

NEVER MIND THE
FANZINES --
SAVE THE
WHISKEY
!!!



SCIENCE-FICTION
FIFTY YEARLY

A Dialogue of Vast Import

- 1st Neo: Hey, look -- Bloch and Tucker got out a fanzine!
- 2nd Neo: So what? Those two guys are always getting out Science Fiction World, or whatever they call it; you know -- that thing that don't even have Rotsler nudes in it.
- 1st Neo: But this one is different!
- 2nd Neo: You mean it has got Rotsler nudes? Where is it? Lemme see quick, goshwowboyohboy ...
- 1st Neo: No such luck. This here now fanzine is called Science Fiction Fifty-Yearly. It seems they suddenly discovered that between the two of them they have spent fifty years in fandom together, with time off for good behavior.
- 2nd Neo: That figures.
- 1st Neo: Well, anyway, they thought why not get out a special fanzine to sort of celebrate the occasion?
- 2nd Neo: This calls for a celebration?
- 1st Neo: Well, they knew damned well nobody else would do any celebrating.
- 2nd Neo: And why should fans celebrate? What have Bloch and Tucker ever done anyway? They never wrote an Immortal Storm or put out a Fancyclopedia or an Index like Don Day, or ran a convention, or did any of the really important things which have contributed to the progress of fandom in the past 25 years. What have they got to brag about?
- 1st Neo: No, you misunderstand. This fanzine of theirs is not offered in a spirit of personal pride. It's offered in gratitude for having managed to stick around so long and enjoying so much of their stay.
- 2nd Neo: Okay. What's in the cotton-picking thing?
- 1st Neo: Oh, some new stuff that sort of explains what fandom was like in the bad old days, and some reprints of their earlier work. Not necessarily their "best" or their "funniest" -- just typical things which may convey the flavor of the past.
- 2nd Neo: So who needs it?
- 1st Neo: Nobody, really. And yet it does serve a purpose. If you don't want to read it, at least you can sprinkle the cover with a coating of sugared glue. You'd be surprised at the number of flies you can catch that way!
- 2nd Neo: So okay, pass me the glue bottle.

Science Fiction Fifty-Yearly is published by Bob Bloch and Bob Tucker of Weyauwega, Wisconsin and Bloomington, Illinois, respectively. It is intended for the November, 1957 fapa mailing. Perhaps our children will publish the next issue for us in 2007, A.D. Up, First Fandom!

cover by Plato Jones
duplicating by A.S. Dick
(our grateful thanks to them)
(ye are welcome, bob)

Fable

(from Le Zombie, July, 1948)

I found him on the beach at Toronto, staring sullenly out across the blue-grey waters of the lake and idly kicking sand with his foot. Without a doubt he is morose, and furthermore sad.

"Why, hello there, Bigfan," I say in some surprise.

He glares at me. At length he say ungraciously, "H'lo."

"Why are you down here at the beach staring sullenly out across the blue-grey waters of the lake, Bigfan? Why aren't you down at the convention hall, basking in the spotlight that is rightfully yours?"

"Convention -- bah!" he sneer downwind. "That, a convention?"

"Well, Bigfan," I ask in wonder, "whatever do you mean?"

He make a dramatic gesture with his hand. "Those sissies think they are having a convention. What is happening?"

"Well," I answer, "when I come past the door this morning en-route to breakfast after an all-night poker game in which I lost six bucks, they were preparing to have a convention."

"Like clockwork, wasn't it?" he sneer upwind. "Sissy stuff! Only sissies hanging around. It ain't like it was in the old days."

"Aha, Bigfan," I ejaculate, "now I know where you are aiming."

"Precisely," he state in great diction. "Now when you and me was young -- they had conventions in them days! Do you see any exclusion acts up here? Do you see anybody getting tossed out on the sidewalk, or kicked out a window? Do you see anybody calling the cops because somebody else refuses to leave? No."

"It is sad, eh Bigfan?"

"Fandom is shot," he assert with a crosswind sneer. "Fandom is gone to the dogs. Nothing exciting happens anymore. Nobody sends obscene Christmas cards these days; nobody sends spelling books to fanzine editors anymore; nobody advocates Technocracy these days; nobody throws delegates out on the sidewalks. I am disenchanted."

"Well, Bigfan, there may be something in what you say. But still, they have been some feuds ..."

"Pah!" he cut me off. "Sissy feuds, revolving about some girl, some skirt. Remember the rough-and-tumble six-shooter feuds we had in the old days? Now that was the stuff! Sissies, now -- a pack of ladyfingers. I'm wasting my time up here."

"Things is a bit tame," I admit to him. "I come out for a breath of fresh air, myself. All they do today is talk ... they're talking about something called nuclear physics. Over my head. Not like the old days, eh Bigfan?"

He sneer his answer.

-Hoy Ping Pong

Bang!

Listen my children and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Spaceman Revere.
He stepped on the rockets -- they're searching yet,
Some practical joker had plugged a jet.

- by Len Marlow

Le Zombie, September 1945

THE PAST RECAPTURED

(or) Down Memory Lane With Butterfly Net and Restraint-Jacket

by Robert Bloch

Ever so often, while attending a Science Fiction Convention, I am approached by a teen-age neo-fan.

If the neo-fan happens to be female, I immediately demand to inspect her birth certificate before allowing our acquaintance to ripen.

If (as is usually the disappointing case) the fan is male, we generally exchange a few words; and usually to my profit, since I've picked up a lot of dirty words that way.

But if we talk for any length of time, sooner or later the neo-fan gets around to asking the fatal question: "Tell me, Dad -- what was it like to be a fan 'way back in the early days?"

By 'the early days' he's usually talking about the 1931-35 period, known to us historians as the Dark Ages. What kind of a world was it?

Jayne Mansfield hadn't been born, nor Anita Ekberg whelped. Marilyn Monroe was still virgo intacto, according to many of her biographers. Gertrude M. Carr was not yet a grandmother; presumably she was reveling in the administration of Herbert Hoover and preparing to go underground as Franklin Delano Roosevelt assumed office in March of '33.

Can you imagine what it was like to live in a world where Elvis Presley didn't even exist? Talk about a sense of wonder -- we had it!

It was a world in which the Model T still roamed the streets in plenitude. There were horse-troughs, too, although these were fast disappearing along with such other primitive manifestations as organ grinders, junk wagons, derby hats, armbands, detachable collars, wind-up phonographs, Irish Mails for the kiddies, and headphones on radio sets. Radio sets (again, for the benefit of you late-comers) are pretty hard to describe. The nearest I can come to it is to ask you to imagine a TV set with a broken picture tube. Like ours, after Elvis appears.

Perhaps you can manage to visualize this -- but can you visualize an entire universe operating full blast without the presence of Lee Hoffman, Harlan Ellison, Peter Vorzimer, Bob Silverberg, Jim Harmon, Gregg Calkins or Peter Graham? A world in which Sam Moskowitz was still speaking with a soprano voice?

If you can, don't bother to read any farther. Just set your visualization down in book form and call it Utopia.

Actually, I'm only kidding. One of the greatest defects of fandom and faning in the Thirties was the lack of just such an assortment as the above-named. Anyone who has ever read *The Immortal Storm* will realize that early fandom was pretty much of a paper-airplane proposition; flimsily constructed and incapable of soaring to any heights.

It wasn't until midway in the decade that fans actually began to organize into clubs holding regular meetings -- and then, only in a few major metropolitan areas. The great preoccupation of the time was not with writing or communication but with reading and collecting; the social aspect was dominated by politics and feuding. The era of fanish friendship seems to have come later, when conventions began and fans started visiting one another.

