya'-Ballinger,
Gt. Missenden, Bucks.,
England, U.K.

I liked Leon Taylor's "Ostriches," although I thought it a little earnest. Roger Bryant's article would have bankrupted me if I could get American books locally, so it's perhaps a good thing that I can't....

You talk in your column of US judges who are "moronic bigots" and this reminds me to ask whether you have heard the sickening "Ballad of Lt. Colley." Appalling, musically and morally. *1*

You're using some very nice artwork. Rotsler and Schalles I really like, and the occasional Jeeves illo makes me feel at home.

1 Those verses were printed in TIME, as I recall, and my glance darted over them in passing. I much prefer Chopin or G & S, to be perfectly candid.

JOHN PIGGOTT
17 Monmouth Rd.,
Oxford, OX1 4TD
England, U.K.

...Ed, I thought you were producing a fanzine. So what are all these tired old book reviews doing in it? I think you'd be far better to leave the sf to mags like Speculation that do it well--I don't find a collection of book reviews terribly interesting when they're hidden among all the fanzine material you have.

I like book reviews, but think they should be kept well inside the purely serious zines. Serious discussion of sf and book reviews go well together--your combination of serious book reviews and the trivial but interesting fanzine stuff tends to grate a little. It makes the book reviews seem dry and uninteresting, and the fanziness trivial and pointless. I much prefer good fanzine material anyway; and it's the fanzine stuff that tends to last: I don't know the name of a single serious magazine of 10 or so years ago, whereas I've heard of quite a lot of fanzine ones of that era, which are spoken of with nostalgic affection by those that have read them. I haven't, of course....

Mushling's article was a nice surprise, very readable and quite funny in parts. Didn't realize M. was such a fan of Harlan Ellison, though (length of her title).

Bill Bliss has a very warped idea of human nature. He spins a nice fairy story about peaceful people, but alas it's very far from the truth. The great majority (say about 99.9%) of people are not peaceful. Far from it. Usually it doesn't appear in violence, since our society levies penalties on people who use excessive violence, but it's there, coming out in more subtle ways. Fans aren't exceptions either. The phrase "blood runs fast in the lettercol" that's been used in more than a few fanzine reviews springs to mind. If you think about it, that's just what does happen. The fans don't use physical violence; instead they just demolish personalities in fanzine lettercolumns. It's no coincidence, surely, that Science Fiction Review, perhaps the most successful fanzine of all, had just about the nastiest lettercol out... I realize I'm being unfair to some ~~people~~ people here, particularly Harry Warner, who strikes me as one of the most likeable people there are. But even Harry has occasional lapses, like his column in SFR 40 where he tried to convince us that he's really vicious and evil. Nevertheless, I'm willing to believe that fandom has a greater proportion of "non-violents" than does the general population.

The fact that nearly all people have violent tendencies stems from the fact that mankind is, when all's said and done, a hunting species. To coin a fine old cliché, killing's in our blood. Ancient man had to kill in order to survive; he was in competition with many species for food, a lot of which were better at it than he was, and so he killed not only for food, but also took pot shots at other predators...because they were dangerous to him. And I'm sure this is still with us. Only now the main threat to man is other men. Things like Pinkville and My Lai (much as I hate to use these already hackneyed and thoroughly sordid examples) only bear out my conclusions.

And I'm no way exempt myself from this. I am certainly guilty of writing LoCs which are far more vitriolic than necessary....

BILL WOLFENBARGER
705 East Front St.
Bloomington, Ill. 61701

Really enjoyed Don Brazier's story; I'd like to see what he could do with a novel.

David Wm. Hulvey: Your comments are most interesting... to use an oft-turned phrase. I appreciate the concern you have for my head. Anyway, I've been thinking over what you said, and re-read the article in question.

What I did was describe my feelings about certain aspects of the Social Lie, the Big Snuck. It certainly doesn't mean I'm uptight to the point of any overt action, or anything of the sort. "Zeppelins and Pallbearers" was an experiment in fandom, and it has obtained a nice wide variety of reactions. I admit it, tho, David, for a few moments I was indulgent. Yet I have also come into unfortunate contacts with rednecks, power people, proto-fascists, etc., on a much more dangerous scale than anything described in that article. It's unfortunate I turned you off, and I hope this will be a tumon communication with you.

