

my 28

MEMOIRS
OF A
SUPERFLUOUS FAN

VOLUME ONE

The Old L.A.S.F.S.

T. BRUCE YERKE

An Explanation —

It has been my intention for some time now to record in as much and interesting detail as possible the long, long time during which I was an active member of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (LASFS) and its predecessor, the Los Angeles Chapter Number 4, of the Science Fiction League (LASFL). My recent action in resigning this Society, and along with it all my active offices, is no way the sole reason for the writing of these memoirs. For whatever good or bad science fiction fandom may eventually serve, it ought to have a comprehensive record of its oldest and largest component.

I was a member of the LASFL and LASFS for very nearly seven years. In it I met many of my best friends, and through it I passed many interesting hours and discovered many interesting things. The LASFL was beyond a doubt the greatest and most active scientificion organisation of all time...it had the most members, some of them now well-known in their respective fields; the most publications, and very often the most fun.

I saw the twin-clubs at their best and their worst: as a haven for wayward characters, as an inspiration for incipient authors and artists, as a storehouse of inestimable value to the serious scientificion and fantasy hobbieist, and as a gathering place for good-fellows in general. But I have also seen the LASFL, and especially as the LASFS, as a rotting ground for fine minds, a har-binger of psychopaths and morbid misfits, a circle of futility and frustration, a trap full of bickering and petty jealousy for those within it. These two conditions have existed side by side for virtually as long as the Society.

When I was very young and had first joined I used to wonder: in what manner would I finally leave this group of strange people? who would turn out to be my best friends? who would be the first of us to die? how long before something took me away from the entire environment? I spent seven years in intimate association with the group, and all my questions were answered. Now the seven years are a closed book, full of many fond and many disappointing memories.

Withal I feel a great vacancy in "fan" history will exist unless someone records the long years in which the LASFL and LASFS were at one and the same time the greatest and best, and yet often the smallest and worst, of all scientificion fan groups

What follows are my own personal memories. I do not pretend that they are unbiased or presented with hair-line accuracy; but I do hope they will prove to be interesting to the more serious followers of this avocational field. Since this is going to be a rather lengthy project, it is impractical to bind them under one cover. For this purpose it is my intention of dividing these memoirs

into four volumes of two years each. The more or less conveniently divide themselves as follows:

- VOLUME ONE The Old LASFL (1937-1938)
- VOLUME TWO The Transition (LASFL to LASFS) (1939-1940)
- VOLUME THREE The LASTS (1941-1942)
- VOLUME FOUR The Begining of the End (1943-1944)

I wish to have the bulk of these distributed through the F.A.P.A. because I believe that, with but a very few exceptions, the bulk of the more mature and reliable members of the field are covered by this instrumentality. For this purpose the press work for these volumes is preceding under the FAPA frank of Mel Brown-Francis T. Laney-Phil R. Bronson, who have been kind enough to do the majority of the mimeography for me as I am employed nights and unable to do so myself. The stencils, with the usual errors, were executed by the author.

I trust the present members of the LASFS will be big enough to let me use my own minutes for this project, and I hope I will be able to pull through all four volumes.

This first throw is rather general, because it's a long ways back and specific incidents tend to blur into one another. But as we approach the present, conversations and anecdotes will be recalled in profusion, full of stories about Charlie Hornis, Jack Williamson, Bob Heinlein, Art Barnes, Henry Kuttner, Julie Schwartz, Otto Binder, Bill Crawford, George Hahn, Edmond Hamilton, E.E. Smith, Morrie Dollans, Erle Korshak, Milton Rothman, Kornbluth and Cohen...and many others that made Los Angeles a scientifiction fable. I was there with all these guys, drank with a lot of them....so bear through, chums! It might be worth it.

T. Bruce Yerke,
May 19, 1944.

Published by THE OUTSIDERS for the F.A.P.A., at 1104 S. Georgia St., Los Angeles 15, California. Address personal comments and suggestions for future volumes to T. Bruce Yerke, 1223 Gordon St., Hollywood 38, California.

Any person who grows up to attain a reasonable position of achievement in the science fiction fan world through the constant and prolonged association with other science-fiction fans in the same area must necessarily have a more personal outlook on the subject than the fan who has at best been only in sporadic contact with the specie. It was my own particular experience to have literally and actually "grown up" in the environment furnished by the Los Angeles Chapter of the Science Fiction League and subsequently the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society.

From the last Thursday in January, 1937, until November 14, 1943, I was in constant association with the ever-changing membership of the club. This period of my life covers high-school, a year of work, then a year of college, and lastly, a year or more in the so-called "business world." Unlike many unfortunate cases in this field wherein the individual comes out of the world and gradually draws more and more into the veil of fantasy fiction and its hobby activities, I am fortunate in having had the rather unique experience of growing out of that world into the dull, presumably plebian planet of ordinary people.

My acquaintance with the field of literature was firstly the usual juvenile books, followed by a comprehensive reading of Wells and Verne when I was about 12 years of age. I somehow skipped Burroughs, and have never gone back to read him. It was in 1935 that I first came across a scientific pulp magazine, the April issue of ASTOUNDING STORIES. The cover for Proxima Centauri by Murray Leinster. As I was at the time an avid Buck Rogers follower, I immediately recognised a spaceship control room for what it was. I purchased this issue with a thrill of discovering a long-lost friend. The natural course of evolution set in, and I was shortly purchasing second-hand WONDER STORIES and I quickly came across letters by Forrest J Ackerman. Meanwhile, my own first letter appeared in the May 1936 ASTOUNDING, right next to the first published letter of Leslie A. Crouch.

Late in 1936 the family moved from the outlying suburb of Huntington Park into Los Angeles, and I realised with a sudden start that I was going to school two blocks from 236½ N. New Hampshire Ave! It was but a matter of course that I wrote this Mr. Ackerman a letter and eventually received an invitation to drop in at the fantastic place on my way home from school early in January 1937. From then on, things simply evolved, and as Little Abner would say: "It war most remarkable."

This is all the chronological history I care to indulge in. Any numbskull can sit down and write things by date and sequence. Since these are memoirs more than a pretense at accurate bibliography, I must have the liberty to look back on those days and events with the advantage gained by a more mature person and with more insight than I possessed at the time of the actual occurrence. For that reason we are going to jump back and forth from henceforth on.

The names that were extant in the LASFL of early 1937 are strange to the eyes of current readers. They are, with a single exception, now non-active. Aside from myself, Forrest J Ackerman is the only survivor. Morajo and Paul Fraesfer had not yet joined the Chapter, Dougherty and Bradbury were unheard of. The group that met at Clifton's Café in 1937 is no more than group that meets now at 637½ than the congress of 1976 is resemblant of the congress of 1943. The title is self-perpetuating, but outside fans should realise that the gang which made the

LASFL the greatest without a doubt of all science fiction clubs then and now, has been broken apart for many a long month and year.

The minutes for the meeting of August 19, 1937, show the following persons to have been present: Forrest J Ackerman, Russell J. Hodgkins, Bob Olson (yes, the author), Henry Kuttner, Arthur K. Barnes, Morojo, Virgil Smith (her son), Roy A. Squires, Mr., Mrs., and Roy Test Jr., Karl Edward Först von Lutz and wife, Hal and Victor Clark, Perry L. Lewis, Francis Fairchild, Bruce Yerke, Karl McNeil, Vernon W. Harry, Eddie Anderson, Maurice DuClose, Don Green, Al Mussen, and George Tullis.

That was the big meeting of 1937, at which Dr. David H. Keller was guest. As can be seen, there was a liberal sprinkling of authors present, all of whom were more or less regular attenders. It was a different crowd...not only by person, but by deportment and behaviour. The average age was perhaps 23. Average meetings ran about two-thirds of the above number of persons. I cite this meeting mainly to give a morphological cross-section of the structure of the LASFL during 1937.

WHEN I FIRST walked into the Little Brown Room in January of that year, Perry L. Lewis was my immediate discoverer. "Is Mr. Ackerman here?" I queried timorously. Mr. Lewis, enjoying the situation immensely, let out a whoop of "Mr. Ackerman!" and shooed me down the room to where Forrest was sitting.

At the time I thought Lewis to be an obnoxious person. Now I wish I had been old enough to appreciate the character. Lewis was one of the Glendale SFL, a triumverate of Squires-Fox-Lewis. He worked in a stationary store. I imagine he was a typical aggressive, intelligent, cynical high school graduate of the day. My later impressions of him, up until he finally dropped out sometime late in 1939 or early 1940 were always enjoyable. He was sarcastic, but an interested fan of the type that existed then in large quantities; reading, corresponding, and collecting, nothing much more.