When I entered fandom, the Great Depression raged; it was the time of the Lindbergh Kidnapping, of Prohibition and Rudy Vallee and other evils; of Bobby Jones and Technocracy and Bank Nite at the movies.

I got in through the back door, as a fan correspondent of H.P.

Lovecraft and the Lovecraft Circle ... but although pieces of mine saw print as early as 1934 in Crawford's Marvel Tales and Hornig's Fantasy Fan, I met more pros than fans. The only fan I did meet, prior to 1937 was the fabulous Jack Darrow, who dropped in for a visit one Sunday afternoon in Milwaukee. Darrow vied in those days for the dubious distinction of 'Number One Fan' and I felt properly humble in his presence. He name-dropped all over the place, as I well recall, because after he left I had to sweep up all those names from off the living-room rug.

So while I gradually got personally acquainted with Stanley Weinbaum, Ray Palmer, Ralph Milne Farley, Farnsworth Wright, Otto Binder, August Derleth, Donald Wandrei, Julius Schwartz, Mort Weisinger and Otis Adelbert Kline -- all of whom I met in either Milwaukee or Chicago in the mid-Thirties -- I knew nothing of fandom.

That's because, aside from a few fanzines, there was little way in which I could get acquainted with the field. If any APAs existed, they were APathetic. It wasn't until 1937 when I went to California to visit Henry Kuttner, that I learned more about the fan field, at first hand. On that visit I met C.L. Moore, Fritz Leiber and Bob Olsen --- but I also had my baptism of fire, my first visit to a fan club.

It was, of course, the LASFS, and there I became acquainted with such long-ago and far-away figures as Fred Shroyer, Russ Hodgkins, Jim Mooney, Morojo, and some pesty teen-age kid name of Bradbury. The meeting was presided over by a Mr. Ackerman, who has since won some fame as a movie reviewer.

In 1939 I visited New York, but met only pros. Nobody so much as invited me to a Hydra Club orgy.

News of the first convention failed to stir me. The second affair, held in nearby Chicago, tempted me a bit -- but I hardly felt I could afford the fifteen or twenty bucks for a weekend.

So during that faroff decade, I went my proud and lonely way ... reading and writing for the prozines ... turning out bits and pieces for such fannish efforts as Unusual Stories (believe me, they were!) and Fantasy and Science Fantasy Correspondent; a crudzine to end all crudzines called The Phantagraph, which was edited at various times by a certain Wollheim and a certain Kyle.

Looking back on those early years, I can detect only one glimmer of consolation. As yet, I had never run into Bob Tucker.

When at last I did meet him -- but that another, and far dirtier story.

Fanzines of the Thirties

The Comet	(Ray Palmer, 1930)
The Planet	(Allen Glasser, 1930)
The Planetoid	(Bob Tucker, 1932)
Cosmology	(Ray Palmer, 1930-32)
The Time Traveller	(Schwartz & Weisinger, 1932-23)
Science Fiction Digest	(Schwartz & Ruppert, 1932-34)
Science Fiction	(Siegal & Schuster, 1932)
Cosmic Stories	(Siegal & Schuster, ??)
The Fantasy Fan	(Charles Hornig, 1934-35)
International Observer	(Will Sykora, 1934)
The Fourteen Leaflet	(Bill Dillenback, 1935-37)
The Brooklyn Reporter	(George Gordon Clark, 1935-36)

The Poor Man's Jamdat Nasr

(or, as Liebscher would say, At Bay With The Ages)

by Bob Tucker

I glory in one thing.

I am now able to stand upright (no mean feat in itself) and on equal footing with Gertrude Carr; able to stare her full in the face without flinching. No more will her throaty growls of seniority frighten me; no more can she pull rank with impunity. In times past she has frequently taunted we lesser mortals with the fact that she is A Grandmother, and somehow A Thing Apart. Very well. Let it be said that my Thing Is Now Apart too, for I am a grandfather. All fandom will be plunged into war!

I wasn't always a grandfather.

Once upon a time, slightly more than a quarter - century ago, I was a runny-nosed, almost-neo-fan who window-shopped the magazine marts because I couldn't afford to buy a copy. I even lacked a dime to buy Dime Detective. No doubt the depression cruelly shaped my innocent young mind and turned me into the voracious capitalist that I am today. But things changed. A stack of old Argosys discovered in a closet set me on the primrose path to hell, and Ray Cummings (rest his shade!) was the man responsible for my downfall. His serial, 'Brand New World', opened up a brand new world of reading and from that point the fall was spectacular. In 1929 and 1930, travelling theatrical troupes would leave behind occasional copies of Weird Tales, and I snatched those. One or two years later I discovered Amazing and Astounding on sale, but at fifteen or twenty cents a copy I had to be content with looking at the Wesso and Morey covers, and fingering the pages.

By 1932, I was rolling in wealth: I had a job paying me the magnificent sum of six dollars a week, and the newsstands took a beating! In some long-forgotten 1932 issue of Astounding you will find the notation "Other good letters received from Bob Tucker". And gosh-wowboyohboy, I was a faaan! I didn't invent the term neo-fan, but undoubtedly I was guilty then of every crime ascribed to them today. I pestered my betters with stupid letters, I demanded free sample copies, I mailed trash to every fanzine then alive, I craved to see my name in print, and I yearned to visit other faaans. Real gone, that boy.

And---brash, foolish child that I was---I hurriedly produced my very first fanzine that winter. Distributed in November 1932, or thereabouts, The Planetoid was a midget-sized printed four-sheet chock full of "scientific facts" to stun the fan world. And stun them it did. The offering met a thundering reception. So thundering, in fact, that I lost the courage to distribute the second issue, and slunk away to hide. Thus ended my first publishing spree.

They weren't called 'fanzines' then; Louis Russell Chauvenet didn't invent the term until ten years later, but a flock of the things must have come my way to provide the inspiration for my own. Scattered throughout this issue are the names of many of those prehistoric mags. And after them, the deluge!

As best as can be determined now from scanty files, my first published appearance (other than The Planetoid, and pro letter columns) was in Charles Hornig's The Fantasy Fan for September 1933. That issue carried the first of a series of articles entitled 'Science Fiction in English Magazines'; the articles appeared intermittently over the 18-

issue life-span of the Fan, interspersed with book reviews and "funny" pieces. Hoy Ping Pong was also spawned in the same publication-- "How To Write a STF Story" was printed in November 1933. The Chinaman and myself were very small potatoes in that crowd, for Hornig consistently published names like Lovecraft, Derleth, Barlow, Searight, Binder, Doc Kellar, Searles ... and that giant, Bloch. Names to contend with!

Postoffice Box 260 came into my life about the summer of 1931. I was living in a boarding house possessed of a nosey landlady, and when my first fan letter arrived (from Ted Lutwiniak of Jersey City) she was overly curious. With the coming of the second letter she remarked the heavy amount of 'foreign mail' I was receiving. 'Foreign mail' was anything from out of the county. To still her tongue and to frustrate her, I rented 260. I kept that box for twenty years, finally changing to a larger one in 1951 to accomodate my legion of admirers. All sorts of things appeared in 260 during those twenty years. Once there was a bottle of mouthwash. Yellow, smelly mouthwash. It had not been wrapped, nor mailed to me, but was simply there. I let it be. By the next day it had disappeared. Once Dale Hart mailed me a black widow spider from Texas ---- suitably preserved and boxed of course.