ANN CHAMBERLAIN
4411 Van Horns
Los Angeles, Ca. 90032

You can get a well written pamphlet from De Vorss & Co. publishers (Los Angeles) on spacecraft and their relationship to earth...the title sounds something like that...if you really care about the subject. This is one of those things that

really can't be proven or disproven to the satisfaction of everyone...it's an individual experience which is real when it happens to you, that you see or ride in one...and only then.

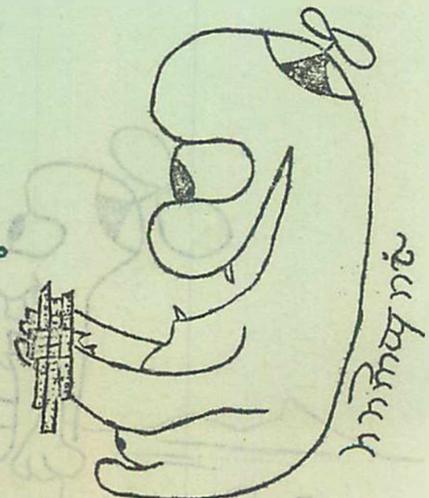
Now I have the best book available in the world today by the foremost authority...on an ages old subject which is often discussed without being understood. The book is "ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ASTROLOGY" by Nicholas Devore (no relation to Howard). Suitable questions should be, "How long is an Astrological Age?" "What are Houses?" "What is the Penumbrol Eclipse?" or "Whence Astrology?"

Thus far, this requires more thought than the average fan cares to expend in a serious way. The preface by the author makes very good sense to me--so I recommend that the book should be read by people who want to know how this "best authority" evaluates it. THEN enough will be known about it to begin a discussion.

For comparison--an idiot can recognize forms and symbols that describe Easter, but only a pure-hearted and intelligent person can surmise what it must have been like to endure a crucifixion and receive the glory of ascension.

Mention any great and well known philosopher or scientist, where any large group of people are gathered together--few will agree with the original thought and everyone will put some variable interpretation on it. Will you judge the originator by the evaluations of the uninformed?