That night I met David Fox, Roy Squires, Russ Hodgkins, Al Mussen, Roy Test, and Vernon Wilfred Harry. The others who were present I have forgotten, and these few I remember because I later had dealings with them and with Hodgkins a good friendship. My interest in science fiction magazines was avid. The sight of those huge quarterlies and old Science Wonder Stories which Squires and Ackerman, and I guess Test and Harry, were trading sent me reeling. I wanted to possess them, to read them. I presume an archaeologist being allowed to view undestroyed Mayan relics drools and slobbers no less than I when wallowing in piles of quarterlies and the like back in 1937.

I was immensely flattered when these "experts" asked me to read THE TALE WHICH HATH NO TITLE, a sort of ALICIA IN BLUNDERLAND affair which was one of the projects of the chapter at that time. When Ackerman asked me my opinion of it I gave a very sober literary analysis which must have been screamingly funny to the others. And my appreciation of these people knew no bounds when Vernon Wilfred Harry, with great magnanimity, asked me to join the WORLD GIRDERS' INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE LEAGUE CORRESPONDENCE CLUB. The conscienceless villain rooked me out of some dues on the spot, and I was given some stationary to boot. All in all I was very proud.

Other events of the meeting are lost to obscurity. The world of the future seemed awfully close, though. Here were people who thought about it, much as I did. Schoolmates laughed at such things, but when I could tell them that I knew adults who spent their time in such a manner, I felt that my own interest was

justified. There was something remarkably exhilarating in going up to the Ackerman den and looking at movie stills from *Metropolis*, *Deluge*, *Things to Come*, *The Golem*, *The Girl in the Moon*, and countless others. It seemed to make a faith in the future justified.

The Los Angeles Chapter, #4, of the Science Fiction League, lead a most sedate sort of social life in 1937. The primary contact between members were the 1st and 3rd Thursday meetings at Clifton's Cafe, 648 S. Broadway, in downtown Los Angeles. On these occasions, when there was no scheduled speaker, the topic of current and passed stories was a valid and always interesting basis of discussion. One of my earliest staunch friends at the Chapter was David L. Fox. We had a common interest in the exploits of Bill Barnes, an air Ace who built his own forerunners of P-38's and Flying Fortresses back in 1934-35, through the medium of a Street & Smith pulp of the same name. I remember his Flying Fortress, which carried a whippet tank or else a small airplane, after the Macon and Akron style. It was all very amazing, and Fox and I could and did discuss them for hours.

Roy Test and Squires were old-style scientifiiction collectors. But much of the chapter was old style, in that there was a proper respect for visitors and authors. Even the Director and Secretary were paid attention. Guests were always introduced to the membership during the meeting. At a later date guests and even authors were often left to shift for themselves in a very awkward silence. The impressions I carry from those early days, though, are that the crowd was quite a well-behaved bunch of serious-minded, intelligent, science-fiction readers and collectors. I carried then and now an admiration for these persons, since I had been taught to respect my elders.

I WAS FORTUNATE to join the Society just at a time when it had its first deluge of celebrities passing through. The frequency of visiting authors and editors was not equalled or surpassed again until the Summer of 1940, three years later. Aside from David H. Keller, we managed to lure Arthur J. Burks and Joe Skidmore, who died shortly afterwards. There were occasional lectures by such persons as H. Atlantis Sudburry, a well-known Horologist, and Dr. Feeley of Los Angeles City College. In addition, we had the resident attendance of Henry Kuttner, Arthur K. Barnes, and the artist Tom Mooney, who lended their unique and witty presence to the chapter at frequent intervals. At the time the club was keeping a scrapbook of important advances in science, the prize item being the Los Angeles Herald-Express' account of the discovery of Pluto.

The club is different now. (NOTE: These lines were written late in December 1943.) Keller could drop in and he would probably be left to stand around in the background, unintruduced, much as the eminent Dr. Adolphe DeCastro was neglected at the Open House meeting in June 1943 when the present quarters were dedicated. In 1937 there was usually someone of interest to meet. Kuttner was always bringing in a character or so, and while I was much too young to appreciate the hilarious discussions that went on between members, I know they were first rate...current fans enjoyed no better in those riotous stags in Art Widner's room at the Shirley-Savoy during the Denvention.

I still don't know what to think of Vernon Harry. My own opinion is that he was a sort of genial scoundrel. I was interested in the 1st issue of *WONDER STORIES QUARTERLY*, and he offered to sell me his copy, inviting me over to his house on S. Grand Ave one Saturday to pick it up. Once I arrived, after a few awkward moments, he produced the thing which I grabbed avidly, and then discovered he had no change. (I think I paid him 75¢ for it.) While I stood sweating for fear he would want the magazine back, he very generously offered to let me

take out the chance in dues to the World Girdlers' International Science League Correspondence Club. I think I gratefully took out change for several month's dues. Promptly thereafter, the W.G.I.S.L.C.C. folded up completely as Harry went to work on a night shift.

SHEP'S SHOP WAS a favourite hangout for SFL members in them thar times. Lucile B. Sheppard did have a fabulous collection of scientifiiction magazines up on Hollywood Blvd, and through the endless prying of Ackerman, it was stocked with Esperanto literature, fan magazines, and a general welcome to SFL members. I considered the place to be quite a paradise. I often dropped in after school to enjoy this rapture, this virtual wallowing in vast piles of AIR WONDER STORIES, SCIENCE WONDER STORIES, AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY, and endless piles of later Astoundings and Wonder. I often cursed the cruel fate which had left me too young to read these vast, thrilling magazines in that what seemed to me glorious day when they came out on the newsstands each month.

Eventually as a good boy selling newspapers and the Post, I earned from time to time sufficient money purchase these exotic magazines, and through much effort eventually acquired all of the SCIENCE WONDERS, and AIR WONDERS, some of VOL I AMAZING, and a representative assortment of Amazing Quarterlies, later issue Wonders, and the like. For some reason early Astoundings held absolutely no fascination for me, and I never acquired any prior to my first newsstand purchase in 1935.

I don't know if fans like Washington, Schmarje, Smith, Lazar, and a host of others who were newcomers to me, have ever seen an Air Wonder, or experienced that thrill which comes to a 'teen-ager of actually owning one. Perhaps it isn't necessary, but the experience of collecting and reading these stories of the future was an integral part of my earlier political-sociological explorations. I did believe that mankind was capable of following these stories in a few years and making a glorious world of the future, where science and sanity would be the governing factors. The primary thing that science fiction did for me as a 'teen-ager was to make me think along sociological lines, and when my friends were all wearing Landon or Roosevelt buttons in 1936, I was looking far beyond near political party stuff.

The old-style science-fiction novel with the emphasis on science had a definite educational value to the properly attuned mind. Through them I knew that mankind's lot could be better, and while I lacked all the data which subsequent years of study has given me, I at least had a glimpse of what might have been, while the rest of my schoolmates were busy swallowing the official version of the Revolutionary war.

Some meeting between my joining and August 1937, I was frightened by a lurid affair which either Roy Test or Roy Squires brought to a meeting. It was one of the last copies of Morris S. Dollens SCIENCE FICTION COLLECTOR. Since I was taking journalism in school, the idea that people could publish little magazines on a hekto pad was interesting to me. I scanned the Collector at that meeting and was fascinated. Every since I had been given a copy of Van Loon's STORY OF MANKIND in 1935 for my birthday I had been possessed with a desire to write apres Van Loon. In fact, I had written many little booklets which I typed and sewed together by hand for the amusement of my immediate circle of friends. YERKE'S ALMANAC and YERKE'S HIP-POCKET DICTIONARY still evoke chuckles on my part to this day. The possibilities of making fifty copies of such a venture on a hektograph, for only a few dollars, was a sort of tinder that eventually produced IMAGINATION! I went without a hamburger the next day and sent a dime to

Dollens for a copy of the Collector.

Meanwhile, my first fan correspondent turned up. As I was adicted to writing endless letters to the editors of the three scientifiction magazines then extant, (I was very successful in this venture, having an average of one letter each three months in each of the three magazines) it was natural that I began to receive letters from other fans of the day. John L. Chapman, of the original Minneapolis bunch, dropped me a letter saying that he was looking for a pen pal. I wrote back that while I wasn't especially looking for a pen pal, I had no religious scruples against one. This began a protracted correspondence lasting from the middle of 1937 to and through 1940. I presume this could also be selected as the particular instance which precipitated me into the fan arena.

