

The book reviews were good, but don't inspire comment...
2962 Santa Ana st.
South Gate, Calif.

~~1/1/62~~
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Dear Fred,

I am sorry I failed to write a l.o.c. on Salamander #2. For a period of about four months the outside world intruded on things fannish, and I have fallen far behind in letters and reading. There has been an improvement now, and I hope to regain lost ground, and make up old scores.. And while I don't like to try an comment on two issues of a fanzine the size and quality of Cal., I will try.. Or, rather, brief comment on #2, pluss a little silver. I hope the rest of the l.o.c. will cover the good will for #3.

The general appearance is very pleasing. By now no one should have any trouble telling the difference between your zine and other LA fanzines. Yours looks 50% better. You have size and style that conform, and blend together. A single editor with an idea of what he wants and a good sense of layout, can be expected to turn out a better fanzine than a co-op job, with different layouts, and you have. But, as far as artwork, you are on top. The Bergeron cover is great. The Barrillo though fabulous. It may not be, as I imagine some fans will say, the best fan-art ever. There were covers on some of the early fanzines that were as good as this. Which looks very odd, as interior repro was very poor. Now days fans expect neat and easily read text as the standard, but 20 years ago it was the exception. But they would from time time shell out for an off-set or litho cover that would knock your eye out.. In late years the mimeo has improved so that good art can be rendered on stencil, so there is less of the litho work, and what there is, isn't that great. But this is.

I'm glad to see the publicity for the UCLA fantasy collection is working both ways.. But, as I've told Steve, the thing to do is keep it before the fannish eye. This can be best done by articles on how things are going, and what is being done.. I for one would be interested in the plain mechanics of how items are handled. It is doubtfull if they just put them on shelves like books. I know this doesn't work, as it is to hard to get things out, and single-sheeters get out of place, or worse yet, crumpled. - But how do they index them? -- Maybe not many would care for this, but I'm interested in filing systems..

Not much to say about Bob's article on apa's.. I agree with nearly all of what he said.. Pleased in fact to see him saying that atleast one-half a apa-zine should be original material. While no comments at all can be bad (leaving with the feeling the member never reads the mailing) and detailed comment can be interesting, the material of lasting interest is more apt to be original. (Bob's opinion of who writes good mailing comments is based more on personal taste that real outstanding quality. But, this is a matter of taste.)

The book reviews were good, but don't inspire comment..
Though I think I'd like The Green Odyssey, in view of what you
compair it too.

Deckinger was sort of out of step with the quality of your
other material.

A "Slow Train" was also supprisingly slow. I would normally
echo Fitch's statement (in 2's letter column) about Ted's writing
ability...but even John Berry has off days..

Bob's fanzine reviews are of a length to make them interesting,
but for the most part it is merely an extended listing of the
contents. Bob -- well, here is an example; line three, page 18:
"Each issue of DISCORD leads off with several pages of Redd's shappé
commentary....." This would be okay, if you felt most of your
readers didn't allready read Discord--and as he says, anyone who
isn't, ought to have their mind examined. ---- In otherword, Bob
writes very well, but he some times says more words than are needed.

I'll not coment on letters in 2.

Comment on #3.. Again a beautiful cover.. A little less so
than the first two,--but it pails only in compairason with them.
I like more and more of Karan's work, and I'm glad to see more and
more of it appearing in other than her own fanzines. -- Your
overall layout again was superb.. -- The interior art was very
good, with two marked exceptions.. The one by Bjo which was
exceptionally good.. A beautiful picture, with a kicker in it.
No doubt the loveliest of the Quezral cartoons.. It is to bad there
aren't more childrens books around for her to illostrate. -- The
other exception was Dian's work, which was rather poor. The poorest
things I've seen by her, which makes me think something was wrong.
All her other work has had life and flowing lines.. This was
quite square and flat. Maybe she doesn't draw people well,..which
is true of many otherwise good artist.

Your lengthy review/critism of Andre Norton was very good.
I'm at a loss to say just what it was I liked, but it was long
and interesting. It not only told what happen, but what you thought
about it, and how it related to other books. The sort of thing
Blish has been doing...and can only be done if you allow your self
lots of room. I wish I could write like this, but I've never
been able to get enough depth of fealing into any reviews I've
done. Thus I admire those who can all the more.. -- The list of
Norton books was interesting in itself. I've heard you argue that
she was a one-plot writer before, but I'd never seen so much
evad nce..

Regarding Coventry I can hardly claim to be an impartial
observer. I do seem to have a more detached attatude toward it
though than most I have met -- eather in or out. -- So, to answer
your question, "Is Coventry a good idea?", I would say "yes."
But to paraphrase an old samantic saying, what most people seem to
forget is, that the idea is not the people.

