

S.F. WEEKLY 190 JULY 10, 1967

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FURTHER DETAILS OF WESTERCON XX: Rick Sneary reports on the WesterCon: While food and liquor prices were high, room rates were quite low and the convention generally had excellent relations with the Sheraton-Wilshire. Fans in attendance included Alva Rogers, Bill Donaho, the Anersons, Bob Chazin, the Rolfes, the Goldstones, the Ellingtons, Ben Stark, the Trimbles, Art Widner, Ed Clinton, the Breens, and the entire Society for Creative Anachronism.

Professional attendees included Charles Schneeman, winner of the Invisible Little Man Award; Poul Anderson; Fritz Lieber; Harlan Ellison; Robert Bloch; A.E. Van Vogt; Ross Rocklynne; Chris Neville; Larry Niven; and Guest of Honor Marion Zimmer Bradley.

Attendees included over 350 fans at the time of the banquet with more than 100 coming to the convention after that. The program included two Gilbert & Sullivan parodies, films, the costume ball, banquet, and a mideaval tournament. Rick reports of the Costume Ball: "Luise Petti's costume so defied the laws of gravity, science, physics, and nature that it was a wonder to behold... No one believed she could get through the evening dancing like that, and hold together... but alas, she did. After the judging, the Ball took off and turned into a real party, with dancing until after one... There were more people dancing at this ball than at all past Westercons put together."

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NYCON MEMBERSHIP NOW OVER 800: Membership in the 25th World SF Convention, or NYCon 3, is now over the 800 mark with the figure expected to reach 900 by the end of next week. With notices appearing in IF, F&SF, and ANALOG, the rolls are being swelled by sf readers at the rate of 50 a week. Memberships have come in so fast that the committee has run out of Progress Reports; more are being printed. A breakdown of membership by state and country follows, based on a smaller number of available membership addresses:

New York	191	Texas	17	Colorado	6	Oregon	3	Georgia, Nebraska, Ok-
Ohio	67	Indiana	15	Iowa	5	Maine	2	lahoma, Hawaii
California	65	Missouri	14	Louisiana	5	Delaware	2	Canada
New Jersey	64	Connecticut	10	Mississippi	5	New Hamp.	2	Australia
Pennsylvania	42	Minnesota	9	Kansas	4	Kentucky	2	United Kingdom
Maryland (+DC)	33	Florida	8	North Car.	4	W. Va.	2	West Germany
Illinois	33	Tennessee	7	Rhode Isl.	4	S. Caro.	2	Sweden
Michigan	35	Virginia	7	Wisconsin	3	Arkansas	2	Vietnam
Massachusetts	29	Washington	6	New Mexico	3	Arizona	1	Italy, France, P.R.

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FANZINES RECEIVED: Cosign, official organ of the Central Ohio SF Society. \$2.50 a year, available for contributions, Letters of Comment, trade, or material. Available from COSFS, 216 East Tibet Street, Columbus, Ohio, 43202. Good Clubzine. Zingaro, Available for 30¢, trade, contributions, letters of comment, and to others. Available from Mark Irwin, 1747 Elmwood Drive, Highland Park, Illinois, 60035. Good. Sirruish, official organ of the Ozark SF Association. Available for 25¢, contributions, letters of comment, articles, fiction, artwork, etc. Available from Leigh Couch, Rte. 2 Box 889, Arnold, Mo., 63010. Highly recommended clubzine.

PAPERBACK SALES: Paperback Sales, a new service, will attempt to gage the sales of currently available sf paperbacks, based on figures from New York Bookstores. Current sources indicate the top 6 bestsellers over the past 6 months are:

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| 1. Tolkien- <u>Lord Of The Rings</u> (Ballantine) | 4. Blish: <u>Cities In Flight</u> (Avon) |
| 2. Herbert: <u>Dune</u> (Ace) | 5. Asimov: <u>Foundation Trilogy</u> (Avon) |
| 3. Robert E. Howard: <u>Conan</u> (Lancer) | 6. Heinlein: <u>Stranger In A Strange Land</u> (Avon) |

CURRENT SELLERS FOR THE WEEKS OF JUNE 23 - JULY 7th:

1. Vance: The Last Castle/Wayman: World of the Sleeper (Ace Books) - 60¢
2. Williamson: Bright New Universe (Ace Books) - 50¢
3. Howard: Conan The Usurper (Lancer Books) - 60¢
4. T.B. Swann: The Weirwoods (Ace) - 50¢
5. Roy Meyers: Dolphin Boy (Ballantine Books) - 75¢

((Thanks to Dick Seyfarth & Papyrus Booksellers, Inc.))