The languid tempo of my science fiction life began to increase towards the middle of 1937, and shortly I was put in touch with John V. Baltadonis through my good friend Chapman. By now I had received two issues of the Collector from Dollens and by going through Ackerman's collection I acquainted myself with former amateur ventures. Claire Beck dropped me an issue of TESSERACT, and I seriously considered joining the Science Fiction Advancement Association, mainly to get that professional rubber seal which members of that organisation used to stamp MEMBER SFAA on all their letters. I also sent a silly and stupid article to Jullie Schwartz's FANTASY magazine, the theme of which was that science fiction was not widely recognised because it did not come out in books. I often get this ridiculous thing out and laugh riotously over it all.

BY AUGUST 1937 I was fairly well established in the Los Angeles Chapter of the Science Fiction League as a rather young but not unduly obnoxious member. I even grew so bold as to contribute to the discussions and arguments. My good friend David Fox gave me much low-down on the dirt of the club, a hobby which I have enjoyed ever since. My turn to write chapter number eight of the "Tale Which Hath No Title" came around, and I was highly gratified that the members accepted it to be as funny as any other. My introduction of the two moons "Oglethorp" and "Arglethorp" caused much hilarity.

I can never thank Russ Hodgkins enough for treating me in those days as an intelligent person. The condescending attitude of Lewis and a few others kept me away from them at first, though in retrospect I cannot blame them in the least. Hodgkins managed to make me feel not so much a waif in the midst of all these activities. The same goes for Forrest J Ackerman. He was undeniably the leading and outstanding fan and figure in the field in those days. I could ask him questions about scientifiction and scientifiction fandom which I know were inane and mayhap stupid, but he managed to patiently explain the mysterious world to me. That this preoccupation with scientifiction could be indicative of other conditions never occurred to me for several years. My admiration for Ackerman then as the prototype of a better kind of person was endless.

Somewhere between my joining and April 1937 Myrtle R. Smith (or Douglas) was brought to a meeting by Ackerman. He had first met her at an Esperanto Club meeting. At that time her scientifiction name was Morogo. Her son Virgil was a schoolmate of mine, one or two grades below me. This and the coming of Paul R. Frechafer, who was previously a pen friend of Ackerman's, noted for his reading and collecting activities, rounded out the few fans who have survived to the present day from early 1937. Frechafer came from Payette, Idaho, to attend the California Institute of Technology, and his visits to the club were more or less sporadic for several years before he commenced active membership sometime in 1939 with the publication of POLARIS.

LATE IN THE SUMMER of 1937 my interest in the science fiction fan magazine field was at a high pitch, and I began to wonder why Los Angeles had never produced a fan mag on its own initiative. With brilliant reasoning I deduced that with Ackerman, Roy Test, Squires, Paul Freehafer, Russ Hodgkins, and Morojo all here in Los Angeles, we should be able with little difficulty to put out a top flight fan publication. My correspondence with Baltadonis suddenly took a technical turn, as I pumped the obliging fellow dry of all the information he could send via post on the subject of hektography. Older fan readers will recall the Baltadonis SCIENCE FICTION COLLECTOR as one of the highest attainments of the hektographers' art. His colour reproduction was superb, the pictures themselves far above the average, and the layout superlative. I still marvel at the results he obtained, especially as contrasted with the first IMAGINATION!

One afternoon at Ackerman's, the habitué where I used to spend most of my afternoons...a nuisance which Forrie tolerated in a most admirable spirit... I broached the "elaborate" plans which I had conceived for a local fan magazine. The original title of the venture was to have been ODDS & ENDS. This was a carry-over from a small one-copy rag of fantastic Münchhausen material I used to get out for my schoolmates. The first agreement was drawn up with Ackerman financing the thing, and he and I acting as co-editors. Material was collected and work progressed in August 1937. I wrote and edited, Forrie did the proof-reading and dummy work. He also obtained the title-rights of IMAGINATION! from Roy Test, who had planned to use this title for the official magazine of the World Girdlers' International Science League Correspondence Club, which folded earlier in the year along with my dues as Vernon Harry went to work nights.

Just where the idea occurred that IMAGINATION! ought to be the chapter organ, I do not know. I believe that this, too, was Ackerman's idea, but in any event, after I read to the chapter letters from Baltadonis explaining in lurid details the use of the hektograph, Russ Hodgkins fell for the idea and the chapter voted \$7.50 on September 2, 1937, to cover the cost of the initial hekto equipment.

The heroic story of the first issue of IMAGINATION! is related in my editorial in the second issue. It was a small-scale nightmare of those New York publishing houses who do all their desk work in New York and then send their material to Chicago for the press run, In our version, when I arrived home from school in the afternoon, I would write up the material of the day, and then hop a street car to Ackerman's flat. My typewriter was an old three-decker Underwood with elite type (to which I am very partial), but the magazine was slated to come out in pica. Ackerman would have to spend an hour or so correcting spelling and indulging in other editorial adjustments, after which he copied the stuff on the hekto carbon, first having make another short car-trip to Morojo's apartment which boasted a standard typewriter, best for uses of this nature. Then her son Virgil made the trip all the way back to my house, usually arriving at 10:00 in the evening, catching me in the process of shaving, a habit I acquired at a very early age, damn it. As the LASFL only had two hekto pads, this mad-house continued for ten nights, after which we were all quite ready to retire in grace from the publishing field.

It is said by learned ones that ignorance of one's own ignorance is inexcusable. Up until the first issue of IMAGINATION! I had been ignorant of the fact that I did not know how to spell. To this day I am especially weak in the matter of double consonants and adverbail ending changes, but in 1937 my spelling was incorrigible. My habitual use of british and quasi-french variations, as in "civilisation, encountre, discouvour," and an occassional unorthodox doubling of consonants is no doubt due to the fact that the dictionary which I used

during the formative spelling years was a Century dictionary rather than the more standard Webster. Another cause was my advanced reading in my later elementary school grades. As I poured through semi-technical books on science and chemistry, not to mention the Wells and Verne's novels, I naturally came across great quantities of words which my ordinary school studies would never encounter until the last years of high school. When, in putting these words back into my own sentences, I spelled them as I thought they were spelled, the results were garbled; hilariously so, I may add. I still maintain the British system, since my earliest readings were British science and chemistry textbooks, and, of course, all the Wells and the Jules Verne translations, are in British letter.

It became obvious after the first issue of IMAGINATION! that my ideas were a bit too grandiose for my technical ability to carry them through. For this reason it was imperative that the club come to the rescue of the magazine before it was too late. Further, as Hodgkins was and is an adict to rigid punctuality and order, the magazine not only had to be letter-perfect, but it must come out on a monthly schedule, and for this last requirement, the hektograph was considered too ancient a machine for the purpose.

Whereas the first issue of IMAGINATION! had largely been between Ackerman, Morojo, and myself, the entire club now burst forth with ideas and suggestions. In fact, all through October and November 1937 the club dickered and bickered over IMAGINATION!, though the contributions of such skilled cynics as Kuttner, Lewis, Fox, and Hodgkins made the entire affair a little less than delectable. Among the major battles was the Chaper vs. Ackerman re: simplified spelling.

This is a matter on which I have always been phlegmatic. Perhaps I am a reactionary, but there has been one tendency about the club which has deeply irritated me the many years I associated with it. I do not nor have not at any time, been able to adopt any but a smirking distaste for simplified spelling, Esperanto nicknames, and the more rabid scientific abbreviations. One bit of hell which I raised and kept raising for months was the changing of the club's name to the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society on April 4, 1940. Perhaps due to my own faulty spelling, I have always stood in awe of a language which was so cantankerous and wrapped-up in itself that it blithly bowled over in rapid succession every conceivable sound and sane concept of phonology. This feeling of accomplishment at being able to spell English at all was strengthened after my dialatory into such phonetic languages as German, Dutch, Russian, Greek, Finnish, and even French, which though not phonetic, is more regular than the King's language.

I have always had a sane respect for language, and such prostitutions as Morojo, Fojak, Tobojo, stfan, stfette, etc., have merely called up a feeling of contempt for persons whose minds were so unstable that they had to try and make their observations interesting by googoo tricks under the guise of neo-modernism. I can see the legitimate use of scientificion, a term I use myself, and I have accepted stf. as a properly justified abbreviation of the same, but I do not pronounce the abbreviation "stuff", or whatever you will. This mad desire to warp and spice-up every possible word change on the part of a large faction of the local group has galled me for years.

