



"GETTING THERE IS HALF THE FUN!" - CRETN, 2 B.C.

RUNE 17

November, 1969

This belated issue of RUNE is brought to you by the Minnesota science fiction society (which masquerades under the pseudonym of "Minn-Stf"). The officers of the Minn-Stf -- or the Minn-Staff as it were -- are:

- Frank Stodolka, President; (1325 W. 27th St., Mpls., 55408.)
- Jim Young, Vice-president (1948 Ulysses N.E., Mpls., 55418.)
- Linda Lowndsbury, Recording Secretary (Macalester College, St. Paul, 55111.)
- Ken Fletcher, Secretary (1501 Breda, St. Paul, 55108.)
- Marge Lessinger, Treasurer (1350 Queen Ave. N., Mpls., 55411.)



"It's the early-bird that catches the rune." --Anon.

And those are the present officers of the group. This is edited by Jim Young, with the assistance of Chuck and Marilyn Holst. They'll be taking over RUNE in a few issues; I haven't been able to keep the thing on a regular schedule due to my running the worldcon bid; I hope to be able to publish HCOOP as often as I've published RUNE once Chuck and Marilyn take over.

RUNE is available free to all attending members of the Minn-Stf. You may become a non-attending member for one year (about 12 issues) for \$1.00.

Another one of the multifarious Minneapolis in '73 zines.

WILLY LEY:

Willy Ley died in July, just before Apollo 11 took off for the moon. I could dabble in the Moses parallel (he saw the land but did not reach it), but there is really very little I can say beyond the simple fact that he was an important man who will be missed very badly.

ST. LOUISCON: About 20 Minn-Stffers made it to St. Louiscon and helped stage the Minneapolis in '73 parties. Everybody seemed to like putting on the thing, and the rest of the convention enjoyed our parties best of all. We were the only large open-party at the convention; for people going to a convention for the first time, going to the open parties is really important. On top of this, I think we introduced ourselves rather well -- what other fanclub would play hockey with the ash-trays on their banquet table?

The Hugo-Winners from St. Louiscon:

BEST NOVEL : STAND ON ZANZIBAR, John Brunner

Best Novella: NIGHTWINGS, by Robert Silverberg

Best Novelette: THE SHARING OF FLESH, by Poul Anderson

Best Short Story: THE BEAST THAT SHOUTED LOVE AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD, by Harlan Ellison

BEST DRAMA: 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

BEST PRO-ARTIST: Jack Gagahan ... BEST FAN-ARTIST: Vaughn Bode

BEST PROZINE: FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION

BEST FANZINE: SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW * BEST FAN WRITER: Harry Warner, Jr.

A special award was given to Neil Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin and Michael Collins for the "Best Lunar Landing, Ever".

It was a fabulous con. And, oh yes:

Heidelberg won for 1970, Boston won for 1971.

HALLOWE'EN PARTY: The Halloween party was held November 1 at the Center of Consciousness. About 25 people showed up, including Gordy Dickson. It was really a fabulous party, nearly the equivalent of the Minicon party (Saturday version.) And now to wait until Christmas for the next big one....

MAGAZINE NEWS: The Health-Knowledge magazines under the editorship of Robert A. W. Lowndes (MAGAZINE OF HORROR, etc.) have had to change printers, and this has caused a delay of over a month.

CONVENTIONS: Midwestcon was held in Cincinnati June 27-29. Quite a few people from Minneapolis, Louie Fallert, Ken Fletcher, Fred Haskell, Karen Johnson, Mark Riley and YHOS -- attended, and had a great time while pushing Minneapolis in '73. We made a fine showing at Cincy

The twenty-second annual Westercon was held at the Miramar Hotel in Santa Monica, Calif, July 3-6. About 640 people attended. (!) Reports were that it was one of the really fabulous conventions of the year, replete with costume ball, partying, Chaos tournaments in the swimming pool, and a multitude of other goodies.

ST. LOUISCON! This year's worldcon is in St. Louis, as you all know, and we urge you all to attend. The meeting specially scheduled for August 17 is going to be a very important one, and we urge all people interested in attending St. Louiscon to make the meeting.

Remember, if you want to register, you can do so for three dollars (supporting) or four dollars (a full membership; and you can pay three bucks now and throw in the extra dollar when you arrive in St. Louey.) Write to St. Louiscon, P.C. Box 3008, St. Louis, Mo., 63130. See you in St. Louey!