BORN: To Colleen & rich brown: a daughter, Alicia Kim; 6 lb., 7 oz., 19 inches. June 24th, 7:27 pm. Mother, daughter and father doing well.

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MOVIE NEWS: Four unspecified sf shorts by H.P. Lovecraft, as well as Shadow over Innsmouth, will be filmed as part of a 6½ million dollar, 13 film, 3 year production schedule. An agreement to film the various properties was signed between Arthur Stellof, Heritage International Productions, and Jose Luis Calderon, Mexican Producer.

American International will film The Gold Bug by Edgar Allen Poe, based on initial successes of its other Poe releases. A-I will also film Poe's The Oblong Box, with a screenplay by Jerry Sohl. The film will be made in England, and will star Vincent Price and Fabian.

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CONAN POSTER AVAILABLE: Lancer Books has printed a Conan Poster; essentially a cover painting from Conan The Adventurer, with no type or lettering on the picture itself. A black border around the picture carries the legend, "Conan, The World's Greatest Fantasy Hero." The poster is 22" X 27½", printed on glossy paper. The price is \$1 per, with a 50¢ handling charge for any quantity of posters. The poster is available from Dept. LC, Bookmasters, 999 Third Avenue, NY, NY, 10022. The poster is unavailable from Lancer itself, and should not be ordered from them.

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JOIN THE THIRDMANCON: The Thirdmancon, the 1968 British National Convention, will be held in Manchester during Easter. To join, send \$1 to me. Checks or money orders may be made out to Andrew Porter. All members of the convention receive issues of Meteor, the newszine of the 1968 British SF Convention. A sample issue of Meteor will be distributed with this newszine at a future date.

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APA NEWS: The 31st month of TAPS sees the publication of Skulldigger #1, TT #31. A hefty 31 pages, this TT lists new members as Tom Byro, Chuck McMillan, and new waitlisters as Mike McInerney, Al Snider, and Jim Sanders. Dropped were Thorne and Porter, both resigned. Taps has weathered three storms, and will hopefully see a safe harbor at last. As former Apa Manager, I certainly hope so.

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NEW SUBSCRIBERS: Joe Anselmo, Judith Merrill, Jack Gaughan, Rick Sneary, Paul Crawford,

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MUST RENEW IMMEDIATELY: Rich Brown, Bob Chazin, James Latimer, Bob Leman, David Lipsky, Glenn Lord, Bob Saal, Reg Smith.

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ONE ISSUE LEFT: Redd Boggs, Bill Bowers, Ross Chamberlain, Barry Gillam, John Goldsmith, Mitchell Henson, Tim Skarda, Bob Whalen.

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NUMBER FOUR

Published by Andrew Porter, 24 East 82nd Street, New York, NY, 10028, in conjunction with S.F. Weekly. Hardcover and paperbound books for review may be sent to the above address. Doompublishation #269. 12 June 1967.

Sleeping Planet, by William R. Burkett Jr. Paperback Library, 1967; 75¢.

This book was originally published in Analog. As such, it easily qualifies as the type of heavy-science, one-man-against-the-world type of novel that Analog periodically publishes.

The novel has all the classic components to it: a rugged individualist big city lawyer; an embittered 4F truck driver with a fast tongue; a stick-in-the-mud bureaucrat who becomes a commanding general; and finally an eagle-eyed alien intelligence officer.

As such, it's certainly one of the better examples of this type of story. Aliens overpower the earth with a sleep-inducing dust; a dozen earthlings are unaffected, and begin to fight. Most are soon captured, but one battles on, enlisted the planet-wide resources of humanity's service robots, and the fast thinking of one of the captured earthlings.

It's carried off quite well for this type of story. Burkett has a solid grasp of his plot, and ties in all his characters neatly, with no words wasted. His scene shifts are, perhaps, a bit too abrupt, offering the reader a sometimes too sudden shift in viewpoint, but this deficiency is made up for by the solid flow of actions and events that hold the story together. A deft insertion of slap-stick, a bit of egomaniac general, the machinations of our ghostly heroes, and the sleuthing of our evil intelligence officer make this book highly successful. If you enjoyed Wasp by Eric Frank Russell, then you'll really go for this one.