THE GREAT BATTLE OF 1937 was Ackerman's mad desire for simplifying the English language. His rabid attempts became virtually out of control. There was editorial friction from the first as I flatly, at that early age, refused to dummy the magazine in his jargon...and Forrie was equally insistant that simplified spelling be only one of the many unique things about IMAGINATION! Even

before the first issue was out the Happy-Acky was calling it "Madge." Oh, the horror of it all.

As I recall, Russ Hodgkins and the Glendale SFL (Squires-Fox-Lewis) were with me to some extent; at least to the point of agreeing that Ackerman must limit his horrible mangling to his own work unless the authors of other material request their submissions be subject to the horrible mangling into Ackermanese. To this stupid backwardness of the chapter majority, Ackerman and his disciple conceded grudgingly.

The work of getting the original equipment which has been part and parcel of the group for years, is a bit out of my category. The mimeo and over \$50.00 of accessories were purchased over a period of time by Hodgkins and Morojo. I admit that I felt hurt when IMAGINATION! exploded out of my hands, but it was for the best. In any case, I can claim the dubious honour of being the founded and co-editor of the first all-Los Angeles fan magazine, and God-father to all the rest.

THE GREAT DIFFERENCE between the Chapter #4 of the SFL and the present LASFS is a subject of many ramifications, the product of an evolution of some years' length, and a very interesting study. Perhaps it may be summed up in brief by the observation that the club in 1937 had no social life to speak of. The chapter centered about meetings held roughly every other Thursday. Otherwise the members contented themselves with occasional Sunday gatherings of a highly informal and unofficial nature. Often groups of three or four attended shows together or went book hunting en masse, but that was virtually the sum of it. For the most part, members saw nothing of each other between alternate Thursdays, save the vicarious mediums of post and telephone.

Thus it was that when the Thursday night rolled around, there was a lot of business to be transacted. Book and magazine trading occupied much time, discussion of the latest scientific magazines received prime attention, and were greeted eagerly and not with the cynicism often displayed by the present group.*

The meeting itself was operated along a modified parliamentary procedure which called for reports from the Treasurer, Librarian, and the Secretary and his minutes. After this there was the matter of business, which in 1937 constituted little more than answering letters, collecting dues, and a few items of club transactions, mostly the library, but after the founding of IMAGINATION!, the mimeograph and supplies.

After that there was a never-ending source of entertainment. One thing which I have deplored about the Society of later years is the lack of mutual respect among members, especially at meetings...a crime to which I am as guilty as any other. I believe that in 1937 and 1938 the members respected each other as fellow-travellers. And they most certainly had a taciturn respect for the author-members and their guests, who contributed to the conversations and discussions. There is no native genius left in the club such as was furnished by Henry Kuttner, Arthur Barnes, Fred Shroyer, Perry Lewis, Ray Bradbury, Tom Mooney, and even Hodgkins himself. All of these people were excellent conversationalists, any one of them capable of entertaining the chapter for an entire evening. Kuttner many times lead discussions on fantasy. Shroyer is an incomparable character; one is drawn to him much in the manner of a bird hypnotised by a snake. One detests and at the same time envies Shroyer for his complete lack

* These lines were written shortly after the Khanve resignation, but before those of Brown, Kepner, Laney, Fern, Lazar, and Russell.

of anything faintly resembling conformity.

Aside from such resident talent, we had a fortuous string of visitors that year. They included Arthur J. Burks, Dr. Keller, and Jos. Skidmore. But above all, there was an almost naïve interest in science fiction and the world to come; the world, I sadly sadly say, of those glorious years between 1940 and 1950. Ackerman would give accounts of the latest movies to be released with a scientific slant. He was always prepared to present some sort of scientific fiction or scientifically slanted newsitem. He was in touch with virtually every fan of the time.

When the meeting adjourned, cliques of us would break apart and drift down into the café part of Clifton's, again ordering giant malts, or sponging off of Mr. Clinton's sherbert mine. A lot of the members at the time were just out of high school, or else simply and flatly unemployed. Perhaps that is why we took such flagrant advantage of Mr. Clinton and his generous café. There was no rent and all manner of free nourishment in his endless Limeade waterfall and the automatic sherbert mine, both nationally advertised items.

During this idyllic period, just before our publishing venture would make a profound change on the future course of the club, a change still in progress, the characters which were to hold forth on this new stage began to filter into the chapter. As editor of IMAGINATION!, I got in touch with a fan who had been cornered at Shep's shop by one Robert L. Cunnock, an avid but short-lived meteor on the local scene for two or three months in 1937. As editor of the club organ, I wrote to Mr. Ray Bradbury, telling him of our club, urging him to come and visit us, and explaining by what manner I had come in touch with him in the first place. At the next meeting, a wild-haired, enthusiastic individual burst into the Little Brown Room, demanding: "Is Mr. Yerke here?" This fantastic creature became endeared to all of us henceforth, and though often the victim of assaults with trays and hammers by infuriated victims of his endless pranks and disturbances, remained a primary figure in the club all through 1938, 1939, 1940, and 1941.

Another fan who was destined to stay in the LASFL and LASFS for quite some time made his appearance at the meeting of November 18, 1937. This was a Beverly Hills fan who in some horrible manner obtained Henry Kuttner's old Canon Drive address. Presenting himself at the Kuttner maison on a Thursday night, Henry, at a loss to do anything else, brought Franklyn Brady to the Chapter. He stayed until 1942.

I CAN NOW SEE that IMAGINATION! couldn't have done anything but change the entire nature of the club. With the lack of social perception which seems to be typical of most persons, neither Ackerman nor myself for a moment imagined that IMAGINATION! would do more than require a bit of work from four or five of the members. Things seem to have a natural way of making their own evolutionary pattern regardless of how much or how little planning is done by the promulgators of various projects. From a languid, old-style book and magazine collectors' clearing house, the main energy of the club began to be turned more and more to that of amateur publishing.

After the first hektographed issue of the magazine, the second and I believe the third, were run off on Saturday afternoon's on a mimeograph at the office where Morojo was employed. In as much as I was still nursing my fancied wounds over my change of status with the magazine, I was not around to witness these proceedings. It soon became apparent, however, that IMAGINATION! was going

to make a heavy demand on everyone's time, and an especially heavy demand on the treasury. After considerable discussion at several meetings, it was decided to take a big jump and purchase our own mimeograph and equipment. This machine was acquired on a monthly installment basis and cost the chapter \$50. After a short time it found a permanent residence at Russ Hodgkin's home, at the other end of the city.

THE NATIONAL FAN FIELD at that time was going into a brief and temporary lull; at least that is the way I recall it from the Los Angeles end of the continent. FANTASY MAGAZINE had just folded officially, as had the TESSERACTION and the SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST. Furthermore, the last vestiges of the Gernsbackian Science Fiction League was fading away under the new ownership of Margulise and Co. F.A.F.A. had hardly been set rolling; I had received an invitation to join but turned it down on the grounds that the contents of the first mailing were the most abominable trash I had yet seen. With the exception of a few hektographed magazines such as Baladonis' COLLECTOR, Wiggins' SCIENCE FICTION FAN, Richard Wilson's THE ATOM, and a very few others, late 1937 saw a sort of hush. An ebb-tide between one epoch and another was in progress.

I think it marked at that time the close of the era of old-style science-fiction fans...the readers and collectors who corresponded, and many of which were valid literary critics. Publishing in the amateur fan field prior to 1938 was of a much higher quality than the present day new fan imagines. For one thing, there were more printed magazines and they came out regularly. And the contents were of a nature to warrant thorough reading. In addition, the authors of the day were willing to contribute, perhaps because most of the editors then were older, mature persons. The old FANTASY had set the standard for years. THE SCIENCE FICTION CRITIC, Claire Beck's printed magazine, was of excellent quality, even by present standards, as was the first issue of Olon F. Wiggins' S.F.FAN, the first issue of which was also printed, as was Richard Wilson's first ATOM. Wilson, by the way, was my third regular correspondent...we got mixed up in a trade ad for IMAGINATION! and wrote back and forth for a year or more.