PICNIC: The club picnic of July 4th started out somewhat haphazardly, but wound up somewhere north of the Twin Cities at the cabin of Chris Dunphy's parents. The club was -- amid my losing my glasses in the lake -- playing host to Don Blyly from Peoria, Ill., and the crew from Madison, Wis., that is to say, Paulette and Carl Carroll and Bill Orr. About thirty people turned out for the thing. A party that lasted until the wee hours of the morning ahappened sometime after the picnic, at the home of Mark Riley...amid the blasts of fireworks at Powderhorn Park, a few blocks north of the Riley residence.

At the Last meeting :

The latest Minn-Stf meeting occured at Walt Schwartz's place the evening of July 16. On that fateful Wednesday about 18 people showed up. We talked about the bulk mailing rate, decided to schedule a few talks on SF just to prove to the Post Office that we are a non-profit organization, and generally had a good time. A snooze-con was planned for the night of July 20th to watch the Apollonauts land on the moon, at the home of Joel and Marge Lessinger. (Wait a minute -- the astronauts landing on the moon at the home of Joel and Marge Lessinger?? Ah well, chalk it up to lousy grammar. You know what I mean...I hope...)

Moxie

While visiting Ken Fletcher's house (as usual) Fletch and I walked over to a neighborhood store to buy Coke. We discovered cans of Moxie. Moxie. Yes Mad readers of ten years ago, honest to glu Moxie. And we've become Moxie fans. Yes indeed, and now we'll never need Phillips again....

MAGAZINE NEWS:

At the Midwestcon, Ted White (editor of AMAZING and FANTASTIC) announced that beginning with the November, 1969 issue of AMAZING (and with the December issue of FANTASTIC) the magazines would feature no reprints and the higher price tag of 60 cents per copy. (Future use of reprints will be restrictive, as in Cele Lalli's AMAZING and FANTASTIC of four or so years ago.)

In the latest issue of VENTURE, the colophon announces that the magazine is now being produced bimonthly. The first "new" issue just previous to the current one stated that it was being produced on a quarterly basis. Therefore, the 'zine must be doing fairly well for itself. Maybe it'll be a monthly by the next issue.



GIANTS IN THOSE DAYS

Throttletwitch!

REDD BOGGS

Forthwith, as guaranteed in the last RUNE, is the second installment of Boggs' history of Minnesota fandom. While the last issue contained a section devoted to the bare beginnings of local fandom (and many peoples commented on how Boggs managed to make interesting all of those Minnesotans writing letters to Amazing back in 19-ought-36), this time Redd gets around to the formation and the heyday of the pre-war MFS. Enjoy! --Jim Young.

The "Old" MFS

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Science fiction enthusiasts in the Twin Cities would like to announce the formation of an informal independent organization to be known as the Minneapolis Fantasy Society.

Monthly meetings are being held at the home of its director, Clifford D. Simak. Other prominent members include Carl Jacobi, Oliver E. Saari, Charles Jarvis, and Phil Bronson.

Fans in the immediate area who are interested are urged to contact the secretary at the following address—John L. Chapman, Sec., 1521 Como Ave. S.E., Minneapolis, Minn.

—Astounding, April 1941

It was on 8 October 1940 that John Chapman sent out the first invitations to fans in the Twin Cities area to attend the initial meeting of the Minneapolis Fantasy Society. This act signaled the end of the three-year period of informal fellowship among the "Unholy Five" that had continued since the failure of the Minneapolis SFL (see the previous chapter of this history) and the beginning of the most active and productive era in the history of Minnesota fandom.

The first meeting of the club took place on Friday, 29 November 1940 at the home of Clifford D. Simak. The total attendance was nine ("Ten if you want to count the Simak pooch, Squanchfoot"), with several other interested fans being unable to attend that evening. Simak was elected temporary director, and Chapman temporary secretary-treasurer. (They were elected to full terms with the third meeting; Saari became assistant director.) Carl Jacobi, Samuel D. Russell, and Chapman were given the task of drawing up a constitution for the club, and this constitution—largely written by Jacobi—was adopted at the second meeting, 20 December 1940. Although the MFS was intended primarily as a social organization, "simply to let us enjoy one another's company," the MFS constitution also set form two definite aims: to stimulate interest in fantasy in the Twin Cities; and to make the name of the society notable throughout fandom. The first aim was probably never realized, but as Sam Russell foretold in an early

article (The Fantasite #2, February 1941), the MFS did make its mark during the next few years.