Well--
according
to my
Calculations,
I've been
dead for
17 years--



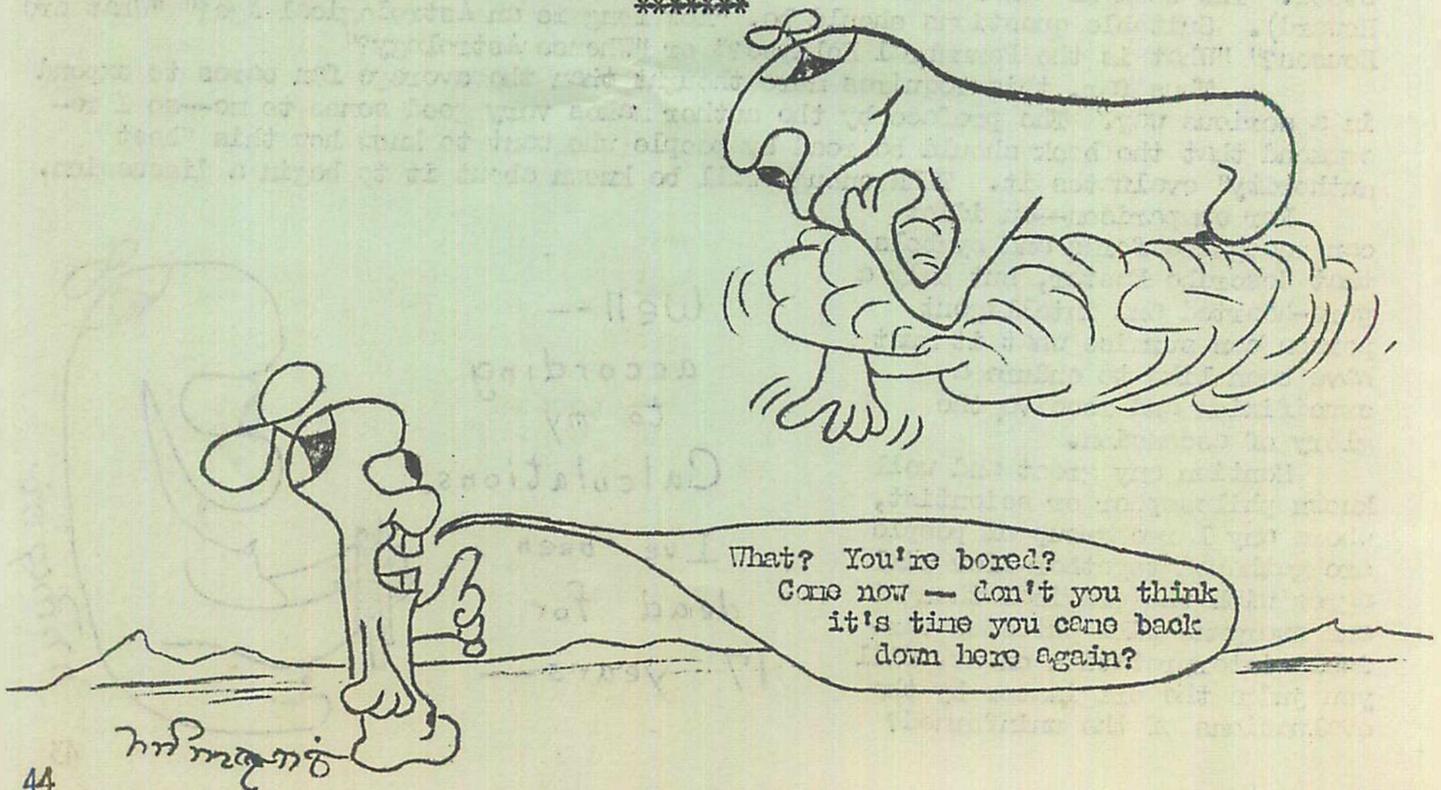
That is what happens all too often.

LEON TAYLOR
P. O. Box 89
Seymour, Ind. 47274

I seem to have created an enemy in George Senda. I am very sorry; altho I am unfamiliar with the bulk of George's work (save a few letters), I envy and appreciate what little I have read. I like him and respect him: if I have so aroused him to such rage with my "reactionary blatherings," then of course the fault is mine and I am sorry. The only thing that I can plead is that I write what I believe; not that I'm always right or even frequently so, you understand. But the reason that I write for fanzines—well, outside of the glamorous Creative Urge—is because it's a fantastic way to communicate; in other words, I don't have to evolve my opinions in a vacuum. I can issue them forth, and talk in the sundry points that a couple dozen people will raise on encountering my own raw article. This way I have the benefit of many viewpoints at once; and my own hypotheses will be that much corrected and enriched. Consequently the issues that Harry Warner and Rick Stoker raise with my "Ostriches" are very penetrative; and particularly with Rick's point that a "joyful article on the latest antics of your parakeet" can contribute that milk of human kindness I stand corrected. Like Keats says, "Truth is Beauty, Beauty Truth / That is all ye know, and all ye need to know." Thank, Rick. But altho George makes it quite clear that I am unforgiveably wrong, he doesn't point out exactly where I go wrong: am I that lost to reason, George? In any rate, perhaps he can correct the situation for the readership; so I invite George to, if he wishes, write a rebuttal article for MT showing the fallacies of my argument. If mine are "reactionary blatherings," then they shouldn't be that hard to destroy. And I think we'd benefit: I know I would.

As for giving up my writing for MT...well, of course if a number of the lettered (say a half-dozen) ask that I do, then I will. But otherwise I think I'll keep writing as long as Ed lets me, precisely for those reasons I mentioned above. I've learned a lot; I expect to learn a lot more. If I am that painful for George to read, then I guess he can always skip my byline. Undoubtedly the loss will be more mine than his, since I am the one losing the benefit of his reasoning.