And then there was the baffling enigma of the bricks. I once suggested in an article of protest against convention prices that fans could save money by contributing bricks and building their own hotel, moving it with them from one city to another. I suggested that the bricks be sent to the con committee, that they may get busy forthwith. Being the perverse creatures that they are, the fans sent me the bricks instead. Week after week, Box 260 delivered up its quota of bricks. Most of them came from Ohio and were the work of Steve Schultheis; but a couple of jokers sent me envelopes stuffed with straw, and told me to make my own bricks. The boys at the postoffice got a large charge from this campaign; I like to imagine they wrote it up in their Mailman's Gazette, and that in due time a postal inspector got around to investigating me. (Another byproduct was the magnificent plans drawn up for 'The Tucker Hotel' by Willis, Shaw & Co., and circulated some time ago)

For a number of years I was the bewildered recipient of curious literature from England; catalogs and circulars calling my attention to wonderful bargain sales in 'rare literature' now in progress. Some kind friend over there had given my name to a number of pornography dealers, who proceeded to bombard me. Possibly the most touching missive Box 260 ever delivered up was that one from the mother of a very young fan, a little hellion; she begged me to shut her boy's water off, to persuade him to stop spending money foolishly on fanzines, stop the dozens of letters he mailed almost daily, to drop fandom and get on with his tardy studies. (I wonder what I did about that matter??)

One day, Box 260 had an Important Message for me. A Big Name Editor from New York would be passing thru town on a certain date, the message said, and he would like to drop off the train for a few moments to chat with me. Train and arrival time was given. Naturally I was there to meet the Big Man. I met that train, and the next one, and the next one -- I met every train that day, until The Midnight Special went thru fifteen hours later. I'd been had.

My first genuine fan meeting did occur at that same station, a few years later. Charles Hornig came to town, enroute to Los Angeles. I believe that this was about the time his tenure as Gernsback's editor was fading; he was transferring his editorship from New York to the Coast. He didn't last long after that. At about the same time, Bill Dillenback came down from Chicago. Bill was the dictator of his chap-

ter of the old Science Fiction League, as I was the dictator of mine, and we met for some fool reason or other. I was a 101% faaan. Somewhat later in the Thirties, a group of Big Wheel eastern fans made the trek to Bloomington to pay homage to the Master; Don Wollheim, John B. Michel and Dick Wilson came a'knocking at my door, and we turned out a one-shot -- except that the one-shot was later (that is, after they had gone) called Le Zombie #7, and mailed out thru regular channels.

* * *

Journalistic Triumphs

Having collected my courage over the years, and having simply outlasted some of my critics, a second fan magazine was launched in the spring of 1935. The D'Journal was the official organ of The Society For The Prevention of Wire Staples in Scientifiction Magazines. It saw only two issues. It was mimeographed for me by George Gordon Clark, of Brooklyn, who promptly handed over extra copies to Don Wollheim ---- and the bloody staple war was on.

"Nincompoop!" shrieked a D'Journal editorial (except that it was spelled 'niniconpoop' that year). "poor hapless moron ... inbecile ... spying, falsehoods, mudslinging ... nitwit cannit fight fair or even clean!"

(The same editorial pointed out pridefully that true-blue Staple Men were somewhat lily-pure. However despicable the enemy might be, we fought the clean fight, we slung no mud, we called no names.)

And the enemy bulletin, the Polymorphaneucleated Leucocyte, promptly retorted: "This mephitic mass of animated nitrogenous matter! Greatest mass of putrefaction ... Tucker's eternal bullyragging ... he is a hypocrite!"

And so it went. You'd of thought we were sore about something.

Wollheim easily bested me in the initial broadsides because of his superior lexicon. The war was fought in fanzines, in letters, in letter columns of the promags, and in clubrooms. It rambled on for almost a year before the promags banished it from their columns. That first issue of The D'Journal named 45 active members, and oddly enough, three are still active today: Robert Lowndes, Milt Rothman and myself. Another four are dead: LeRoy Bashore, Joe Hatch, F. Orlin Tremaine and Farnsworth Wright. The remainder have scattered to the four winds, and I sometimes think of them and wonder what they're doing now. J. Harvey Haggard, where are you? Joe Watson? Bob Anglin? Irving Kosow?

But what did the Society propose to use in place of staples?

"At previous convention the SPWSSTFM voted to have the following magazines bound in the following manner: Astounding Stories to be bound with flavored chewing gum (flavor to be decided on by members' letters to the editor. Write yours now!) Amazing Stories to be bound with nuts and bolts (to encourage readers to invent things). Wonder Stories to be bound with life savers (pages to be clipped ((I meant punched)) and the life savers inserted loose-leaf fashion). Weird Tales to be bound with plutonian brussel sprouts (which, according to author J.H. Haggard, caused the hair on the nape of the neck to lie down and also produced a drowsy feeling)." It was all so simple, you see.

But the enemy had their own blue-sky plan:

"We are not mere reactionaries, content to rest on the past. We desire to go ahead and do our share to bring back prosperity. Our

platinum plan consists merely in having our science fiction magazines bound with platinum wire staples. If they do this, prosperity will return. After reading your mag, it will be possible to remove the staples and sell (them) for far more than you paid for the magazine. In this manner, you will become more prosperous, the circulations ... will rise into the millions, money will flow again in the coffers of the people, (and) prosperity will return and progress will receive a fresh spurt that shall take us to the stars!"

Prosperity finally returned to America, but somebody else's war was responsible. The Staple fracas officially ended abruptly early in 1936 when Tremaine banned it and me from Astounding's letter column. (Is there a fan alive who has not heard of the first death hoax?) Thus ended my second fanzine, a publication that made a slightly larger dent upon fandom's hide than had my first. But the Big Noise was coming --- the whirlwind ultra-fannish activity was just around the corner. Mine detractors (and they are many, bless them!) can curse the day Wollheim failed to down me. Again it was a matter of outlasting the critics. In the closing months of 1938, I joined FAPA (for the first time); in the fall and winter months of that year, and the spring of 1939, all of the following were spewed forth:

- Two or more issues of Science Fiction Variety (for Fapa)
- The first seven issues of Le Zombie
- Three issues of a new and completely different D'Journal
- Two editions of The Yearbook of 1938 (a promag index)
- A one-shot entitled Invisible Stories
- One or more issues of Nova (a co-published venture)
- Three or more issues of Science-Fantasy Advertiser

I must have been nuts.

And perhaps I was, but it was fun at the time. The Fapa title didn't last very long --- perhaps two or three numbers in all, and then I went on to another one. LeZ did last a spell -- the 64th issue was circulated in these bundles about two years ago. The three issues of D'Journal (this was the second use of the name) were not connected with the old Staple War, but were humor magazines. That Yearbook was, I believe, the very first promag index to be published. Nova was a mistake; it was intended to be "the Esquire of fan magazines," was published by Sully Roberds and myself, and was a flop. The Advertiser had no connection with the later Willmorth, Squires and Smith titles of similar name, but was content to publish small notices for other fanzines. One issue was a whopping financial success. Street & Smith took a full page to advertise a new magazine they were launching, a pulp to be called Unknown. The gala first issue featured an EF Russell novel, "Sinister Barrier." Street & Smith thought enough of it to buy a \$2 page of me, and we went to press with for-real, paid pro advertising.

Despite what happened to LeZ later (in those days it was merely a throw-away gag sheet), the D'Journals were the big things, so eagerly striving to be The Number One Fanzine. (Hollow honor! But how hard we fought for it!) Ray Bradbury was one of our star contributors, but no one then realized the shape of things to come. This was three years before he had even appeared in "Probability Zero." Bradbury's pieces were punnish articles on the Los Angeles club, on promag contents, and daffy definitions. (Sample: "Rocket -- what the people upstairs make a lot of.") And needless to say, Hoy Ping Pong was his usual blatant self all over the place. Keeping company with these distinguished gentlemen were Harry Warner, Jim Taurasi, Jack Speer, Forry Ackerman,

Myrtle Douglas, Olan F. Wiggins, Richard Wilson, Dan McPhail, and the inevitable names which have now vanished into limbo: Avery, Fleming, Hart, Strothers, Cunningham, Namahara, etc. (Where DO old fans go to die when they manage to evade Fapa?)