Those Who Watch, by Robert Silverberg. Signet Books, 1967; 60¢.

The past several years have seen countless saucer sightings, UFO conventions, and books on the subject by reputable publishers. Utilizing this background, Robert Silverberg has written an interesting first contact story. The plot is based on some propositions that are perhaps a bit weak: that aliens in human form will inevitably become human in emotion as well, and yet be able to give up their human entanglements and return, quite willingly, to the alien worlds from which they came.

The story is basically that of a disabled observer-craft, whose crew para-jump to the Earth below, injuring themselves in the process. They fall into the hands of, respectively, a widowed mother, an embittered Air Force Colonel, and a deprived Indian boy on a backward reservation. How these emotionally-stunted people adapt to, and in turn adapt the aliens to themselves, is the basis of the novel.

Silverberg finds it necessary to throw in a 2nd alien power, perhaps to complicate the book, perhaps to speed the ending. His complications are, on the whole, basically without threat, although the blurb on the cover suggest different. The book could stand without the "interplanetary intrigue."

This is a competent book, with some faults. Silverberg's Air Force Colonel is perhaps too typically soured on life, and his abrupt about-face when presented with the evidence of alien life stretches the believability of his character. Other than this, the widowed mother and the Indian boy are portrayed with a mastery of the written word that Silverberg has used elsewhere.

The book seems to have been published, and the blurbs bear this up, as a book designed to catch the growing market for books on and about flying saucers. As such, it fares well. As science fiction, it shows more faults than Silverberg would have had in a book oriented purely at the science fiction market.

I Have No Mouth & I Must Scream, by Harlan Ellison. Introduction by Theodore Sturgeon. Pyramid Books, 1967; 60¢.

The basic trouble with this book is that the reader drowns in words before he even begins to read the stories. There is a biographical sketch on the first page, followed by 4 pages of introduction by Theodore Sturgeon, in turn followed by 6 pages of preface by Ellison himself. Then, the first story is prefaced by a page of introduction.

The trouble with all this is that frequently Ellison's introductions are more fascinating, more illuminating than the stories themselves. Ellison has the habit of telling funny Harlan Ellison stories which, often, make the stories he introduces seem drab by comparison. He also has a habit of telling all about his books many months before they are published. When they are published, they are frequently not as good as the stories about them.

Of the seven stories in this book, perhaps the most striking is the title story. A planet wide computer, embittered by the knowledge that it is sentient yet forever tied to this planet (a reason for which is not enclosed in the story), sends the 51 last humans alive about the planet, searching for food, as punishment for humanity's having built the computer as it is.

The story is without human meaning and hope. The realities in the story are the realities of a demented machine. Thus, the story is completely separated from human existence. In such a setting, the author can do whatever he wishes with the plot, characters, and actions. Ellison has such powers, and he uses them. In this the story is successful; more than this cannot, with any truth, be said.

There is not much to be said about "Big Sam Was My Friend." As the oldest story in this book, it is perhaps the most successful from the standpoint of entertainment.

Taking the book as a whole, it is not science fiction, but rather morality tales. Some of the stories read like it. Ellison has prefaced each of his stories by telling how each helped him over some burden, some hurdle in his personal life. They are not entertainment, but rather glimpses into the good and bad within Harlan Ellison. They would have been more successful without Ellison telling us what their purposes were; had he not prefaced each story with an indictment of all that is bad and painful both within himself and within the human race, then these stories would have had a chance of succeeding, of showing us something that we haven't seen, but as entertainment, not as a collection of sermons.

As morality tales, they are a failure as science fiction. I urge you to buy this book if only to see what Harlan Ellison is doing now. You can read the stories, and perhaps find them good entertainment. Or you can read the introductions, and perhaps catch a glimpse of the seedier side of Harlan Ellison.

RECEIVED AND NOTED:

Dolphin Boy, by Roy Meyers. Ballantine Books, 1967; 75¢.

The Fantastic Swordsmen, edited by L. Sprague de Camp. Pyramid Books, 1967; 50¢.

The Dolphins Of Altair, by Margaret St. Clair. Dell Books, 1967; 50¢.

The Winged Man, by A.E. Van Vogt & E. Mayne Hull. Berkely Books, 1967; 60¢.

Journey Into Darkness, by Frank Belknap Long. Belmont Books, 1967; 50¢.