Thank, Harry, but as sortofan expert on my own writing I can assure you that I am nowhere being "the best of the newer fuz writers." More in the lower stratum, I'm afraid. But you encourage me when you credit me with trying to write an essay with vividness and imagination because that is precisely what I am trying to do. I almost feel like I might succeed.



andy offutt ...I think it's safe to say that my little collection of weirdness in
Fanny Fain ME#6 has brought more letters and kudos than anything I've ever done,
Haldeman, including the SFR article "Paper Tiger, Burning Bright," which I thought
Ky. 40329 was the Last Word on the New/Old Wave shuck, and the long-ago article in
Bane, about Vardis Fisher and the Testament of IFA, which Fisher thought
was the best treatment he'd ever got. (He requested 25 copies at any price, and I
think student-magazine-publisher Vic Ryan musta keeled over; I've heard neither from
nor of him since.)

Anyhow all the letters about my "Implausibility/Improbability" article in
#6 made #7 a real treat for me, and now you send me #8, with spillover: more letters.
I think I'd better do another article. The wild thing is that ALL I did was put down
some things I'd both read and thought about--and I'd never read Fort (have since
bought 3 Forts from Ace and read one, the skimmiest)--hadn't even read Fort when Mar-
groff and I wrote "The Book" and sold it to Damon for Orbit 8. Nor had I read the
newspaper feature Harry Warner mentioned, nor did I know who.., ohgod. I forget the
name--Von Haniken? ((Daniken.)) Anyhow, I keep intending to look him up because I
keep realizing that in so many ways in sf/dn I am such a dumb kid; I just didn't grow
up properly, meaning faanishly, and after being exposed to sf and fandon for years
and years, finally went to my first con in St Leo in 1969. A bunch of others since
then, and by the way Don Blyly called the other night and I'll be CoH at some sort of
con next November in Champagne (Champain? Champlain? Shamplyan?). ((Let's just say
Urbana.)) This will follow close on the heels of my triumphant appearance in Dallas
this summer, where I will be co-CoH with Bloch. (Meaning that everybody's going to
say "Wow, wasn't Bloch great and funny--and who was that bearded cat up there beside
him with the good-lookin redheaded broad?")

This was going to be a note, see?

So I swear unto you that I will now write another article, with answers to
all the questions in the letters and with some new material and some sources. I find
me getting more and more interested in strange-things-that-don't-fit, including Hur-
kos, Cayce, guys like J Swift and Leonardo da Vinci who just don't FIT this planet,
and a lot of other things.

Obviously I could save this letter today and get right on it, but I now
have 22,000 words of notes on this year's serious novel, and am trying to get the
monster outlined and begun--all simultaneously. It's going to be a Good book, I can
see that, and I am determined to give it what it deserves. Like: I have now been
working on it nearly two weeks, but have only about 9,000 words of copy. And all
these damned notes and thoughts and little index cards with pieces of outline on.

I was delighted to read about Phil Farmer, whom I seem to love without
knowing him at all at all--and by Jove, he's a R.F.Burton man, too. As usual, I
thought I had him all to myself. Now it turns out Farmer's working on a couple of
things I've been accumulating notes and thoughts about...well. Directly above my
head is Burton's Arabic motto: madz' al-kull: This too will pass.

PS: Tell Farmer that if Burton (the knightly rover, not the nightly lover)
had survived, he'd say Death Smokes a Camel.

ED CAGLE -- Route #1 Charly Brown can gripe about Philip Jose Farmer writing a few
Leon, Ks. 67074 books that were below the average quality of his work if he
wants to, but as for myself, one story like RIDERS OF THE PURPLE
WAGE, or a RIVERWORLD saga, or any one of many fine tales more than justifies any-
thing Farmer wants to do. SF readers should be so lucky to have a few more writers
who could put out even one good book in all the years of a career. Why piss and moan
about a lapse with a good writer? Maybe the man had a chance to make a buck, and
surely he has the right to do that.

Mae Strelkov writes fascinating letters, doesn't she? They are evidence
to me that she is a lady who knows how to live, and what living concerns: People. I
would be interested to know more about her, and the life she leads which creates all
that enthusiasm for life.