Speer did a burlesque entitled "Our O.P.U. Poll" which is still fresh enough to bear reprinting; Wilson told about "The Care & Feeding of Vampires"; McPhail won the coveted D'J cover-symbol (A Nova Story) with "A Letter From Injun Joe"; while Harry Warner gave advice to hopeful hacks on his page called D'Journal Author Service. Some sample punch lines recommended by Harry include:

"Good heavens! The thing was a robot!"

"The earth hung like a great green ball in space."

"I, an Earthman, was an exact twin for this Martian prince!"

"Mortimer, I want you to meet my niece, Mary Ann. She helps me around the laboratory a bit."

Ah, happy days. They just don't make fandom like that anymore. War came to Europe in the summer of 1939, and the fans and their magazines of Britain began to slip away. The same war came to America in December, 1941, and the same happenings were repeated here. Those of us who remained behind, still publishing, adopted the practice of sending free copies to fans in service; and some of us who remained behind also adopted the practice of publishing our draft status in each issue -- so that readers would not be caught entirely unprepared if the next issue never appeared. LeZombie, which had become a bi-weekly subscription paper by the end of '39, now undertook the task of keeping up with everybody. A single issue would list as many as 63 names in the armed forces, not counting the pros. (Examples: Pvt. David Kyle, Cpl. Martin Alger, Pvt. Dean Boggs, Lt. Fred Shroyer, Pfc Ackerman...) Another practice of those middle years was the annual Fanzine Index. The 1942 index, for instance, lists 61 fanzine titles, and the number of issues each published that year. The 1942 leaders were:

Fantasy Fiction Field (Julie Unger's newspaper) 44 issues

Nebula (James Hevelin) 13 issues

MFS Bulletin (John Gergen) 11 issues

Futurian War Digest (Mike Rosenblum) 9 issues

Light (Les Croutch) 9 issues

Voice of the Imagi-Nation (Ackerman & Morojo) 7 issues

Spaceways (Harry Warner) 6 issues

California Mercury (Joe Fortier) 5 issues

LeZ, now publishing bi-monthly, had 6 numbers plus supplements. Jim Taurasi was present with 2 issues of his Fantasy Reporter. Fran Laney managed 2 issues of The Acolyte, and Al Ashley turned out 4 numbers of Bonfire, which was the N3F poopsheet that year. Phil Bronson was publishing The Fantasite; Art Widner doing Fanfare; Larry Shaw was present with Leprechaun; the team of Ackerman-Willmorth-Joquel was publishing Shangri-L'Affairs; Harry Turner was producing the incomparable Zenith in England; and Jack Speer gave fandom a one-shot, The True Tale of the Spiritrip.

And so I drifted through the Thirties, into and through the Forties, practically falling into the Fifties; with cane, beard and my bifocals I'm peering at the Sixties. I began as a big-mouthed fan -- and will probably end in the same manner. There could be worse fates, and someday some delving scholar may find some of them.

No indeed, I was not always a grandfather.

I've never found science fiction, or fandom, a way of life, but there were times when I came perilously close to it. I like fandom, as any fool can plainly see, and I like the people in it. I like the nice things that have happened to some of the old fans of yesterday, and I like the nice things that are happening to science fiction today.

It pleases me to see ex-fan, ex-publisher Sam Youd selling his novels to the SatEvePost and to the movies; it pleases me to see Ray Bradbury rapidly rocketing to the top; it pleases me to see another ex-fan and ex-publisher, Fred Shroyer, now writing scholarly articles for The Saturday Review, the meanwhile holding down an English Chair at a California university. It is pleasing to see the measure of fame that has come to Arthur C. Clarke, to Dick Wilson, to Frank Robinson, to the literary agent who calls himself Scott Meredith, to Charles Beaumont, to editors such as Larry Shaw and Doc Lowndes, to critics like Damon Knight and James Blish, and to numerous fans-turned-writers. Why, even Eric Frank Russell used to publish a fanzine. It pleases me to find review papers like The Saturday Review and the New York Times reviewing the better science fiction novels in their regular columns -- and not in some special space-ship department. That is coming of age.

That's what I like about the old bunch. And those of us who are around twenty-five years from now will be able to say the same about a few of the rawest neos now blasting our sensibilities.

First Fandom is not dead!

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Cullings from Le Zombie

THE AVERAGE FAN: The average fan is aged 19 years, five months, two weeks and four days last April first. He is five feet five in height, wears his trousers just below his knees, and shaves once every two and a half months. He has eleven and two-thirds correspondents, and he answers his letters six and one-half months after receipt. (He still owes his two-thirds of a correspondent two-thirds of a letter from last Midsummer's Eve) The average fan's spectacles are five millimeters in diameter and he sports a mustache one-eighth of an inch square. He owns a seventh of a bicycle and has ridden approximately three miles on same. The tires of his seventh are punctured every nine years. The Average Fan has half a girl friend (the other half being in great demand by non fans). He spends 4,566d a week on his half-girl, and L. 11/- a month on science fiction literature. He has a bath once every fifteen days, gets a haircut every seven weeks, and cleans his teeth every fortnight. He owns one-fifteenth of a typewriter, one seventy-fifth of a car, and eats three and one-eleventh meals per day. -Don J. Cameron

(Reprinted in LeZ from Gargoyle, March 1940.)

PERSONALS: The first issue of Stunning Scientifan will carry long yarn by William Hamling, which is reprint from his school paper. * Speer and Rothman are the latest to make pilgrimage to Hagerstown. * Gerald Meader won the Krupa "Rocket Race to Luna" drawing. * Russ Hodgkins opened a sport shop in Los Angeles. * Hannes Bok, the L.A. discovered artist, now in New York with Weird Tales. * FAPA election now official: Rothman is president, Speer is vice, Madle is Sec-Treasurer, and Walter E. Marconnette is editor. * Martin Alger makes his own movies and among them is an stf cartoon in color, in which a horse rides rocket ship and rescues his master from the villain. * Harry Warner says latest Spaceways circulation is 110. * (From various 1940 issues.)

"Doctor Bloomington, I Presume?"

or How I Walked and Talked With the Master

by Robert Bloch

It would be sheer false modesty to disclaim knowledge of the fact that the names 'Bloch and Tucker' are often coupled in fandom today. Actually, they are paired so often, they sometimes sound as if they belonged together; like death and taxes, fire and brimstone, hell and damnation.

It may come as a shock to younger readers, therefore, to learn that as of 1946 --13 years after entering fandom-- I had never met Bob Tucker. Not only that, I doubt if I could have correctly identified the man.

Oh, I'd seen his name around from time to time, in various fan-zines. But if you'd pinned me down, I'd have merely been able to speak of him vaguely as a "fan," along with Trudy Hemken, Walt Coslet, and the little kids like Damon Knight and Judy Zissman.

But Fate took a hand; Fate in the somewhat unlikely form of Forrest J Ackerman. It was at his behest that I finally determined to attend my first science fiction convention -- Los Angeles, 1946.

I flew out. That is to say, I flew from Milwaukee to Chicago. That was the night when TWA grounded all its planes. So I switched to a train, and the train switched around for several days. By the time of my late arrival in L.A., Ackerman had already collapsed, and I was met at the depot by eleven other fans, one of whom owned a genuine beard. No, it wasn't Sturgeon, and it wasn't Tucker either.