Whether you regard Coventry as a geo-political, ecological
crossword puzzle inwhich you start with major factors and build
in the details of a world to fit them; or as the co-operatively

designed background world in which to lay the action of a series of stories, the idea is a good one. It is what the individuals involved do with the idea that makes it seem either good or bad. For my own part, I feel about Coventry as I would a game of chess. When I play the game I expect the other players to take it seriously, and when ~~it~~ it is over to put it aside. I wouldn't expect anyone who wasn't interested in the game to play, but I would resent their criticism of the game.

It has been noted long before Coventry came into fannish notice that many if not a majority of fans have designed their own fantasy world. Coventry was started by pooling some of these worlds.. It has grown by adding more. It has faced three types of problems (as I see it.) 1: The multi-fantasy worlds have been hard to reconcile. 2: Persons who are not fantasy-world builders have come into Coventry (the idea), and added jarring tones. 3: Some persons both inside and out of Coventry have taken it to seriously.

A weakness of trying to bring Coventry stories to fandom is shown by Felz's story. It is damned by being set in to rich a background.. He rattles off names and places that mean a grate deal to me, because I know Coventry. Just as if he were to real off place names in Los Angeles.. But unless you have been there, they are just names. And Bruce doesn't have the space to build up the background that is needed for the non-Coventrain to "see" what is happening. Take the example of a good historical novel. You don't really need to know anything about history or the land to enjoy it.. If you do, it is that much more enjoyable.. The same *should be true* of stories about Coventry. But this, as with all the others I have read, *pre-supposes* to much information about the background.. I'm sure this is what has turned some fans against Coventry. --- I don't mean this as a criticism of the story, which I enjoyed, but a general comment of stories from Coventry. If they appear in gen-zines, they should be self-contained and not depented on background material not available to the reader.

Ted is back in form with his report on how a TV film is made. He may call it blowing his own horn, I call it a intertaining look at how things are done. And as usual Ted has a easy going style to his writing, and he packs in so many delightfull asides that the whole thing comes off with the same friendly air as if Ted were setting across a table from you telling it to you in person. (Gor! Fourty-five words -- thats to many.) Ted is a natural born story teller, and should be good in broadcasting.

Bob's reviews are better this issue, but still lack something. I'd probably have more to say, if I dissgreed with what he did say.

DNP this bit-- but T.Carr's letter is both good and sad. You no doubt notice that he and White have used every chance to get in a dig at the LA gang, even while prasing you. Yet when they cover other subjects they show the sharp thinking and good writing ability that have gotten them the fame they deserve. A sad case of being peggidice redden. A weakness of to many fans, and I suppose I've got them too -- though naturally I'm blind to them. But it is to bad. It is to bad that this "thing" seems to be growing up about LA fans. Maybe you, by being your self, can help change this fealing..

Your letter dept. is starting to hit it's stride--and the value of Sal is shown by the names there in. (That is, it is judged valuable by the BNF who write) A good many points of fan history brought up and cleared up. I know this is one of your interest, and you seem to be able to ask the questions, or say the right thing, to bring forth responses.. But then we gray beards always like to spin tales of our youth.

You have atleast two letters that made me sputter a little, and I admire your restraint in your reply. Some people don't read before they write (and I may not read deeply enough, at times) while others read more into things than was meant.. You ought to get a few howels of protest for the next issue.. -- And, Oh, say, Farmer did lay it down didn't he. - As I've just commented to Warhoon, it is all right if Campbell says fans opinion doesn't count. Maybe we aren't a representative number of the readers. But when some of the best professional authors says his policy is all wrong, it seems to me he ought to listen.

You could have given Schultz a column, for all the space he took.. And worth it too.. Gave me a pace it did though, to think of them poor Easterners who don't often get a chance to look at stars without a lot of lights around to muck things up. -- I know what he means though, about feeling like you are falling into space. It also makes one feel so awfully small. But it makes you feel you are part of something pretty big, at the same time. While I think of myself as a conservative agnostic, being alone under the stars gives me the feeling that there is a great power behind all this. That it couldn't "just happen." It makes me feel more religious than being in any church ever has.. and that isn't churches fault..

But it is late, and I feel like I'm coming down with a cold. Better get to bed and rest, if I'm going to be in good form when Ethel gets here..

Best wishes,

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THP this bit-- but T.Garr's letter is both good and sad. You no doubt notice that he and White have used every chance to get in a dig at the LA gang, even while praising you. Yet when they cover other subjects they show the sharp thinking and good writing ability that have gotten them the fame they deserve. A sad case of being prejudiced indeed. A weakness of to many fans, and I suppose I've got them too -- though naturally I'm blind to them. But it is to bad. It is to bad that this "thing" seems to be growing up about LA fans. Maybe you, by being your self, can help change this feeling..