



The

NEOLITHIC

Borogove in orbit No. 10, September, 1960: a monthly mag

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with the pictorial aid of: Dick Schultz,
Rab, and eaa



Comet Firestone is back!

NeoLithic, with All Mimsy, will go to all who send contributions or letterofcomments (sent at the rate of four a year), five cents in postage (also sent four times a year), or who trade on an all-of=ours for all-of-yours basis. Neol comes from the basement of Ruth Berman at 5620 Edgewater Boulevard, Minneapolis 17, Minnesota.

from HAL SHAPIRO, July 24, 1960: "Suggestion, cut down on frequency of your fmz and try to be a little more judicious in content. Your writing is the best part of the thing (not flattery. Sincere estimate) but you seem to have nothing to talk about."

I've exerpted that paragraph from Hal's letter because I want to make a longer reply to it than I would ordinarily give in the letter column.

About three years ago some of my friends and I began putting out ALL MIMSY. Few fans have seen any copies of AM, because all issues but one were put out before I entered fandom. Of course, I am not the only editor on AM as I am on Neol, but, even so, I have had the experience of putting out a zine which is fairly long -- in size and in space between issues. Having tried both, I prefer Neol's format.

Deems Taylor, commenting on Sir Arthur Sullivan's system of composing the music for the operettas, said, "Sullivan must have

had newspaperman's blood in his veins; he never could work well except to an imminent deadline." I don't think there's any need to relate that trait to newspapermen, in particular; it seems to be the way most people work, including me. The methodical Gilberts seem to be rare. This means that I do the larger part of any job in a short period just before it comes due. This, in turn, means that I would rather not have a large job coming due, because a large one could not be gotten ready in a short period. If I put out Neol less often than monthly, I would feel obliged to make it larger. I could only do this by putting it on the sort of schedule AM has -- highly irregular with long, long periods between issues -- or by working at it in the methodical fashion.

As I already mentioned, I don't care for the first alternative. It's just a matter of waiting for a long enough period when nothing much is going on so that I can still do the whole thing in one fell, or stumbling swoop. As for the second, well, after all, this is just a hobby: methodical fashion's no fun, and I won't do it.

I might do it, if I thought Neol's present schedule was -- highly inconvenient for the readers. However, the only discomfort I can see is that it's hard to store a small, frequent zine like Neol -- assuming that you want to. Otherwise, you don't have to be more active than usual to stay on the mailing list, as "four times a year" is an average of once in three months; and the time for the chore of reading this is not much.

Incidentally, I'll grant that not all my columns have something important to say. But I think that's an occupational (hobbyational?) disease: incurable, but somewhat controllable. Go read "Confessions of a 'Colyumist'" by Christopher Morley. He knew the illness...and used it to fill one column.

E PLURIBUS ECTOPLASM; a Comet tale
by Comet Firestone

"Oh, come one, George, wake up. Someone's walked on me three times already."

"Hmmm? What do you want now, Alice? What time is it, anyway?"

"You nut, it's 1536. You've been asleep for 270 years already. Just because you're a ghost doesn't mean you can sleep late whenever you want to."

"So what do you want me to do?"

"See who it was who stepped on me."

"Here she comes now. Dear me! No wonder she stepped on you. How do you do, Miss?"

[This new addition is mumbling. Or else something is wrong with the Transylvanian relay -- CF]

"Pleased to meet you, Ann. So Henry's still up to his old tricks...Oh, look out! There it goes. Come on, George, help Miss Boleyn find her head."

BERRY GETS THE BIRD

by John Berry: a Berry Factual Story

My wife had to go away for a week to look after her sister who had given birth to a baby, and I had therefore to take leave of absence from my office to look after my two children, who expect a big hearty meal when they come home for dinner.

In between my chores, however, I sat happily on the back door step, allowing the sun to titillate my complexion into a seductive brown tan, and whilst engaging myself in this fascinating pursuit of doing nothing rather well, I began, quite unconsciously at first, to notice birds!

The little fluffy ones, as distinct from the shapely ones who wear nylons.

My garden is all lawn (This will be complicated to Americans. To Americans, as I pointed out in THE GOON GOES WEST, a 'garden' is any part of the ground attached to the house which is cultivated. A lawn is not the garden. In Great Britain, however, the term 'garden' includes lawn.). It is about, let me see, about fifteen yards long and eighteen yards wide. At the bottom, where the lawn meets the garden of the house opposite, there are three sycamore trees. Not very high ones, but leafy just the same.

Having some stale bread in the kitchen, I decided to give the birds a treat. I fetched the bread, broke it into little sections about as big as my thumb nail, and threw it, shower-like, onto the lawn. There was a pause, whilst the birds tried to work out the gimmick. Then, daringly, a hen sparrow hopped down from a tree and surveyed me and the bread. I just sat there, sort of suave-looking, waiting for developments. The crumbs were some distance away from me, and, furtively, the hen sparrow hopped forward to the nearest crumb, grabbed it, and flew away in triumph. Soon, sparrows and starlings crept forward, one eye on me, one eye on the crumbs.