Tucker, however, was very much in evidence during the ensuing three days. As I recall, neither of us put in very much time during the actual sessions of the convention. But we kept bumping into each other -- in such unlikely places as MacArthur Park, across the street from the meeting hall -- and something clicked.

I had attended this first full-fledged fan-gathering with certain misgivings. Oh, I'd expected it to be pleasant to meet and mingle with fandom, and it was; but frankly, I thought one or two such contacts would be sufficient. But there was Tucker, and there he has been ever since. Upon meeting him, I realized that finally I had found a Purpose in Life.

It was to rib Tucker.

I had discovered a scapegoat, a whipping-boy, a target for all the concentrated malice, venom and anathema in my many-vented spleen.

Yes, thanks (or bad cess) to Tucker, I've stuck around ever since. During the past eleven years I have dutifully shown up at 8 national conventions and 5 Midwescons, solely for the purpose of scourging Tuck.

We have shared the role of Guest of Honor; we have shared the platform; we have shared chips and ice cubes and Jim Beam and the privilege of listening to George Nims Raybin rising to a point of order. There's absolutely nothing we haven't gone through together.

Together we braved the wilds of Joliet, the fastnesses of upper Michigan, the iniquitous sinks of Chicago. Together we have gone to Niagara Falls ((please reassure our readers that we aren't married!)) and avoided going to Mammoth Cave. I have invaded his home and --- stretching human endurance to the uttermost --- allowed him to invade mine. I have even co-edited with the man.

There is only one word to describe my sentiments as I contem-

plate our combined fifty years of fanning and our long mutual association.

That word is dismay.

CASSANDRA

(a poem in blankety-blank verse, from Vega #10, August, 1953)

I remember the prophets without honor
 And how they used to skulk down alleys,
 Hiding the magazines under their coats,
 Ripping off the lurid covers,
 Apologizing softly for their reading taste
 Until the wine ran defiant in their veins.
 Then, "The day will come," they said.
 "The day will come, and surely, when we prevail;
 Our tastes, our dicta reign supreme."
 They gnawed stale bread and their wine was poor
 (What can you buy for half-a-cent a word?)
 But never faltered in their faith.
 They spoke of brave new worlds and things to come
 And dreamed of sainthood in the latter day.
 Well, they spoke truly. Look about and see.
 It's all yours, upon a silver platter.
 The literary critics bless, the readers buy,
 The editors and publishers defer.
 Trimmed edges? So be it, as ye wish.
 Artistic covers, permanently glazed?
 Why not? All this and increased wordage too.
 Let all the world take note of our reviews;
 The leading journals of opinion honor us
 And Hollywood lends three dimensions
 In glorious Technicolor.
 Book-of-the-Month, television, foreign rights,
 Royalties, bonuses, pocket-book assured,
 Contests, awards, banquets, adoration
 And the accolade of luncheon at the Stork.
 It's here, it's not a dream, it's true!
 The prophets are not without profits today
 And there's talk of further boom and further fields,
 Of influence subtly wielded, opinion deftly moulded.
 Why should we stop at this?
 Go on now, lead the way!
 They wrote of nuclear fission, and it came to pass.
 They postulate new science of the mind.
 They need not falter: keep it up!
 Predict new government,
 Technological, authoritarian,
 And who knows where it can all end?
 Perhaps the alleys lead to final thrones!
 Write on, dream on, speed the day.
 But wait -- one final prophecy!
 Ere Science and its minions reign supreme
 And smugly mark Millenium's approach --
 Cock an ear. Do you detect a distant sound?
 A bang? A whimper?
 I skulk down alleys, but I hear it now ...

-Robert Bloch

POOR PONG'S ALMANAC

(from D'Journal for May 1939)

Being thee record of thee events of past historie, together with thee phases of ye moon, and important informations.

Ye Monthe of March, in thee year of Our Lord, 2039 A.D.

1	W	Ye month roars in like wild rocket. Sure to exit like ye lamb.
2	T	First rocket ship takes off for trip to moon, 1995.
3	F	First Rescue Expedition takes off to rescue first rocket ship.
4	S	Full moon provides fine target for rocket ships.
5	S	Second Rescue Expedition takes off to rescue first Rescue Exp.
6	M	Heathern Chinese raise fund for starving Americans, 2001.
7	T	Europe sends missionaries to natives in Chicago area, 2004.
8	W	First rocket ship returns from moon trip. Reports moon populated by beautiful girls. Their males had been wiped out.
9	T	Half-million men desert homes. President declares emergency.
10	F	Gov. Ackerman of California frees condemned man on his promise to immediately take up Esperanto, 1977.
11	S	Prisoner returns pardon, requests death.
12	S	First Rescue ship returns with half-million disgusted men. Reports "girls" were only a mirage.
13	M	Second Rescue ship not returning. Mirages delightful.
14	T	Moon in last quarter. So are mirages.
15	W	New York native sells Brooklyn Bridge to missionary, 2005. The missionary returns home, bearing prize.
16	T	Major Bowes awards grand prize to first Martian crooner, 2030.
17	F	Government worried over sudden influx of singing Martians.
18	S	Moon waxing, mirages are not. Rioting reported.
19	S	Florida fan announces new fanzine and is promptly jailed, 1950.
20	M	Blue Monday. Astounding ceases weekly publication, 1967.
21	T	Amazing announced great surprise in next issue; declares it will be the greatest thing in science fiction in forty years! 1945.
22	W	Fan delegation visits Amazing; warn editor building will be blown up if 'surprise' is another companion magazine.
23	T	Publishing house blown up.
24	F	Moon is, mirages aren't. Malcontents coming home.
25	S	Scientists discover 'mole men' living underground. Wonder Stories immediately sends agent to form chapter of S.F. League. 1983
26	S	Mole men chase agent topside; deny they want the comforts and blessings of civilization.
27	M	Florida discovered, 1513. Congress returns it to Spain, 1954. Fans protest; are put in concentration camp.

- 28 T Los Angeles natives roast and eat missionary, 2003.
 29 W Los Angeles natives have big bellyache.
 30 T France declares all Los Angeles natives to be barbarians; recalls missionaries; natives light bonfires in celebration.
 31 F Ye monthe of March exits like ye lamb Pong predicted.

POLL RESULTS

(Following are the results of a poll taken by Art Widner, and published in Le Zombie for December, 1940.)

Forry Ackerman	538	Spaceways	252
Bob Tucker	446	Sun Spots	182
Sam Moskowitz	395	Stardust	160
Doc Lowndes	322	Le Zombie	153
Harry Warner	311	Snide	133
Don Wollheim	236	Fantasy News	130
Will Sykora	204	Pluto	128
James Taurasi	158	Voice of I-M	119
Ray Van Houten	152	Comet	106
Bob Madle	136	Alchemist	99

In re, Joe Fann

Joe Fann, a once-sacred name, but now one kicked about by green neo-fans ignorant of the fine traditions of fandom, was born in Box 260. Joe first saw the light of day in the pages of Le Zombie, in 1940. He was an anonymous person who scribbled anonymous little notes to the magazine, commenting on various items in the previous issue, or on the fans themselves of that bygone day. In short, if there was any humorous or treacherous work to be done, Joe leaped into the breach. For quite some time he was no more than a figment of the imagination, until there suddenly arrived in 260 a series of postcards mailed from several cities across the country -- each signed 'Joe Fann'. This has been attributed to Elmer Perdue, who was travelling at the time. A sampling of Joe Fann-mail follows:

"Anybody here wanna buy a slightly used Esperanto course, cheap?

"Bigawd, Tuck, they got me! Signed up for a seven-year hitch -- busy digging trenches on the USS Texas."