ALEX VITEK As before, your lead article in #8 was excellent. As with the
478 Prentis, #3 article on P.J.Farmer, other articles on well known authors,
Detroit, Mich. 48201 appearing occasionally would be a strong point for the 'zine.

Ted Pauls is definitely getting to be one of the best reviewers that I have found in any 'zine, other than some of the reviews that I have seen done by Alexei Panshin.

Concerning the controversy between Fandom is a Way of Life or a Tool for Life. Fandom can be either one, it is up to the individual and what he wants or expects from life. George Senda brought up a good point. It is somewhat hard to make Fandom a Way of Life because of financial and other considerations, but they can do the next best thing. They can spend all their free time and money on fandom, SF, and all of the various aspects, but what does that leave them other than a heightened sense of "ego." Truly, fandom can be enjoyable and rewarding, but other activities can be just as beneficial....

PAUL DOERR
Box 1444, Vallejo,
Calif. 94590

(JW) Pussy-cats...night fighting, screaming, spitting, primitive little bastards do not civilize themselves and are independent savages who take what they can milk from human susceptibility-- etc, etc. He is on pussy-cats? I've read & heard approximately the same descriptions of businessmen, priests, soldiers--all kinds of people. Why so hard on cats? Methinks thou dost protest too much.

I'm still hunting some people to split the cost of country land. I was offered 40A near Crescent City for \$4000 but didn't have that much bread & could find no one to share.

...The only way to avoid being attacked (as a nation or as an individual) is to be the Meanest Bastard in the Valley. If you're ready, you won't need to. But don't get soft, like Rome, you can't go anyway but down.

...Do the writers really want fans' criticism of their work? As one said, the best comments are long and green, and they don't really write for the fans....

NICHOLAS J. SHEARS
52 Garden Way
Northoliff Ext. 4
Johannesburg, Transv.,
Rep. of South Africa

...A rather interesting statement is in David Gerrold's LoC: "all fan groups (including SFWA)..." What betting nobody even comments on it? If they won't I won't!

As regards NZ fan, I've been trying for quite some time to contact some, and everybody says they don't exist. (Witness ANZARA never having had a New Zealand member.) Never have been, aren't, and probably never will be, so I'm told. ((Hogwash to 1 & 3, maybe even 2.))

Daniken's books seem to fairly be well-known amongst fans (and deservedly so, methinks), but how many have heard of We Are Not the First by Andrew Thomas (Souvenir Press, London, 1971)? Thomas's theory is that perhaps the earth experienced a time slip and moved back into the past; and then started moving on again to the future. ((What utter hogwash.)) He uses many of Daniken's "startling revelations" as well as several others, most of which I haven't seen before. Makes for fascinating reading....

TERRY JEEVES
230 Bannerdale Rd.,
Sheffield S11 9FE
England.

Liked Taylor's OSTRICHES, and of course FIATFL and we are better men (and women) Gunga Din for having entered it. However, he does overstate his case a bit. Fandom is for fun. That is rule No.1. If that is thwarted, we get feuds, cliques, arguments, Gafia and all the other ills that fannish flesh is heir to. Naturally, Rule No.1 doesn't bar the possibility of a bod making money from s-f, from improving his literacy..and his volubility for that matter. I for one have managed to improve my own art work (Before the man in the corner makes a funny...he ought to see some of it as it used to be).

Bill Wolfenbarger's piece was also pleasing to read, inasmuch as it is nice to hear of people who aren't afraid to admit to loving their wives. Val and I have now been married eleven years...we're still in love, and what is perhaps the finest thing of all, in ALL that time we haven't had one row....I also liked Bill's comments on the various prozines, but sad to say, so far only Analog has made it through my portals up to date. Worse, I'm missing two copies of Galaxy from way back...so if you know anyone who wishes to donate, trade or sell...I'm after:

GALAXY: Nov. 1969; March and July 1970....

MAE STRELKOV
Casilla de Correo 55
Jesus Maria, Cordoba,
Argentina.