IMAGINATION! had the luck to be uniquely blessed. Russ Hodgkins is one of the most methodical persons I have yet to meet, and under his exacting care, the mechanical aspects of the magazine became rapidly superb. Morojo functioned as chief assistant in the early days in view of her office technique and experience. Aside from mechanical excellence, the magazine was liberally blessed with material by such gifted and witty authors as Kuttner, Barnes, Shroyer, Bloch, Mooney, Barnes, Hodgkins himself, and later by the more responsible fan writers of the time. Native talent also developed, giving Los Angeles a set of indigenous writers, one of which turned professional. Ray Bradbury, who joined about this time, soon produced a ribald and fantastic humour which had an odour all of its own, albeit loved by all. Even Brady made a few literary attempts under the fearsome name of Dr. Acula.

The bulk of the editorial work on IMAGINATION! fell to Forrest J Ackerman. I have personally never cared much for his material because of my detestation of simplified spelling and googoo nicknames. But the content is, or was, such as to outweigh the abominable literary style. To Ackerman, who was still fortunate in not having to work for a living on an hourly basis, fell the job of stenciling, dummyping, corresponding, and a good bit of the editing. The rest of us turned the crank, learned the Speed-O-Scope, assembled and stapled or else sat on the side-lines and read from the Hodgkin's collection of fantasy, one which is certainly comparable to any of the best in the country.

THE MEETING OF DECEMBER 16, 1937, concluded my first chronological year in the Society. Looking at the roster for that meeting, I see a list of names of people, most of whom not more than three persons now affiliated with the Society could remember. And furthermore, knowing them as I did, I doubt if they would fit into the Society as of December 1943. They were a different type of scientificion fan.

One of the very few social events of the year 1937 was an extra meeting at Morojo's to celebrate the first issue of IMAGINATION! It was here that Hal Clark brought his brother Victor Clark. Hal Clark, an occasional attender in those times, was a little rotund, red-faced creature in his mid-thirties. Whence and whither of him I know nothing. I seemed to like him for virtually no reason at all, except that he reminded me of one of those small, round, man-quinns that teeter and loll precariously about on a half-spherical bottom, always smiling and never upsetting. His brother was quite the opposite. Like member Franklyn Brady, he had and has a speech impediment. His attempts to discuss complicated sociological or psychological matters are thus often rendered difficult. Victor Clark was a full-time student, and he has been going to U.C. L.A. every since I first met him, working towards a Ph.D. Vic was around the bunch a bit even as late as 1943.

There are other characters that fit into the Chapter at the close of 1937. Corinne Grey was rather regular in her attendance; she was a junior at Los Angeles High School. She later became known as Pogo, now signing her name as Mrs. Russell M. Wood. She has a baby son, name of Kurt. Charles Gurnett was another obscure figure that flitted in and out of the club until late in 1939. I remember him vividly for the sole reason that he reminded me in a faint manner of Lovecraft. He seemed to have the respect of the Kuttner-Shroyer clique, and they would all sit together talking weighty matters together for many hours of an evening.

Guests at that last meeting in 1937 included an obscure young artist, a friend of Ray Bradbury, names Hannes Bok! Emil Petaja made his initial appearance on the same occasion. The officers of the club stood as follows: Russ Hodgkins was reelected to a second term as Director, a dual secretaryship comprising alternately Perry L. Lewis and Roy A. Squires, Hodgkins as Treasurer, and I believe Alvon Mussen (now missing on Bataan) as Librarian.

We used to have a Christmas party on the night of the election, which included a scientificional grab-bag. At the first Party I received a Buck Rogers water pistol. The following year it was a bottle of whiskey which I was too young to appreciate. And the last party the following year saw me make off with a useless book. My luck in grab bags and the like has always been abominable.

As I look back at that first year and its impressions, I wonder if I would have remembered the club any other way, had I been, for instance, of my present age and nature. I might have found it unutterably boring. But I don't think so. I like to think that the Los Angeles Chapter of the Science Fiction League was at its best then, and in the year following. One looks back on the society of the nineteenth century and imagines that it possessed something more stable which is lacking today. Most likely this is so much balderdash. None-the-less, I'm glad I was a member of that bunch of people, because I can thus appreciate an aspect of fan history altogether missing from present day activities, be it for better or worse.

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I think that 1938, at least in its earlier half, marked the period in the club during which the most members were in the most accord over the most things. IMAGINATION! was accepted without question as a serious project, necessitating the fullest support from the membership. There was no question raised, as there was two years later, over whether or not the club organ had first call on the spare time of the member. The bi-weekly and often weekly pilgrimages were made to the Hodgkins' maison in high spirits by everyone

The fourth issue of IMAGINATION! contained material by Ackerman, Bradbury, Hodgkins, Kuttner, Lovecraft, and a cover by Mooney. It was dated January 1938. By now the chapter had amassed quite a few accessories to our original purchase, numbering mainly the Speed-O-scope, numerous stencil alphabets, stylii, and several pattern screens. These were kept out at Russ's, along with the paper stock and other materiel, since the publishing was more or less permanently established there.

Here was the incipient beginning of the trend which has over a period of years changed the LASES from a bi-weekly meeting-night affair to (as of summer 1943) its present twenty-four-hour-a-day, seven days a week, theory of function. On a Sunday in 1938 by two in the afternoon upwards of fifteen persons would have congregated out at Hodgkins'. During the week I had seen Ackerman occasionally of an afternoon while he was working on stencils for the magazine. Ackerman and Morojo were in fairly constant communication, as were Hodgkins, Kuttner, Shroyer, et al. On Sunday the various ideas that had been conceived "in committee" would be broached then rather than on Thursdays.

The Glendale SFL was absent from all but a very few of these meetings, due to the extreme distance involved...something over 25 miles including one interurban trip, a street-car, and a bus ride. The gradual inversion of the club to IMAGINATION! and the preoccupation with the problems of running a regular monthly magazine which was then, with the exception of the British NOVAE TERRAE and its luminaries, of the largest volume being produced, created a rift in the interests of the Glendale group with our own which made it only a matter of evolutionary course that Fox, Squires, Lewis would find less and less in the SFL. In truth, by the end of the year their attendance had become extremely irregular. However, there was no ill-feeling whatsoever involved.

MY OWN PARTICULAR part in IMAGINATION! at that time was negligible. As a matter of fact, it was not until April 1938 that I survived the first IMAGINATION! fiasco and write a "Reply to Michelism." This launched my writing career in the science fiction fan field, and unfortunately, I seem to have been mixed up in controversial items of one sort or another every since. While my attitude on fan affairs, after the initial blind enthusiasm passed off in 1937, has been one of a detached sort of arm-chair General, others who submerge themselves in the fracas have made it rather hot at times. "Never a dull moment," I always say, and what with "Reply to Michelism," "The Tale of the Hooten," "Open Letter to Daugherty," "Stagger on, Pacificon," "Report to Science Fiction Fandom," and lastly "The Knavve," it is no wonder that Jack Speer, when he met me late in 1943, was moved to observe that I was surprisingly moderate in my opinions. However, I see I am getting ahead of the story a bit too much.

Adolescence was very far along with me in 1938. I happen to have been a

victim of Progeria, a term meaning pre-mature ageing. At sixteen I am supposed to have looked nineteen, and from my eighteenth to my twenty first birthday only one bartender asked for my draft card. The youngster outlook with which I entered the club gave way gradually to a more tempered view of the situation, and while only twelve months previous the sight of original cover illustrations, scientific cinema stills, and the rarer magazines sent plain and unadulterated thrills of excitement throughout my nervous system, a year later I had a much more controlled view on the importance of fan activities in a person's life.

Contact with mature but unconventional persons such as Henry Kuttner, Shroyer, and their group within the club, and later Charles D. Hornig, made me more quickly aware of the difference between 'teen-age behaviour and adult behaviour. Naturally I cannot say that I grew-up over night, or that I ceased being stupid or juvenile at times, but my outlook not only on scientific fiction but "outside" life as well was greatly influenced by a premature desire to get over the growing-up process, urged on by a wish to imagine myself as developed a conversationalist as the abovementioned figures of the old LASFL.

RUSS HODGKINS had a meticulously well-kept scientific collection, plus a well-rounded library on technical and sociological subjects. One of his characteristics was an incessant filing, cross-filing, and counter-filing of all the various items in his shelves. One could find any given story by either magazine, author, or title, and there was still a fourth file where stories were listed by type. This order-mania was conveniently extended to the LASFL mimeograph and equipment, which received far better care than they have had at any time since. Hodgkins at the time was employed by the Bank of America, which may account somewhat for his preciseness. He had been there for nine years since graduating from high school.