"There is no truth to the rumor that John Campbell is an alto-gether lovely little chap, but slightly wacky."

"Hey, Tuck, are you a Number Fifteen fan?"

"Hey, Tuck! Notice that the fans, realizing it is impossible to oust Ackerman, no longer try to be #1 fan, but are content to concentrate on becoming Superman?"

In those far off days, each and every line Meant Something, but don't ask (at this late date) what the secret meanings might be. A few of the more esoteric lines explain themselves to me, but explaining 'em to you would require the next several pages. You shoulda been there!

JUST BEFORE THE BATTLE, MOTHER: "Believe me there is absolutely no feud of any kind going on here in Chicago!" -LeZ, June 1940.

POE AND ME

(from Vanations, July 1953)

In recent months, the science fiction world has been set back on its heels by one of the strangest writing combinations ever to sell a story. Separately the two collaborators are well-known and well-liked, but when they got together and wrote "The Lighthouse" for Fantastic ... then it was something indeed. Never before have Robert Bloch and Edgar Allan Poe collaborated together. To bring you the inside truth ... the story behind the story, I have taken the liberty of questioning Mister Bloch in regard to it. My questions and his answers are listed below.

--Norman G. Browne

- Q: In general, how did you like collaborating with Mr. Poe?
 A: Fine. He didn't ask for a split on the check.
 Q: Did you experience any trouble while collaborating with Mr. Poe?
 A: Not as much as I usually have when I've attempted to work with other amateurs.
 Q: During the collaboration, did you find Mr. Poe to be temperamental?
 A: Quite the contrary. He was so quiet I scarcely knew he was around.
 Q: Did Mr. Poe have any eccentricities?
 A: Well, one thing ... he kept looking over his shoulder and claiming he saw a raven. This was absurd.
 Q: Do you think Mr. Poe found you eccentric in any way?
 A: He seemed to. I kept looking over my shoulder and claiming I saw a black cat. He said that was absurd.
 Q: Does Mr. Poe have any bad habits you found irritating?
 A: Yes. He drinks Amontillado right out of the bottle.
 Q: Do you have any bad habits that Mr. Poe found irritating?
 A: Yes. I drink Amontillado right out of the cask.
 Q: Was this the first time you had ever met Mr. Poe?
 A: Heavens to Betsy, no! He and I met many years ago at the house of an oldtime fan named Usher.
 Q: Did you take a liking to Mr. Poe?
 A: Of course. The kid shows promise of developing into a real writer. A sort of Edgar Allan Pro.
 Q: Do you think he took a liking to you?
 A: Why not? I'm very lovable, really. Beneath these ragged trousers there beats a heart of gold.
 Q: Did you use an orthodox method of collaboration ... each writing a word of the story in alternation? Or did you use an unorthodox method, such as writing a sentence in turn?
 A: We went further than that. We took turns writing each letter of each word. This got pretty tiresome, so along about the middle, he handled all the vowels and I handled the consonants. Then he complained of vowel trouble, so we took turns writing syllables.
 Q: Is it true that Mr. Ziff of the Ziff-Davis Publications regards Mr. Poe as "Quite the up-and-coming young writer?"
 A: Yes, but wait until he hears about Jules Verne!
 Q: A vicious rumor has it that Mr. Poe wrote the first half of "The Lighthouse" and you wrote the last half. Would you care to make a statement commenting on this?
 A: I actually wrote four-fifths of the story. Mr. Poe drank the other fifth.
 Q: Is it true that you and Mr. Poe isolated yourselves in a lighthouse while writing the story?

- A: This is an error, based on the fact that Mr. Poe and I shared the same quarters during our collaboration. What I actually said was that, "Mr. Poe and I have set up in a lighthousekeeping apartment together."
- Q: In closing, are there any further statements you wish to make regarding Mr. Poe, yourself, and your collaboration?
- A: It was a pleasant experience, but next time I'm going to collaborate with Kathleen Winsor!

- Robert Bloch

* * *

THE DEMOLISHED FAN

(from Copsia, Jan. 1954)

I happened to be going through my files the other day and when I got as far as F (for Fingernails) I came across a small section labeled FANS. This so intrigued me that I crawled right out of my files again, banging my head on the drawer, and sat down to contemplate the memorabilia of another day. (Memorabilia, for the benefit of those who came in on free passes, is a fancy name for the kind of thing you look at and say, "I wonder whatinell I saved this old crud for?")

But there it was ... a dusty, musty bundle of fanzines containing my own minute contributions to the field. Now unlike the Big Names ---men like Wilson Tucker and Dr. David H. Keller, M.D.--- I have never made a regular habit of writing for amateur publications. In recent years I've been a bit more active in this direction, having published a number of items under the pseudonyms of Walter Willis, Lee Hoffman, Harlan Ellison and Hugo Gernsback -- but no great volume. Still, I was surprised at the number of magazines represented.

And it occurred to me that, in a piddling sort of way, I had amassed through the years a sort of capsule History of Fandom. The kind of capsule you take with a glass of water and a fervent prayer that this will put you to sleep, that is. So while you're sleeping, I'm going to take a casual ramble through Memory Lane, and let the toes stub where they may.

The first item I pick up is a little orange-covered magazine titled Marvel Tales. It's a printed job from Everett, Pa., dated 1934. Its editor, William L. Crawford, put out several issues and hoped to attain a pro circulation for this combined sf-and-fantasy book. My first yarn appeared here .. along with Schuyler Miller's 4-part serial, 'The Titan', and (oops, I told you so!) David H. Keller, M.D., offering 'The Golden Bough'. The associate editors of Marvel Tales were Walter Dennis, who has gone on to distinguish himself, and one Lloyd A. Eshbach, who has completely disappeared. Anybody know whatever happened to Lloyd Eshbach?

The next effort to hand is the 1934 (December) issue of The Fantasy Fan, edited by Charles D. Hornig, who styles himself Managing Editor of Wonder Stories. It contains Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, Robert Nelson, and a particularly precious bit of Bloch, along with a column by Schwartz and Weisinger. Schwartz and Weisinger ... there are two names to conjure with! (Say 'em often enough and you get rabbits out of hats.)

These two boys were also involved in Fantasy Magazine, which boasted as the Literary Editor one Raymond A. Palmer, and as Fanta-

science Film Editor somebody named Forest A. Jackerman, or some such name. The issue of Fantasy I have here contains material by these boys ... and believe it or not, Messrs. Schwartz and Weisinger showed up in Philadelphia in 1953. It gave me a great thrill to see those venerable men pounding on the floor with their canes and waving their false teeth about with all the enthusiasm of a vigorous childhood.

In 1936 they had already attained the dignity of a 38th issue, featuring material by Eando Binder, Jack Williamson, Edmond Hamilton, Raymond Z. Gallun, John Russel Fearn, H.G. Wells, Walter Gillings, Festus Pragnell, Stanley Weinbaum, RAP, Robert E. Howard, George Allan England, Clay Ferguson Jr, Forrest J Ackerman, and yours truly, who was doing an alleged column of alleged humor.

And here's a companion to Marvel Stories, called Unusual Stories. Winter, 1935, and it contains a poem by one Robert W. Lowndes. Meanwhile a young friend of his named Donald A. Wollheim was editing The Phantagraph, the last line of which reads as follows:

"Is STF in a Rut? Left Out Till Next Issue."

There's a question for you. Is STF in a rut, in this, the year of our Lord, 1935? I dunno ... I never got the next issue.