I am deeply tempted to jump in with both feet anew to defend poor persecuted Perry A. Chapdelaine! Does he want it? Does he need me defending him by any chance? Just let me know by return airmail and I'll begin firing my peace-salvos in his defence! Three cheers for the Underdogs of Life!

But really, the poor darling... It makes my heart bleed to hear how hard it is to be a writer, nowadays. Hoorah that I'm an unsuccessful one (since my published phase lasted only between 1953 to 1958 with a Catholic Digest reprint in 1959), when I was going through the "Love-one-another" stage at its highest.

The Catholic editors back in the U.S. used to inform me that priests and nuns wrote them regularly that my articles "strengthened their faith." Am I strengthening yours now?...Love, peace and happiness to FANDOM AND FANGDOM alike....

ARTHUR HAYES
Box 1030, South Porcupine
Ontario, Canada.

In the area of fandom devoted to Fanzines, the fanned is given his due condemnation or kudos, the letterhacks fight amongst themselves using the medium provided by the Faned and all continues much as before despite so-called memor-

ial words printed originating from BNFs and Pros, no one really changing anything.

Hidden amidst these, lie the majority (I think) who get some vicarious pleasure at peaking in on the contents, but who are rarely included in there, because they form parts of various groups that, along with other groups, compose Fandom.

...There are times when I hate receiving fanzines and at those times I really wonder why in hell I am still active in Fandom after nearly twenty years around. What is the purpose of Fandom? I haven't really fathomed that yet. The time I am putting in on fanac could be more profitably spent (financially speaking) in many ways. It is an escapist method, similar to the TV, a time waster with many fans. Even conventions are being questioned as to usefulness in my mind, though I'll be at the NOREASCON this year. Either I am changing, or the new fans are different, but there doesn't seem to be the rapport now between myself and other fans that seemed to be the case even ten years ago.

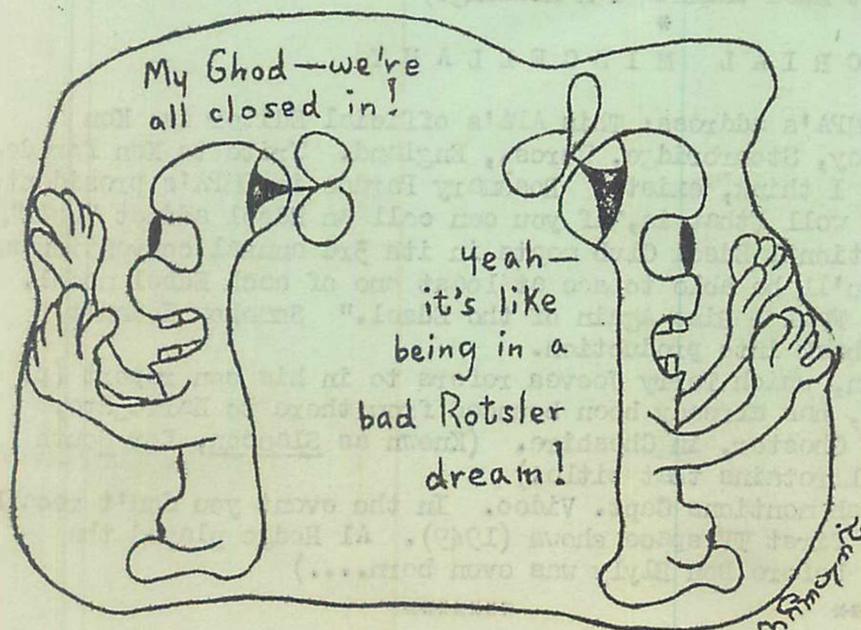
JEFF SCHALLES
173 McClellan Drive
Pittsburgh, Pa.15236

I wonder if I fit Bill Bliss's type 4. Maybe that would explain away the fact that I have trouble communicating with about 90% of the people I run into. I'm usually open to just about anything, and I usually think things through before jump-

ing on the bandwagon. I mean, when all my peace type friends started on the "Kill the Pigs" jag, I hesitated, because I realize what this place would be like without cops. I mean, I KNOW there are a number of bad cops that probably wouldn't hesitate

to split my head to see if there's anything underneath the hair, but I've known a few good ones in my time, and I've certainly run into plenty of people that need enforcing. So I say "Keep an Eye On The Pigs," meaning, let them do their job, but make sure they remember that they are public servants, not Mayor Daley's private army.