Ray Bradbury, who played a prominent role in the local chapter until late in 1941, was one of the many interesting persons to acquire the Sunday-at-Hodgkins' habit. In the same manner that my outlook was tempered by contact with the older members, it was tempered by closer association still, with the late 'teen-agers of the club such as Bradbury and Brady. In 1938 Ray was attending Los Angeles High School. His ambitions were along the theatrical line, but the feature which marked him among the members of the group was his mad, insane, heckneyed humour, which was the especial anathema of Hodgkins. But underneath this ribald and uncontrolable Bacchus, which produced such things as "Hollerbochen," "Hollerbochen Returns," "Mathematica Minus" "Formula for a Stf.-Story," "Verse of the Imagi-nation", and many others in the old mag, was a deep understanding of people and the signs of the times.

Bradbury was a natural semantist, and possessed an excellent ability to see through the shams of the political and economic game of hide and seek which characteristic of those last years before the outbreak of the war. We knew that this present war was coming, that it was a deliberate machination, and that we would probably have to fight it. And at the same time we were always living and talking of man's possibilities, of the worlds we could build. In early 1938 I wrote an article for the high school paper speculating on the effects on Los Angeles if war were declared with Japan and the city bombed. The Dean of Boys called me to his office at the request of the journalism instructor and asked me if I didn't think this too fantastic and disturbing a subject to put before the tender minds of high school children! So you see, we knew which way the wind was blowing, but unlike my non-scientifictional extra-intelligent friends, we SFL members had the nostalgia of seeing the world we believed

in deliberately being destroyed, thus postponing the finale of Things to Come for perhaps the rest of our life times.

ASIDE FROM A few pictures taken out at Hodgkins' house, there is little to record these days in official LASFL archives. Squires and Fox, who were the Secretaries until May 1938, never included these extra-meeting activities in the minutes for the simple reason that they were never present. It will be seen from this account, however, that a very subtle change was taking place in the structure of the chapter. Whereas, prior to IMAGINATION! all discussions and activities were centered at Clifton's on alternate Thursdays, the scene of real activities began to move out to 84th Place. It is true that official motions and disbursements of monies occurred Thursdays, but most of the spontaneous discussions started up at Russ's place. This is more or less natural, since they evolved around the publishing activities of the club, and the problems which arose were considered there on the spot. Therefore, when Thursday nights in Los Angeles came around, members had less to talk about and subjects ranged far afield from scientificfiction. The business meetings often became cut-and-dried affairs, all the details having been worked out in advance. While this trend did not come into full force until late 1941 when the members were seeing one another three and four times a week, the incipient motive began way back in 1938. I shall elaborate on this long-term trend as the account of the group progresses into the 1940's. Actually, there was still plenty of good, interesting, scientificfiction talk and personages in '38, and no immediate cause of worry was even remotely imagined.

George Tullis, who later made a splurrry in Chicago scientificfiction circles, had been to LASFL meetings as early as mid-1937. He made another brief appearance at the SFL during February 1938. I rather liked him, as he was genial and down-and-out along with a lot of us at that time. He spent the meeting night of February 3 deluging the club with accounts of Sun Valley, Idaho. At a subsequent meeting Tullis and I amused the gathering with a concert played on two 10¢ fifes. We were amazed with each other's dexterity on the instrument, each having previously assumed himself to be the only person extant to play the fife (10¢ variety) according to classic musical precepts.

A few meetings featured talks by Shroyer, Kuttner, and Hodgkins, and finally, in the middle-spring of 1938, the Michelist Movement broke upon fandom. My journalistic endeavour in IMAGINATION!, "A Reply to Michelism" caused me to be hailed by the opposition (ref. IMAGINATION! letter pages) as "the first to take the Michelist bull by the horns." My information at the time comprised the Jan issue of NOVAE TERRAE, the monthly of the British Science Fiction Association, which I joined along with most of the other members of the chapter in 1938. What I was actually trying to do then was not to take political sides in Fandom over the question, but to question the advisability of attaching to fandom any pseudo-political importance, a stand which I have maintained to the present day.

Time dims my familiarity with the Michelist movement at that time. Since this involves by analogy the NEW FANDOM movement, it is no desire of mine to drag up this ancient and bitter feud for a personal review. My article at the time started the ball rolling, but in subsequent correspondence with Wolheim we both reached an agreement of aims, and the entire affair was settled without enmity on either part. I maintained a casual correspondence for some time with Doc Lowdnes and with Wolheim himself. The important point about this issue in my own personal memoirs is that it again launched me into active fan writing and especially political writing. And at the same time it was the first venture on

the part of members of science fiction fandom to attach a sociological significance to the hobby.

Through the fortunate contact with Hodgkins and the others I have mentioned, I had managed to learn enough that I did not make an ass of myself in the short-lived excitement. My career as a science fiction fan might have taken a different turn then, if another event of local importance had not occurred in May 1938, just after I was on the way to precipitating myself into the arena of political discussion. The Squire-Lewis Secretaryship at last petered out. Squires resigned as an active member and officer, and Lewis, his unofficial aide-de-camp, concurred.

When this vacancy occurred, Hodgkins, acting under the authority of the constitution of the chapter, appointed me Secretary. This occurred on May 8, and I was so elated at the prospects that whether the appointment was one of well-considered fore-thought over several prospects, or simply due to a dearth of material at the moment, I cannot yet decide. Both Brady and Bradbury were regular and enthusiastic attenders at the time and would have been logical substitutes. This new responsibility naturally turned my interest in fan activities from the growing national field to those of the local chapter. For that reason, my position as a national fan has been rather derelicted, for the next five and a half years my standing was augmented only by THE DAMN THING of 1940-41, the two Fywert Kinge poetical pamphlets produced by Joquel, and occasional items in other magazines, mainly Bronson's FANTASITE. For the next three years after my appointment to the Secretaryship, my fan activities were devoted to recording in all their numerous phases the activities and exploits of members of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Science Fiction League and its later form, the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society.

SINCE MANY OTHERS have not constrained themselves in praise of the Yerkes minutes, I do not feel obtuse in making a few remarks about them myself. As a Secretary, I had absolutely no training whatsoever in the business world, nor in the proper form and method of writing minutes. Like my idol of the time, Van Loon, I wrote history as I thought it should be written, with emphasis on the personalities involved rather than the dull business proceedings in all their monotonous glory. As I was then the Assistant editor of the School paper, and author of a very popular column titled MOOZIK NOOZ, which was devoted to the doings of the Music Dept., though more often pregnant with the scandals of the various orchestra and band members, I simply adopted my columnar tactics to the writing of the minutes, growing bolder and bolder as my familiarity with the task increased. The "task" lasted in an unbroken stretch from May 8, 1938 to March 31, 1941, when the press of work made it impossible for me to give them their usual attention. Due to a very genuine dearth of material for the job in 1942, I was again appointed Secretary, which position lasted irregularly through 1943.

Being in the position of club historian for this lengthy time, I saw many familiar faces come and go, many business machinations become repetitious; but above all, this protracted position gave me an insight into the nature of the club and its membership that is possessed by none of the other members. Ackerman and Morojo, the only other members of comparable seniority, have no ability to view the situation from a perspective, being too thoroughly wrapped up in the club itself. I watched the club change in purpose, membership, concept, and nature. Further, all this time, my mind was growing up, following the normal evolutionary course as I grew out of my 'teens into my twenties. The longer I held the job the more interesting it became to me...especially as I went to college and took up the study of abnormal psychology and sociological behaviour.

Then the club ceased to be a club at all; it was instead a priceless proving ground, a never-ending demonstration of half a dozen common psychological types in action at one time.

Though in the later half of my régime, such priceless characters as Shroyer, Kuttner, Mooney, Hodgkins, Lewis, Garnett, Henderson, etc. had all but totally disappeared from the scene, new ones took their place.. Helen Finn, Jack Dowdle, Henry Hasse, Arthur L. Joquel II, Walt Daugherty, Ed Chamberlain, and Dave Elder, George Hahn, and Bill Crawford. The antics of this mad, insane, diverting procession was closely observed by myself sitting in the chair next to Director Hodgkins, later Director Daugherty, and then Director Finn, Wilmoth, and lastly Paul Froehafer. Therefore, when I claim to be able at any given time to discern more about what the club is doing than the body of the membership, I imagine I know what I am talking about. I feel that I put in a good turn of work for the chapter during those three years, though the extent of this service is mainly unknown to fans outside of Los Angeles.