Come to think of it, as I peruse these early offerings with their Lovecraft, Howard, Clark Ashton Smith items and frequent references to Poe and Bierce, I am forcibly reminded that fantasy was given equal or greater consideration than "STF" in those days. In early 1937, David A Kyle was putting out Phantasy World, alias Fantasmagoria, dedicated to H.P. Lovecraft, and apparently hand-printed by a victim of paralysis agitans on the back of some used cleansing-tissue. Science came first in the title of the Science-Fantasy Correspondent, but it features, heaven forbid, a something called "A Visit with H.P. Lovecraft." The 'science' is largely evident in a scholarly article by Ackerman, entitled "Will Color Kill Fantascience Films?" The writer fears that this might well be the case ... a pity he didn't stick around long enough to see 'Destination Moon' or 'When Worlds Collide', or some of the more recent efforts.

Comes now a rash of Bloomington News Letters and Voms and such-like manifestations of the early '40s. These were the days of West Coast Fandom. Through the pages of The Acolyte and Madge and Chanticleer and The Fantasite parade the names of Francis T. Laney, Samuel D. Russell, Duane W. Rimel, Carlton J. Fassbeinder, Milton A. Rothman (apparently you had to have a middle initial to get into the act.) Tucker is largely in evidence here and so is Burbee, Warner, Liebscher, Carlson, Joquel, Daugherty, Tigrina, Ashley (what -- many of you don't remember these names? These were BNFs of just eight short years ago! Apparently SF moves faster than the speed of light.)

Agonbite of Inwit, very arty, by Lowndes, in '45. And now the names grow recognizable: in 1945's Grotesque, edited by Judy Zissman, a young fan name of Larry Shaw explains the mysteries of silk screening ... a Jim Blish writes about viruses as possible zombies. Here's 1949-50 with New Purposes, edited by Fritz Leiber Jr. Never heard of that one? Well, it existed. And Don Day's Fanscient, and Fantastic Worlds ... these offer a startling contrast to the tone of early ones.

And now we're up to Sixth or at least Five-and-a-Halfish Fandom with the British invasion: Slant, Hyphen, Peri, etc. -- and the intimate magazines: Quandry, Confusion, etc. ... plus the still-current crop, SF Bulletin, Spaceship, Vega, Skyhook, Destiny, Fanwarp, Vana-tions, and so forth. ((Did you say current?))

On the face of it, one might well believe great changes have been made, great strides taken in fan publications. There are more magazines today, there are more ambitious efforts running to a hundred pages or even greater lengths. There are such mighty organs of public opinion as Oopsla! for instance.

And yet I wonder.

Today I received in the mail a magazine which shall remain nameless and blameless. It contains material from prominent fans and prominent pros. It is well-designed, with handsome artwork and even semi-legible reading content. It might easily be representative of the Fanzine of 1954.

In the back is an announcement of the next issue's line-up. The feature article, I see, will be "Is Science Fiction in a Rut?"

I think I know the answer to that one ...

- Robert Bloch

Cullings from Le Zombie

PERSONALS: Henry Kuttner enroute to New York to live. Our reporters state: "He is going into writing in earnest and he wants to be in very close contact with the editors to sell." We shudder to think of what the readers are in for! -Dec. 2, 1939.

OH-MI-GAWD DEPT: Hot news! Astonishing Stories, edited by Fred Pohl, published by Fictioneers, Inc., of 210 east 43rd St., NYC., to appear soon. 112 pages, price 10¢ !!! First issue has cover by Jack Binder, from Polton Cross story, "Chamelon Planet." Also "Half Breed" by Asimov. The companion magazine ((we just knew it!)) Superscience Stories, 128 pages, 15¢, trimmed edges, will appear soon thereafter, and will alternate with the first title. Whichever one goes over better will become a monthly. -Dec. 2, 1939.

TEE-HEE DEPT: Ray Bradbury, in a recent postcard, takes credit for introducing new Weird Tales cover artist, Hannes Bok. Also says next issue of Futuria Fantasia will have a cover by him. -Nov. 18, 1939

OPEN LETTER DEPT: Again this issue we present a cover by Le Zombie's own 'find', Damon Knight. If you don't like it, tsk ... but if you do, pause and snicker: Ray Palmer rejected it. -Feb. 24, 1940

LEZ LETTERS: "At last, after trials and tribulations beyond number, the overdue FAPA mailing, whose appearance was a most definite desideratum, has been entrusted to the hands of the postoffice. Saturday, Rothman, Speer and I piled into a car ... and headed for Philadelphia. On the 14th we succeeded in our mission, and the two-three foot pile which was the mailing rested triumphantly in the back of the car. So what happens? I put out the mailing, with assistance of the elected officers. So I decide this is damn foolishness, inertia that these officers possess; Agnew, Madle, Paltadonis, and so on. So I say to myself, 'Elmer, what the FAPA needs is someone as Editor that shall have as his creed: The Mailings Shall Go Out On Time! And so I filed as Editor on the ballot.' -Elmer Perdue, August 1940.

(This editorial note follows the above letter: To interested fans who are not members, the mailing is just out containing 18 pieces; there are only 34 members, leaving 16 vacancies open for application. ... The dues are 50¢ per year if you are interested.)

They just don't make fandom like that no more!

Is It Warm Enough For You?

(from Le Zombie, September-October, 1940)

- by Hoy Ping Pong

Foreword: Few pastimes are as entertaining and lively as giving someone the gentle joke known as 'the hotfoot'. Mr. Cyril Kornbluth, the angel from Brooklyn, has proven himself a past-master at this fiery art, as witness his antics at the Chicon upon the honest soles of several persons there. The place: convention hall in the big Hotel Chicagoan; the time: Monday evening, Sept. 2nd.

7:26 pm: Kornbluth slides up from leeward and applies the hot foot to Marvis Manning. Manning is seen to leap sixteen feet in the air, crack his head on the ceiling (leaving a greasy spot on same) return to the floor to land on his neck and back (losing an overstuffed wallet in the action), crush to splinters two chairs beneath him, and cry excitedly, "By jove -- that's quaint."

8:14 pm: Wriggling slyly as a sneke, Kornbluth approaches the unsuspecting author, Charles R. Tanner, and leeringly applies the hot foot. Tanner promptly completes three somersaults, knocking over the speakers' rostrum, upsetting two pitchers of ice water and twenty glasses, strews a pipeful of hot ashes over the rug (setting fire to same), tripping a round dozen innocent bystanders in his path, and then springs up to shout, "Eureka! What a sensational plot for my forthcoming time-travel tale!" Tanner then pays Kornbluth the standard fee of ten cents for supplying ideas.

8:56 pm: The wily Kornbluth attempts to give Tucker the hot foot; but the wily Tucker knows what foul jest is in the offing, and offers to pay Kornbluth the sum of one cent to forget the whole thing. Kornbluth agrees, accepts the penny, and wriggles away to vanish amid a mob of fans gathered about the fanzine tables.

9:03 pm: A pitched scream of anguish is heard from the pack of fans gathered around the fanzine tables; a figure soars into the air with shoe soles smoking, to execute a neat powerdive over the heads of many astounded onlookers and land in the innards of a piano. From which issues many discordant sounds and jumbled tunes as the still-unknown fan endeavors to smother the flame consuming his sole.

9:38 pm: A most terrifying howl of frustration and disgust is heard over and above the general hubbub of a fan gabfest. Tucker knowingly cocks an eye to find the unfortunate victim. It is none other than Kornbluth! Amazed, hosts Korshak and Reinsberg rush over to the prostrate victim to find him rubbing his leathers and giving vent to some of the most vitrollic words of a mule-skinner's vocabulary. No other fan is near. In answer to excited inquiries, Kornbluth pauses momentarily from his angry smashing of chairs to jerk an accusing thumb over his shoulder.