The names of some of the attendees at the historic first meeting are unknown to your historian, but Phil Bronson was probably present, and Arden Benson surely was, for he is said to have inaugurated, with this very first meeting, the famous MFS custom of winding up the evening with a visit to the New Elgin Cafe in downtown Minneapolis for a bullfest over coffee and sandwiches. "Regardless of the time," reports John Chapman in "MFS Notes," The Fantasite #4, "it's accepted that the better half of the crowd will drift for the New Elgin after each meeting. Unless the management brings a complaint. You see, we're still wondering how Bronson accidentally (:) didn't pay his check a couple of months ago." (Thereupon Bronson promised to pay the management "their nickel the very next time I'm in town.") The New Elgin Cafe disappeared years ago, but it probably occupied the same space occupied today by the Cafe DiNapoli, across the street from the State Theatre at 816 Hennepin Avenue.

A group photograph was taken of those present at the third meeting, 10 January 1941, and published on the front cover of the February 1941 issue of The Fantasite. In the picture are Arden Benson (holding Squanchfoot, Simak's Scottie, adopted as the club mascot), Charles Albertson, Oliver Saari, Ken Peterson, Sam Russell, John Chapman, Clifford Simak, Carl Jacobi, Cyril Eggum, Douglas Blakely, and Phil Bronson. Not present, and not in the picture, were Fred Wagner, Sherman Schultz, and Bill Campbell.

Cyril Eggum went south with the National Guard soon afterward and was stationed at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. To my knowledge, he played no further part in fan affairs. Bill Campbell, one-time Astounding letterhack mentioned in a previous chapter, soon dropped out of the MFS, but all the others continued to play active roles in the club for years to come. Carl Jacobi was the well-known fantasy and weird tales writer who had also been present at the 1937 SFL meeting reported in the last chapter. One of the few Minneapolis-born members of the MFS, Jacobi had been a successful author of weird, fantasy, adventure and detective fiction since his student days at the University of Minnesota, where he had known Don Wandrei, another well known fantasy writer. One of Jacobi's earliest stories was "Mive," written for a contest but eventually printed in Weird Tales. He later became a WT regular, contributing such stories as "The Phantom Pistol," "The Satanic Piano," and "Revelations in Black," the latter being the title story of his Arkham House collection. Besides freelance writing, Jacobi edited various publications, including Midwest Media, a local trade journal. He still lives in Minneapolis.

On 23 May 1941 an MFS meeting was held at Carl Jacobi's cabin on Red Cedar Point, Lake Minnetonka, which he had built as "a place to work in quiet and solitary retreat, a place where great masterpieces would be written." (He admitted that, though he went there to write, he preferred to fish or putter around, and "not one yarn has come from the cabin on Red Cedar Point.") A photo of the attendees at that meeting was taken by Morris Dollens by the light of kerosene lamps. In the photo are Simak, Russell, Dale Rostomily, Dollens himself, Jacobi, Albertson, Saari, Chapman, and Peterson.

Though one of the earliest MFS members and one who remained a member for many years, Dale Rostomily is one of those fans whose fame is severely local. He wrote little or nothing for any of the club publications, and his reputation as a "character" was thus limited to those who met him face to face. Morris Dollens had reappeared in

day firmly insisting that he had wakened in a taxicab the previous night, with the driver loudly demanding his fare. The mystery of how he had ended up in a cab after being hoisted aboard a trolley was never cleared up.

Blakely was widely regarded as the sparkplug of the MFS; nevertheless, his departure did not noticeably reduce the rampant enthusiasm exhibited by the club as it passed its first anniversary. Samuel D. Russell took over as MFS director for 1942, and interest continued so high that in the intervening week between regular meetings an informal gathering usually took place. The Hastings contingent often traveled up to North St. Paul on Sunday afternoon to make use of Dollens' endlessly fascinating cameras and recorder or merely to listen to his "millions of records and albums." Other weekends Dollens transported his photographic and sound equipment down to Hastings for a session at Bronson's. Other groups in the MFS often met informally as well, but despite such tendencies the club never subdivided into warring cliques as so often happens with such organizations.