On the matter of enforcement, I've finally had enough of hot cars and fast drivers. I've been nearly run off the road once too often, and am now fully in favor of legislation limiting the top velocity and



high acceleration rates now possible with these "muscle" cars. I know that human beings are sometimes very aggressive, and that they can't help that they want to prove their manhood in their steel and glass demons, but something has to be done. I don't know if this can be accomplished, but something must be done to protect the innocents. One thing I often run into is people that say that normally they don't drive fast either, but there are times when speed or acceleration is needed to pull them out of bad spots. All right. I'm sure there is a medium point that can fit the circumstances. What I have in mind is such things as the "Super Bird" Plymouth came out with—a production car put out in enough numbers to enable them to use it at "stock car races". The thing can do 200 mph if set up correctly, and at least 150 in its showroom condition. WHY?

Moebius Trip seems to be America's International meeting place for International fans. You seem to have more material from foreign fans than all the rest of fandom put together. I really enjoy these glimpses of fanish life across the waters.

WILLIAM G. BLISS

422 Wilnot

Chillicothe, Ill. 61523

...On sea serpents, one of my pet suspicions is that somehow, the planet is continuously (or at least at fairly frequent intervals) being restocked. Either by somebody from who knows where, or leakage from someplace else, like other dimensioned worlds, or Fort's "Islands In the Sky." Things like critters that are not indigenous to a territory showing up (panthers near Henry Ill.—black ones a couple years ago, and now brown ones). Some survive, and some don't. Of course it is a matter of record that many unsuspected critters as well as those believed to be extinct have showed up. Even locally, there is some land that is visited very infrequently by anybody, and with sea serpents, the sea is a big place, and only a small portion of it has regular traffic.

THAT IMPOSSIBLE FEELING: Wouldn't it be the living end of something or other if that green glow actually was SWAMP GAS? Incidentally most swamp gas is common methane, very inflammable and a good fuel. One flying saucer explanation I don't recollect ever seeing used officially is "It was just a small convention of fire-flies or lightning bugs."

Terry Jeeves: Correct about the persistence of the phosphor of a telly screen. My tube manuals only give the scant information, "Medium persistence." I've got more data, brightness decay curves, etc., here somewhere. (Things can get lost in my back room for ages.)

W.A.H.F.: Bob Tucker, Douglas Abe, Michael Glycer, David Grigg, Leigh Couch, Sandra Miesol, Mervyn Barrett, Robert Whitaker, Joe Hensley, George Hay, Gene Wolfe, Dave Lewton & Ian Maule. Thanks to all & let's everybody send a con report from NORTHEASTCON, OK? (Haha—I'll bet Buck thinks I'm kidding.)

*

EDITORIAL MISCELLANY

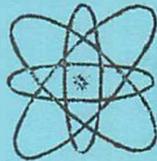
For those who asked for OMPA's address: This APA's official Editor is: Ken Cheslin, 36 Chapel St., Wordsley, Stourbridge, Worcs., England. Write to Ken for details about joining (openings, I think, exist). Rosemary Pardoe is OMPA's president.

Edsel Fandom is alive and well (that is, if you can call an Edsel addict "well".) On Aug. 20-22, '71 the International Edsel Club meets in its 3rd annual convention at the Hyatt Lodge in Peoria. You'll be able to see at least one of each Edsel model. The Con's theme is "The Rise & Fall & Rise Again of the Edsel." Somehow I don't think they'll be putting them back into production.

The 1972 British Eastercon, which Terry Jeeves refers to in his con report (p. 17) as scheduled for Blackpool, has already been bounced from there to Harrogate, then from there to (presently) Chester, in Cheshire. (Known as Slanccon, for South Lancashire, it apparently still retains that title.)