IN JUNE 1938 Charles D. Hornig arrived in Los Angeles for one of his more lengthy stays, the first of a series of shuttles between Elizabeth, N.J., and California, which lasted until March 1942, at which time he was sent to a camp for conscientious objectors. Hornig will probably not be remembered by newer fans as the founder of the Science Fiction League, and as such, the gentleman who signed the charter in 1934 which brought the LASFL into existence. Between 1938 and the present time it has been my pleasure to enjoy a very staunch friendship with Charlie, though the reciprocal interest did not crystallise immediately in the first year. While Hornig and I attended much of the foolery of the American Legion Convention together, it was not until his following stay in the city two years later, when I was much more mature, that we were able to meet on equal intellectual grounds.

Those who have known Hornig will recall him as a man of uncommon conversational proclivity, able to talk delightfully on virtually any subject under the sun. His witty observations and parodies endeared him to the members of the LASFL, and his interest in Esperanto and World Peace, both lost causes, put him on firm grounds with Ackerman and Morojo, a mistake for which he is most fully forgiven.

His arrival in town at the time put some life into the club at a moment when it was ever so slightly dull. He guest edited the July 1938 issue of IMAGINATION! and engaged in some interesting excursions in the direction of Fogo. However, the Hornig influence over the club in general and Bradbury and myself in particular, did not become an influence of any import on the trends of the chapter until his second visit in 1940.

While the summer of 1938 saw the chapter organ IMAGINATION! ascend ever higher on the list of top fan magazines, the first of what has since been periodic slumps in the activity of the club occurred. The activity of the club simply dropped to a very low ebb, meetings attracting only perhaps six or eight persons. The minutes of the time record despair at this trend, which became a familiar cry as occasional slumps of activity occurred every year following. As I have mentioned before, the social activity of the club revolved more or less around scientifiction and its ramifications, the summer of 1938 inaugurated the first of many following all-club social adventures. The classical beach party which occurred on August 13 (and the morning of the 14th) was recorded with unusual and spontaneous enthusiasm by myself as Secretary. As I am at the moment without the convenience of the Minute Book, I remember only

part of those attending. I know that the whole affair was remarkably enlivened by our rapidly-forming group of impromptu entertainers. Brady, a Pepsi-Cola fiend, waded down to the shore to watch the grunions float in and stepped in a clam. Kuttner was seen chasing a scantily clad Pogo, brandishing a simmering weiner on the end of a long stick in the general direction of her buttocks. Antiquarians interested in such wry accounts of the numerous LASFL outings may visit the clubroom and read the entire story in the Special Events section of the minute book.

Incidentally, this particular event set off a reorganisation of the minute book and other club records to which I had fallen heir as Secretary. In August I set about in a burst of enthusiasm to record and transcribe the pre-historical Secretaries, such as Wanda Test, extant during 1936. These had been irregularly kept in a notebook, but in a handwriting not conducive to leisurely reading. My enthusiastic energy sufficed to transcribe several such sets, about the ancient days when the chapter met in the Pacific Electric Bldg., with William L. Hoffman as Director.

When the Beach Party occurred, my high-school-trained news instinct detected an interesting story for future generations. However, there was no provision in the records for nothing this event. Under the heading of Special Events, it filed this and subsequent social write-ups, which, to date, include three more beach parties, numerous picnics, theatre excursions, including the private showing of Fritz Lang's METROPOLIS, and publishing sessions. It was my habit to record such extra activities in as interesting detail as possible until sometime late in 1940 when they had become so commonplace in the club's life as to be superfluous.

UP TO THIS POINT I have stressed the tempo of the day rather than amusing the reader with illuminating anecdotes, of which there will be plenty in the next four years' accounts. My effort through the entire series is to point out as clearly as possible the nature of the transition of a once-every-two-weeks LASFL to a full-time madhouse LASFS. I will back-track for a moment and insert some events of interesting during 1938, which was, on the whole, a quiet year, lacking either notable additions to the club or an imposing list of celebrities such as had graced numerous meetings the previous twelvemonths.

On January 20, 1938, copies of a new mimeographed constitution were passed about. With few subsequent alterations, this document functioned as the sole legal document of the club until late in 1943. This novice attempt as legislature was all right for the old nature of the club, but it was totally unadaptable to a group maintaining a regular quarters, and so when the problems of maintaining a clubroom reach an impasse, the entire legal structure fell down about an unsuspecting membership.

February 17 was the date of the first visit to the LASFL of the Pomona fan, Thomas R. Daniels. Daniels is another one of those many persons who never quite got up sufficient steam for a good launching. Off and on for a number of years Daniels was sometimes heard of, in VOM, in some local magazine, through a deluge of letters, but never quite enough to become even moderately recognised. At present residing in Washington (state), he is chiefly remembered for his attempt in 1940-1 to assemble a comprehensive photo-library of scientific fiction fans. I engaged in some correspondence with him regarding my own extensive file of local and visiting personages, but nothing ever came of it from either side of the parley.

March 3, 1938, witnessed a discussion of the Supernatural, lead by Fred Shroyer. This date was a fine time for such a discussion, as the supernatural falling of unprecedented amounts of water from the sky at this time came the nearest yet to washing the entire city into the Pacific ocean. I was in a particularly un-

receptive mood that night, as during the morning while walking up to the busline on my way to school, my saxophone case suddenly opened up and dropped a \$165 gold-plated Alto Sax into three feet of rapidly running, muddy, silty gutter water. Supernatural, indeed!

The following meeting, March 17, popular author-member Arthur K. Barnes related the havoc caused in his home district of Tujunga Canyon by this deluge and told a never-to-be-forgotten yarn of his hilarious journey out of the flooded area on an earthworm tractor. While sitting, along with many other washed-out residents, on the hood of the engine Art was intrigued by the sight of several copies of old *Amazing Stories* (pre-1930 vintage) floating down the swollen river. He never did find who the collector in them parts was.

April 1 was a Fool's meeting. Paul Freehafer passed about tickets for an open house at CalTech, which a number of members visited, lured chiefly by the spectacular demonstrations in the electrical laboratories. A month later we had one of our few speakers for the year, Mr. John J. Parson's of CalTech, who discussed the rocket experiments at that institution where he was on the research staff.

One of the interesting characters of the old LASFL was Charlie Henderson, who stood for the club as long as the club stood for him, roughly 1938-1939. Henderson was an irresponsible person of Shroyer's tastes but totally lacking the latter's intelligence and personal attraction. Charlie worked for Shep's Shop, the former scientific haven, and eventually is alleged to have run off with Lucile Shoppard's huge Packard coupe and an unspecified amount of cash.

Henderson's contributions to the club consisted of ribald discussions and fantastic ideas for putting the club on a paying basis, a bad habit often dreamed of by his counterpart, as far as ideas go, Walter J. Daugherty. The meeting of May 19 ended in a verbal riot with Henderson proposing that the club purchase a professional story for \$100 and run in it *IMAGINATION!* for ten or twenty issues. The flaw in this reasoning as a circulation booster in fan circles is obvious. There are plenty of professional stories to begin with. Finally, with the assistance of demons Kuttner and Shroyer, the meeting concluded with everybody going hog-wild, finishing off with a proposition that newsboys be given copies of the club organ so they could walk down the streets shouting: *Examiner! Times! Imagination!*"

AFTER A FEW MEETINGS of peace and quiet, politics reared its ugly head. Old timers will recall the great furor raised by Wolheim and CPASF over McCreary's story "After 3000 Years" in *Astounding* during 1938. When copies of the Wolheim letter reached the local fans, we were off again on the old merry-go-round. The contention of Bradbury, Brady, and myself was that: what if 3000 years was pro-capitalistic, etc., it's only a story. The fracas only succeeded in getting the discussion of Michelism banned from *IMAGINATION!*, a procedure which embittered feelings on both sides of the continent for some time. The upshoot of the thing was to get me into a protracted correspondence with Tremaine and then Campbell, which I prized very highly...especially my letters from Campbell wherein we engaged for a brief while in an interesting psychological discussion.