Sam Russell, the new director, was known as the scholar of the MFS and became famous among members as an author, playwright, critic, and actor. He had graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1940, and afterward attended business school, meantime working also as a script writer for the University radio station WLB (now KUOM). He had begun to read science fiction in 1934 and since then had amassed an impressive, almost encyclopedic knowledge of the literature by reading every book and magazine he could buy or borrow. It was proverbial among MFS members that the bookcard for every fantasy book at the U or the city library was inscribed with Sam's name. "He's our briefcase boy," reported "Squanchfoot" in a profile of SDR, "always ready with the facts or perhaps a brief history of fantasy or an anthology of H.G. Wells or a new recording script or almost anything of unusual interest....And his vocabulary is as inexhaustible as his dignity, the latter being one of the better contributions to the society." One time he wrote a letter of comment on The Fantasite which in the magazine ran two full singlespaced elite-type pages on a single postal card, writing in a "microscopic hand" that could not be read without the use of a powerful magnifying glass. Russell, sometimes known to MFSers as E. Throttletwitch Gankbottom, became famous to fandom at large as a literary critic, partly because of his painstaking book reviews in The Fantasite and partly from his contributions a few years later to Laney's The Acolyte, which he served as associate editor during most of its California period. His long and penetrating article on M.R. James in The Acolyte was particularly important.

John Chapman gave posterity an excellent picture of the "old" MFS at its zenith in the installment of "MFS Notes" he wrote for the Fantasite anniversary. At the meeting he reported, that of 23 January 1942, no fewer than 19 fans showed up at Sam Russell's house, arriving from St. Paul, North St. Paul, and Hastings, as well as Minneapolis. Members began to arrive about 7 p.m., and lounged around, watching Dollens assemble his "maze" of recording equipment, or inspected Russell's fantasy collection (adjudged second only to Saari's in the Minneapolis area; Russell's was superior on Weird Tales, which Saari disdained), or discussed the latest Astounding. Director Russell called the meeting to order about 8:45 p.m. There followed a discussion on the question of whether the 1942 Pacificon should be held, and the club put itself on record as favoring the cancellation of all "world" cons for the duration of the war.

Uncertainty about the future, due to America's recent involvement

in World War II, was perhaps the keynote of the meeting. Bronson was struck by a brainstorm, suggesting that everybody present record a message to the next MFS—"the organization that exists after the duration." This was done, although it is unlikely that this disc has survived or at least was ever played for the benefit of the postwar MFS. A science fiction quiz followed, and Donald Wandrei, who was present, was stumped frequently on questions that concerned his own stories. "Did I write that?" he asked more than once. Bronson proved to be the quiz kid of the group.

The meeting broke up about 12:30, and everybody who could cram into Saari's '35 Nash headed downtown for the New Elgin Cafe. Some time afterward, concludes Chapman, "we managed to thwart Rostomily's urge to lead us into a shooting gallery, boarded the Saari auto once more, and limped home."

During the meeting, four new members had been voted into the Society, although for some of them it was their first meeting and the MFS constitution decreed that a new fan had to attend two consecutive meetings before becoming eligible for membership. This difficulty was removed when Director Russell adjourned the meeting and immediately called another meeting to order. The four new members were Don Wandrei, Paul Koppes, Manson Brackney, and Gordon Dickson. Wandrei was drafted into the service shortly afterward, and Koppes, a Hastings friend of Bronson's, soon disappeared from the fan scene, but Brackney and Dickson became important MFS members. Both were University students whom Saari had recruited on campus.

Manson Brackney is another MFS member whose local fame overshadowed that of several other members better known to fandom at large. Although he wrote for MFS publications, was on the staff of The Fantasite, and even published two issues of his own fanzine, B-r-r-r-ack!, "Manse" or "Brack" as he was called was even more fabulous in person. "Squanchfoot" characterized him as "a friendly chap, with an overabundance of energy" and was of the opinion that he would make a good traveling salesman, mentioning his "unequaled fondness for blondes, brunettes, redheads, blondes, redheads, brunettes, and women." One of his main interests in life was "'corn' of any size, shape, color, or variety," particularly honky-tonk piano. Sometimes forgotten in later years, when his interest had declined, is the fact that Brackney began reading the prozines as early as 1935 and had a wide knowledge of early science fiction. Incidentally, he had intended to reply to the old Minneapolis SFL announcement in the June 1937 Thrilling Wonder Stories, but neglected ever to mail the letter he wrote.