So it went on. And as the week progressed, I threw the bird crumbs each day, but purposely threw them just a leetle nearer where I was sitting. Within five days, the sparrows flew down almost at my feet, and ignored the vigorous action of my arm as I distributed the bread all round me. The starlings weren't quite so brave, but the fledglings (who didn't know any better) came to within about five feet of me. No longer did the sparrows look at me with one eye whilst attempting to grapple with a big crumb with the other. They trusted me. They saw I was a rare type of homo spaien who really felt for them. I was considerate towards them. And generous to a crumb.

I saw some wonderful psychological stunts that folks don't give wee birds credit for. To cite an example, one day I threw out an old crust of bread which was almost bone hard. Hardly had it left my hand than a school of sparrows dived on it. There must have been fifty round it. To the rear of the milling throng sat an old cock sparrow. He'd seen better years. He was sort of bedraggled, if you know what I mean. Probably crippled with birdie arthritis to boot. Then I saw his fiendishly clever ploy. He burst out into the Sparrow Warning Signal...a rapid whit-whit-whit-whit-whit. The suckers flew away like a fragmentation bomb bursting. The old cock staggered up to the crust and proceeded to bite off chunks of it as fast as he could.

A few seconds passed by, then the others flashed down again. There was a blurr of feathers, and they all moved away with the crust, leaving the old cock upside down, his eyes revolving appealingly towards me. He rolled over to his feet (I probably should have specified claws instead of feet, but he seemed so human, y'know?) and, pressing his luck, gave the warning signal again. It worked everytime.

The cock was so senile, and plump with the bread, that it couldn't even fly, and it found itself a corner in the hedgerow in the garden.

... ..

Another day I threw out an even bigger crust, half a loaf nearly, it seemed. A small loaf. The sparrows (who, by now, were frightened to fly away lest they miss a feed) dropped on it before it hit the grass. Sparrows are greedy things, you know. Dead gluttonish. Some of them were so greedy that they attempted to fly away with it. And then, wonder of wonders, one little critter actually took off and flew about three feet before the weight brought it down again in an undignified mass of bird and bread.

I saw in a flash, what a great discovery was at my threshold.

For years I've been a sucker for useless data. You know what I mean, queer facts given in spare columns in the paper... 'the world's population could comfortably stand on the Isle of Wight' ... 'if the electric wiring on the Queen Elizabeth were put end to end it would go round the world fourteen and a third times'...

'seven thousand six hundred and thirty four watch screws will fit into a thimble,' etc. Stupid statements. I mean, is anyone going to check to ensure that exactly seven thousand six hundred and thirty four watch screws do fit into a thimble? Suppose they did, and found the correct answer to be seven thousand six hundred and thirty five...would they get any sense of achievement out of such a revelation?

But it is one thing checking up on someone else's stupid statements, and it is something else altogether to make up one's own. And mine was sitting there, probably the most stupid and insignificant statement ever made...this was my lucky day.

This was it: 'The maximum weight of hard, stale bread a hen house-sparrow can lift in flight is 4 ounces 13 grammes.'

This was so insignificant as to be almost genius. And definitely stupid as can be.

This immediately put me in a higher intellectual plane, as I knew it was as simple as pie to get it published in the national press. Editors would give their right hands for it, of that I was certain.

But a nagging thought persisted in my mind. Suppose some clever idiot who had nothing else better to do spoiled the effect of my insignificant statement by saying publicly that my figures only related to one hen sparrow. Suppose a super hen sparrow was about, or one gifted with extra wing power, or a stronger beak. It could probably lift a heavier weight of hard, stale bread.

This was, of course, perfectly true, and it left me but one course of action.

I HAD TO CATCH THE HEN SPARROW CONCERNED AND WEIGH IT, TOO.

Then, without fear of contradiction I could state with authority: 'The maximum weight of hard, stale bread a hen house-sparrow of so-and-so weight can lift in flight is 4 ounces 13 grammes.' Problem, how to catch the hen house-sparrow concerned in this phenomenal physical feat?

My nimble mind soon came up with a number of suggestions, all of which I finally rejected, save one. This was how I worked it out by pure logic: I did not know which individual sparrow it was. But I knew it was a hen. Therefore, if I was able to catch all the hen sparrows in the vicinity, and let each one try to fly away with the crust weighing 4 ounces 13 grammes, the one which did it easiest would, by implication, be the one who would fill the statistic best, even if, by some mischance, it wasn't the one which did it before.

QED...I couldn't lose.

Problem.