BOB OLSON was an author-member whom I particularly liked. He was a small jovial swede, a sort of everybody's grandfather. His contribution to the earlier history of magazine scientific fiction was well-earned and established in Gernsbackian *Amazing Stories*. His first story appeared in the June 1927 *Amazing*, "Four Dimensional Roller Press," and this was followed by a host of dimensional stories, "Four Dimensional Surgery", "Four Dimensional Robberies" etc., for a long time. During the three years from 1937 to 1939 when Bob Olsen was an irregular

follower of chapter doings, his genial, rotund figure was welcome at all times. He was always willing to talk to any of us, especially to wee youngsters like myself. Shortly after the beach party of 1939 he became afflicted with an obscure bone ailment which incapacitated him for many years. In 1941 just after the Denvention, Ackerman, Morojo, Erle Korshak, and myself, visited him at the County Farm, and then I saw him again on the campus of Los Angeles City College sometime in 1942, quite well again. His formerly perfectly globular bald-pate, a feature which was his chief attraction at times, now had some unsightly lunar undulations. Alas! this enviable cranium never recovered from the affliction.

The meeting night of June 7, 1938, witnessed an interesting lecture by Olsen on hydroponics, the art of growing plants in chemical solutions. Bob at the time was an agent for a local company promoting this sort of thing. The club, in a grandiose burst of enthusiasm proposed an attendance of 50 persons, but succeeded at a very late hour in getting only 25. One of the guests at ~~that time~~ was A. Ross Kuntz, who made in and out appearances along with his friend Melvin Dolmatz, until just last year. (1943.) And then the following meeting witnessed a blow that seemed to presage the beginning of the end...but eventually turned out to be merely the darkest hour before the dawn. The minutes for the meeting of August 17, 1938, open as follows:

"One of the most discouraging, down-hearted, disgusting, disgusting, dreary, disconcerting, disabling meetings in the history of the local chapter. Only 12 members were present at this sad assemblage; the meeting at which one of our most popular members died: beloved by all, the enlightener of many dreary hours, of service and assistance to the cause of scientifiction many times, missed and mourned by all members of the local chapter; yea, of all the scientifictional field, we take this moment to bow our heads in silent memory of our former beloved member IMAGINATION! (Sniffle, sniffle)"

The object here, one might guess, was to make the feeling of disaster communicable to all. What did happen? Apparently, since the death of grandpere Ackerman earlier in the year, the Ackerman fortune had not run so well, and thus in August 1938, at the age of only 22, Forrest J Ackerman had to give up scientifiction as a full-time occupation and go to work on the swing shift for either the government or Standard Oil as a typist. This was, to the best of my knowledge, Forrie's first real job, and it hit him as hard as it hit the rest of us. Since he was the mainstay on the editing and stencilling end of IMAGINATION!, a fact which until then had been begrudgingly admitted only as necessary, it became suddenly obvious that the magazine would have to do some rapid telescoping.

After rapid, though sometimes vapid, discussion, the club showed more good sense than on any similar occasion since, and decided to suspend the magazine, rather than make a slow and agonising descent from one of fandom's top periodicals to the ignominious status of a hanger-on. However, plans had been in the offing for some months to make the anniversary edition a giant of its time, replete with top-notch articles by some of the shining lights of the time, both professional and amateur, plus a full-page of lithographed pictures of the chapter's members. In addition, there was a large accumulation of manuscripts scheduled for future issues, including submissions for a contest on the topic: the future of scientifiction. (These make interesting reading, especially Jack Speer and his "After 1939, What?") When the news of Ackerman's having to work hit the club, everything had to be instantly frozen until it could be ascertained just how much spare-time Forrie was going to have available. The situation came

as a very hard blow, and many a near-tear was to be seen in the eyes of the twelve attenders. I noted it all down in the minutes with a sense of foreboding, and for a while it looked as though I were right. Letters of protest and condolence began to flood Box 6475 from all over the fan field; and on the home front no one seemed to be getting over the shock.

Finally, on November 3, 1938, "Madge's Prize Mss." was issued, the first bit of fan literature to come out of the LASFL since the crash. But at the same time attendance at the meetings was dropping. Members of the LASFS who imagine the club to be much more active now (late 1943) than formerly will be interested to note that in the minutes of November 17, 1938, it is seriously observed that the club was facing the startling ultimatum of DISBANDING since the attendance was down to only fifteen per meeting and showed no signs of getting better! Now, an attendance of 15 is considered better than average! A long discussion was held that night between the "faithful", which comprised Hodgkins, Ackerman, Morajo, Bradbury, Freehafer, and myself. It was pointed out that many of our active members, such as Mike and Corinne Ellesworth, Pogo, Wilbur Stimpson, Freehafer, Grady McMurtry, the Glendale group, etc., were not attending because of work and the distance involved. A representative of the Glendale bunch flatly told the assemblage that the club had been degenerated into a boring, uninteresting, tedium, and at the moment I fear he was right. (This was a long, long time before some of the more "loyal" members admitted the same thing themselves.) The absence of IMAGINATION!, the lack of new interests or active members, saw the Los Angeles Chapter of the Science Fiction League approaching the end of 1938 at a very low ebb. In fact, the next meeting, December 2, saw only eight, an all time low, in the Little Brown Room. Again we decided to postpone disbandment until after the Christmas party two weeks hence. But it was a dreary occasion for the eight present. The Floor Manager for Clifton's kept peaking into the Brown Room and was highly annoyed at the sudden lack of food revenue which the group was not producing. The Brown Room was designed for thirty persons, and through the years we have just managed to hang on to it. Indeed, the scene was very black indeed.

One of the more interesting personalities of 1939 made his appearance during this year-end depression. That was Ray Foulkes, who made his first visit at this time, arriving from Seattle. Not noteworthy as a fan, he became for a short while another of the innumerable fascinating characters which have graced the LASFL and LASFS during their history. He dropped from the rolls as silently as he came, and for the life of me I can't remember a thing about him save that like many others, he was a diverting and unusual person to talk with. His part in the chapter affairs will be detailed in the next volume.

Faith in scientifiction and Los Angeles fandom was again restored on December 15. Despite a rain which did some \$25,000 (pre-war prices) worth of damage to the city and environs, twenty four old-timers turned up for the annual Christmas party. Gifts for the grab-box were in great profusion, and the sudden reappearance of our enlivening professional authors and their friends, plus the Glendale SFL, made everyone jubilant. Charlie Henderson conducted an auction which was hilariously funny, much discussion and feasting occurred, from the middle of which Russ Hodgkins was called by his father to help push the family car out of a downtown mud-sink. This left me in charge of the whole affair.

When IMAGINATION! became the club organ, dues had been raised from 10 to 15¢, but with the demise of club publishing, Pogo had raised the motion that the levy be reduced to its former level. Settling this hagggle was my first experience at the helm of the LASFL, a position which I have assumed on numerous subsequent

occasions, much to the dissatisfaction of many members who are annoyed at my insistence on carrying out the business at hand with no side-show, or to hell with it all. Finally dues were kept at 15¢ on condition that the club design a coat of arms and produce some stationary for members' use. Stationary came two years later and the coat of arms after three years. Hodgkins returned at the end of this, and everyone proceeded to reach into the grab bag, and to gab far into the night.

There was one more meeting of the LASFL that year, a fifth Thursday affair in Hollywood. This meeting started something new and far-reaching, and properly belongs in the 1939-40 section of this narrative.

Nineteen thirty seven and 1938 go hand in hand in my interpretation of the club's chronology. Though the latter year differed from the previous in the matter of publishing activity, the stage was peopled with essentially the same characters, and the same plot, and the same spontaneity among the membership. I like those days and weeks, partly, I suppose, because there was a certain element of newness about associating with a group of that nature. We actually did live in comparative harmony then; there were few if any frictions, and very little gossip. The Old LASFL was perhaps the ideal fan organization, because each and every member had an earnest, sincere interest in science fiction and its hobby aspects. The activity was therefore undiluted with cynicism, vicarious motivation, and petty jealousy which later wrecked the LASFS. And there were no members whose presence was undesirable to the rest, another feature of the late LASFS which caused much unpleasantness.

In this first volume of my memoirs I may have waxed pedantic and dull at times. I was young then, and I can only record my emotions and remembrances as they seemed at the time. In the next volumes things pep up, with remembrances and anecdotes about the many professional authors that flocked to Los Angeles at one time, visiting fans, social events, and the like. But if the reader has come this far with me, he will appreciate in the following volumes why it was necessary to go into such minute detail of the years 1937 and 1938, for it is on this framework that the history of the next four years rested.

The coming year of 1939 saw many sudden, abrupt changes...the beginning of the two years transition period from the LASFL to the LASFS. The following December was to see the face of Rome greatly changed.

* * * * *

T. Bruce Yerke,
December 14, 1943