One of the old MFS members who made good in later years as a professional writer, Gordon Rupert Dickson was a friendly, cheerful eighteen-year-old in 1942. He had begun to read science fiction in 1938, and the first fan he ever met was Manson Brackney, a fellow student at the U. During those years it was said that the easiest way to contact him, or Brackney, was to go up the balcony of the Union, where he spent most of his time. Dickson soon became a prolific contributor to The Fantasite and other MFS publications, his "Fan Scratchings" column becoming particularly popular. His first appearance in fanzines outside those published locally was in the September 1942 Spaceways, which ran the MFS chapter of the round-robin serial, "If I Werewolf," largely the product of Gordy's pen. Dickson contributed one of the most famous of Famous Sayings by Club Members on Halloween night 1942 when the MFS threw a combination meeting and surprise party in honor of his birthday. Everybody presented him with a pack of his favorite cigarettes, Philip Morris—except one person who somehow

brought an alien brand. Ignoring the imposing heap of Philip Morris packs, Gordy's first comment was, "Who brought the Old Golds?"

The meeting of 8 February 1942, at John Gergen's, saw a less astonishing turnout than the one for 23 January, and the program was far more informal. The only item of importance was the beginning of a comprehensive review of Weinbaum's science fiction given by Sam Russell—although possibly this talk was not begun till the meeting of 22 February. The records in this case are ambiguous. At any rate, Russell's "Weinbaum talk" became part of the MFS legend, not alone for its excellence and general interest but largely for the reason that Russell so frequently managed to postpone continuing it at later meetings. After some success, luck ran against him at the 17 April meeting and he was, he reported later, "forced to discourse interminably on SGW's hackier work, while members wandered idly in and out of the room." This still did not complete the talk, and on 19 July he managed to evade the necessity of continuing it only by delivering another talk he had prepared, this one on the science fiction of Frank K. Kelly. He finally concluded the Weinbaum talk at the meeting of 13 November 1942—nine months after beginning it.

One of the main events in the history of science fiction during this era—at least for MFS members—was the publication of the short short story "The Door" in the November 1941 Astounding. John Chapman admitted, "There's nothing unusual about it—it's just like any other short short story you'll come across. You may not like it at all." But the story had an unusual history: it was, essentially, an MFS silly story, and it had been born in the feverish minds of two Minneapolis fans in the winter of 1938. Other fans were introduced to the joke, or the story, and the yarn was gradually developed by being tossed around at every fan gathering for the next two years, till nearly every fan in the area had a hand in it. The very first meeting of the Minneapolis Fantasy Society in November 1940 saw the discussion revived yet again after having been dropped for a time. At the second meeting Oliver Saari decided in desperation to write the story and thus dispose of it once and for all. He not only wrote it, but submitted it to Campbell. He nearly keeled over when a check arrived by return mail. "The Door" was published under Saari's byline, but since the MFS as a whole had helped write it, Saari turned part of the check over to the MFS treasury.

By the autumn of 1942 the great days of the "old" MFS were drawing to a close. Now that America had entered the war, members were being drafted at an accelerating pace, and other MFSers were talking about migrating to the west coast. There was time, however, for one more happy event, this being the trek of a quartet of MFS members to the Michiconference, held at the Otsego Hotel of Jackson, Michigan, on 26 September 1942. Phil Bronson, Sam Russell, Manson Brackney, and Ollie Saari drove down in Saari's '35 Nash that had once belonged to Doug Blakely, stopping en route on both the outward and the return trip to visit Illinois fans (Walt Liebscher, Frank Robinson, Niel DeJack, Bob Tucker, and others).

This epic journey, described at length by Brackney in MFS Bulletin Vol. I, No. 6, and at even greater length by Bronson in an article titled "Via Stfnash" in The Fantasite #10, took four days and was, according to Bronson, even more enjoyable than the Denvention. During the trip Bronson won the nickname of "The Shamrock Kid" due to his sudden predilection for a green beverage of that name. Possibly under the pleasant influence of this concoction the Shamrock Kid almost hurtled to his doom at the Otsego Hotel by dashing blindly

through a door that turned out to lead to the fire escape. When the MFS cavalcade passed through Jackson en route to the Torcon in 1948, Brackney pointed out to your historian where the X marking the grease spot would have been drawn had not Brackney grabbed Bronson just in time to prevent him from soaring off into space. -- Redd Boggs.

Next issue will bring you the final installment of the existing Boggs article. It will also bring to you the last Young-edited issue for quite some time.

ART CREDITS: Page one and three by Young, page two by Jack Gaughan.

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%Jim Young
1948 Ulysses St. N.E.
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