Catch all the hen house-sparrows in the vicinity. Well, you'll no doubt be surprised to hear that I worked that out, too. Not only did I propose to catch all the hen sparrows, I had to catch all the sparrows in the area, cocks, hens, and chicks. A big job, but one I thought I could handle.

My plan was simplicity itself.

You see, I reasoned it would be impossible to lay a trap for hen sparrows only. I really couldn't think of a single idea to separate the birdie sexes. Of course, it did occur to me that if I could catch a really virile young cock, and use him as bait, I would probably catch them, but as I had to catch the cock in the first instance, it was a retrograde step, as of course, I could have caught the hen at the same time. Which I had to. I had to catch all the sparrows, as I've told you, and then release the cocks, the chicks, and leave myself with the hens, for to experiment with each, with the specially weighed crust!

This is what I did. I got a large hamper basket, took the lid off, and turned it upside down. I placed this on the lawn. I got a short length of wood, about one foot long. I tied some fine black cotton to the middle of the stick. I propped the basket up on the stick. All I had to do was pull the stick away, via the cotton, when the birds were underneath the basket.

As bait, I soaked half a loaf of fresh white bread in water until it was a juicy, soggy mass. I put this underneath the primed basket. If any of you have ever gone fishing, you know that a prerequisite is to scatter ground bait on the river bed to attract the fishes in the first instance, so that they will come into contact with your worm. So, in this case, I cleverly sprinkled bread crumbs of inferior quality in a long line leading to the basket.

A shower of sparrows, all of them in the neighbourhood, flew down and nibbled up the ground bait, then stood at the portals of my trap. Dozens of them stretched on tiptoe to have a real good peep. It seemed to me that they marvelled at my ingenuity, but none of them would go in. I liberally sprinkled more ground bait; I did this many times, and each time, when they came to the gorgeous hunk of bread under the basket, they stood on tiptoe and pondered.

Then...climax...

Into the area staggered the old bedraggled cock sparrow. He limped through the throng, who made a path for him, and he stood

just outside the basket.

It was his moment of glory.

He raised himself to his knees and stood transfixed. Then he staggered under the basket and started to gorge himself on the goodies.

My heart pounded dramatically, and my fingers tightened on the end of the cotton...because I knew, I just knew, that the others wouldn't be able to stand the sight of a senile cock sparrow up to his beak in soaked white bread.

I WAS RIGHT.

THEY DEFINITELY COULD NOT STAND IT.

In one split parsec, the soaked bread was hidden by brown soparrows fighting each other for the bread. In their frenzy. ^{the} bread rolled over, and once again I was treated to the sight of the poor cock on his back, legs waving about stiffly. But that was a detail. I grinned insanely in my moment of supreme triumph.

I PULLED THE COTTON WITH ALL MY MIGHT.

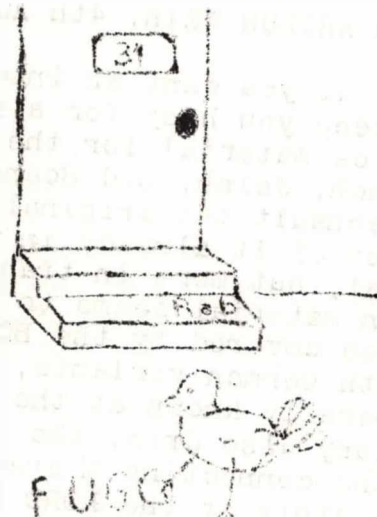
After I'd turned the three double somersaults and landed heavily against the pebble-dashed wall of the house, I looked in awe and saw the sparrows still fighting like mad over the bread. The stick was where it had been before. And then, satisfied, fat and happy, the tribe of sparrows waddled out from under the baset, their wings hanging limply with the weight of soggy bread they had in their crops.

The old one came towards me. He stopped three feet away and turned his head on one side.

He gave a couple of tweets.

Not being bilingual, I couldn't understand 'em, but, clouded in frustration, I went to the basket, pulled out the wood, and pulled the cotton attached to it. It was snipped neatly in the middle. It wasn't frayed at each end, which would have been expected if my extra strong tug hadn't broken. And so my superb insignificant remark is incomplete.

But I am left to ponder.....



CLAY TABLETS

from TED JOHNSTONE, 26, July, 1960

As a matter of fact, back in late '57 Bjo was kicking around the idea of producing -- I think -- Zeepsday, with Jack and Julie Jardine as the aliens. But what with one thing and another it fell through. Maybe you could sell them on the idea this fall.

Arnason and Karg, I am convinced, do not exist, except as figments of your imagination. They will no doubt be pleased to hear this, you will probably be surprised. But there it is -- you do not even know that you have created these strange creatures.

and more TED, 5 August, 1960

Bob Lichtman; I don't know whether you could possibly be thinking of Buz Correy of the Space Patrol; he had a male sidekick whose name was Happy (and six others named Doc, Sleepy, Grumpy, Sneezy, Bashful, and Dopey?) and a female sidekick name of Gail. This show was later shifted to TV without any cast change, but a great loss in subjective realism.