A Schalles cartoon this ish mentions Capt. Video. In the event you don't recall the program, it was one of the first TV space shows (1949). Al Hodge played the lead. (Good Heavens—that was before Don Blyly was even born....)

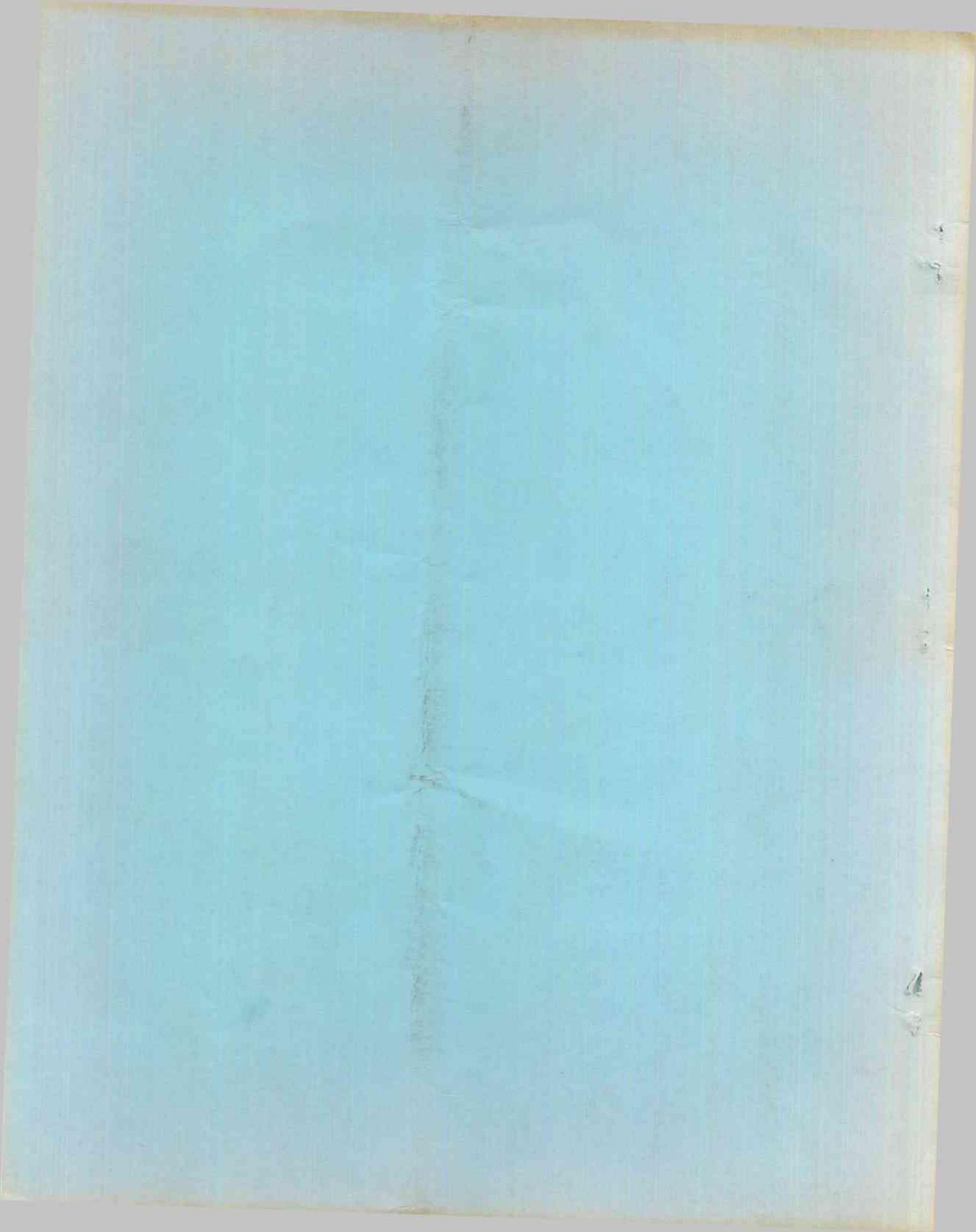
July 11, 1971



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John W. Campbell".

JOHN W. CAMPBELL
Editor.



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