Oh, a word for Mike; Penny wasn't Sky King's mistress, she was his niece. For fun-in-the-air, what about Captain Midnight? He had (besides Ichabod Mudd, his faithful old ~~retainer~~ mechanic [obviously sterile]) two teenagers, Chuck and Joyce, not related, who went rolling around all the time with him. This leads to speculations like Sky King never dreamed of! And, Mike, you have a dirty mind.

from ARTHUR WEIR, 4th August, 1960

If you want an interesting assignment in literature, designed to keep you busy for a few years, you might try locating Tolkien's source material for the RINGS saga -- you'll have to learn Old French, Welsh, Old Scandinavian and Finnish to do it, if you want to consult the originals, but it would be worth it. I've covered a lot of it already in the course of my life -- some in the original, but more in translation, since I am no philologist. The main material seems to be the Norse Sagas and myths, especially those covered by the BOOK OF FLATEY and the VERSE EDDA, their North German variants, the Old French cycle of "Arthurian" legend generally known as the MATTER OF BRITAIN, on which, of course, Malory also drew, the Welsh MABINOGION together with the Irish myths connecting therewith, and the Finnish epic, the KALEVALA. The story of the LORD OF THE RINGS is, of course, entirely original, but if you cover this reading, you will be able to see where his "background" and "atmosphere" -- which are a very large part of the charm of the whole work -- were drawn from.

from ELEANOR ARNASON, August 11, 1960

George, you will be happy to hear, is no longer talking to you. He is, of course, talking about you, and his language is shocking. You cut out the line about his beard in his last letter. George is proud of that beard; he has spent a long time bringing it even as far as its present, dubious magnificence: unaided, uncheered, beset by crude jokesters and Job-comforters, he has gone his brave, lonely way, firmly dedicated to an unpopular cause. And you, foul, false friend that you are, had to blue-pencil his favorite line - just because you loathed the unspeakable foliage. Not only was that unworthy of you, Ruth; that was moronic of you. George placid is a painful enough experience; George aroused acquires all the more lovable attributes of a tidal wave. I hope you can sleep nights, knowing what you have brought upon us. I can't: he stays till one, telling me about his lovely beard, and what he is going to do to you. I hope he does it.

[Poof. I have nothing against his beard. I cut the line because I needed the space. Why did I need the space? Because the last page was given over to Mr. Karg's campaign. And for that I receive this vile calumny -- RB]

Karg's campaign for presidency gathers steam, although no one quite knows what he will do with it when it's all gathered. In a speech he made last night on the back lawn of the Walker Art Center, Karg blamed both major political parties for the ills besetting America. "The American people have tried government and found it wanting. They know the time has come for a change, a change to anarchy, and when November is here, I am confident they will vote for the only party without that worst of special interests: the politician. That party is the Anarchy party."

Shouting above Doc Evans Dixieland Band (then playing in the Walker courtyard), Karg went on to explain his own plan for population control: unrestricted testing of atomic and hydrogen bombs. "Given ten years of heavy bomb testing," he said, "I can confidently predict a rapid decline in world population, brought about by entirely natural and unobjectionable means."

Later in his speech, Karg hailed the U-2 spy-flyers as upholders of a great American tradition. "In these days when such venerable American customs as the witch trial and town lynching seem to have lost some of their force and appeal, it is reassuring to see courageous and forthright men take their places beside Nathan Hale and Benedict Arnold in a grand old trade. Spying is part of our way of life, one with wire-tapping and trying by secret witness; it is a brick in the great edifice of America, and, without it, our country would be less strong and secure."

At his speech's end, Karg presented samples of his first

poster to the reporter. It was a large red, white, and blue object, bearing on it Uncle Sam, the eagle, the Statue of Liberty, Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and the following legend in the Madison Avenue style favored by up-to-date candidates:

VOTER!

Is The Only Man You Hate More Than Kennedy, Nixon?

Do You Feel That This Election Is A Mistake?

Are You Tired Of The Same, Drab, Old Parties?

Then - ACT!

Why Let The Next President Of The United States Be A Son Image?

A Thug Image?

An Image?

Why Let The Next President Of The United States Be?

VOTE ANARCHY!!!

the only sure way to eliminate the ills of election and government.

P.S. Tell Mr. Pelz we found the tape recorder and smashed it.

from PEERLESS JONES, August 13, 1960

[The name sounds like a nom de plume, somehow -- RB]

In issue No. 9, Bruce Pelz suggests tape recording an hour of Karg and eaa conversation.

Question: Is the world prepared for this?



Neolithic
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