Behind him, grinning sardonically, reclines "Oscar," the skeleton brought to the convention from Decker, Indiana.

PONG SAY: A stfan is a guy who will suscribe to a fanmag, be stung , and return to suscribe again. -LeZ, July 1941.

MARK REINSBERG SAY: "All fans are morons -- except you, of course, Tucker." -ibid, Sept. 2, 1939

ADVICE: Pay attention to Moskowitz when he speaks. -ibid, June 1939.

EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER TO LANEX
(from "The Acolyte" - Fall, 1945)

-Robert Bloch

To me (and to my little-known collaborator, a man name of Sigmund Freud) there are only two primary writer-motivations: namely, ego-gratification and catharsis. You can combine ego-gratification and catharsis in one object by picturing an enema tube with your name printed on it.

Seriously, though, I think all writer-motivation analysis must be approached from these two angles.

The ego-gratification phase is, I think, self-evident. There is ample evidence in the pages of any pro mag ... of the guy who writes a yarn to demonstrate his amazing knowledge or facile cleverness. In fantasy, there's the guy who wants to gain a sort of perverted recognition by shocking his readers (as a kid, you met the same guys at a boy's camp; they were the ones who talked at the dinner table about eating loathesome concoctions.) There is the guy who Utopiayarns in order to make the reader identify him as a proufound thinker and a leader ... the guy who writes in an absurdly brusque fashion in order to underplay normal emotional reactions and appear ultra-sophisticated. And, of course, since every author writes for readers, applause is the object, ego-gratification the obvious key to his work.

But ... this method of catharsis ...

Now, I am highly tempted to illustrate what I mean by "analyzing" the cathartic element in the work of a number of contemporary writers. I believe I can detect the obvious confessional element of several fantasy producers. But that would be vastly unfair. I must therefore limit myself to the cathartic material in my own yarns dreary as the process may be.

Between the ages of seventeen and twenty-eight (1935-45), I published about 125 fantasy yarns. Let's ignore the ego-gratification and concentrate on catharsis. During the years 1935-38, I wrote stories about Egypt, about Druids, and a number of pseudo-Lovecraftian tales. A casual survey would imply that I wanted to demonstrate my knowledge of Egyptology and Druidism (which is very shabby and limited) and that I wished to imitate the work of the master.

But that's a mistake -- considering motivation in terms of the story-content. Here's where catharsis comes in. Ignore "what is the story about?" Ignore the style. Concentrate on what lurks beneath the surface. Consider character and setting.

What kind of heroes does the author use? Do they triumph or do they fail? What qualities cause them to triumph or fail? What settings are employed? What villains or personifications of evil are utilized? These are the questions for cathartic analysis. Use them on my yarns for the period 1935-38 and see what happens.

My "heroes" or protagonists (for the "hero" is often the villain) are either beaten-down scholars who blunder into trouble and are destroyed, or mercenary rats who blunder into trouble and are destroyed. They seek ... and find only death.

Youthful cynicism ... adolescent preoccupation with the problems of the depression where the poor scholar (that's me, folks) fails ... and the smug realist also fails (that's a wish-fulfillment fantasy, folks). In other words, the philosophy of defeat implicit ... "Why seek, you only get into trouble anyway."

Obvious stuff, eh? Any kid can do it? Laney's kids do it all the time, eh? Wait a bit. Now, let's get cathartic. In virtually every story I wrote between 1935 and 1938, the villain or evil or doom lurked underground.

Underground ... that's where evil lurks. At the same time, that's where the treasure lies. That's where the hero goes. Seeking treasure, finding doom.

Get out your Freud, folks.

Can't you see the adolescent, subconsciously obsessed with the female sexual regions? Underground .. treasure .. possible danger and doom .. mystery ..

Now we're getting somewhere. That's what I was writing about, whether I knew it or not. Sexual symbolism. Shades of Jorgen!

At this time I pause to realize that if I were to proceed from 1938 onward, I would get increasingly tangled up in a dozen additional symbolic references which enter from that point. It would stretch this pleasant little exercise out for 15 pages or so, and to what end?

Let other, more qualified intellects take up the torch from here ... take up the torch and set fire to the whole damned thing, for all of me.

But at least I don't write about caverns so much any more!

VISITING FIREMEN DEPT:

(Extracts from LeZ, August 1941)

They arrived in Bloomington about 7 am, July 1. They were supposed to have been here the previous day. Art Widner came to the door and staggered thru, to put out a grimy paw. "H'lo Tucker. Here we--" And he collapsed at my feet with a bad case of autointoxication. In 3 seconds flat he was snoring; he slept for hours in the doorway.

Bob Madle, Milt Rothman, Jack Bell and Julie Unger staggered in likewise and looked about for the nearest sleeping accommodations. Unger snatched the studio couch, Bell and Madle the bed, while Rothman was left with only a chair. Later we persuaded Widner to get up from the floor, and we quickly deposited him in the baby's bed. I don't believe he was aware of the change until he awoke.

And so the visiting fans came to town, enroute to the Denvention. Widner drove all day and all night getting here. Their last major stop had been Hagerstown, roughly a nine-hundred mile jump.

July 1st was the new draft registration date -- Rothman and Bob Madle were freshly turned 21. So they prettied up, and downtown we went to sign them up with Uncle Sam. A newspaper cameraman, accompanied by a sob-sister was there -- and yeah, you guessed it. Madle got his name and picture in the local paper. Well, part of his picture. They cut off his head because the photo took up too much space; later his torso was seen busily answering questions. Madle bought a dozen copies of the paper to take home with him.

Madle gave the woman as complete a picture of fandom-in-a-nutshell as was possible in so short a time -- and the usual happened. According to the printed report, Mr. Madle was on his way to Denver to attend a writer's convention. ((Fighting words in them days!))

Rothman minded the baby in the yard, carefully shooing away the ents. Widner gave us a private showing of his convention character: Slan's "Granny". And at dusk they piled into the conveyance and were away.

((They do make fandom like that today!))

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Do you lack the numerical strength to call a spade whatever you think a spade should be? Do you dislike the face of a fellow-fan and wish to change it? Would you like to get tough with fandom and not have to worry about the consequences when your bluff is called?

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Just check your desired line of attack; we do the rest!

Your opponent is:

- () Un-American (and any all 'isms')
- () Dishonest (no refunds of fanzine subscriptions)
- () Ignorant (in fandom less than five years)
- () Perverted (reads Amazing Stories)
- () Old-fashioned (likes science fiction)
- () War-mongerering (thinks next con should be in New York)
- () Uncouth (just starting a new fanzine)
- () Fake fan (you simply don't like his face)

Merely say the word! Make a small down payment and we stir up the hornets' nest! Chaos created in fandom in short order! Disruptions of life-long friendships are our specialty!

You can always rely on Oliver King Smith!

(-Hoy Ping Pong, LeZ, October 1941)

Always Believe Rumors

(an extract from a longer article on the 1947 Philadelphia convention)

- Bob Tucker

It was on a cold and frosty Philadelphia morning that the great Speer plot was hatched. It seems unnecessary to mention here that 'a game' had been in progress all night. All night long we innocent boys had been constantly annoyed in our playing by thunderous explosions outside our window. Some were of the opinion that the Russians were indeed bombarding the city with A-bombs and it might not be amiss if we sauntered out into the streets to survey the damage. Others who knew the city said no, it was probably only sewer lids exploding from the gaseous pressures below the street level, and we could read the casualty lists in the afternoon papers. A timid soul was worried lest some visiting fan's name might be found on the list, but this was dismissed on the theory that it would serve a visiting fan right for being caught on a Philadelphia street at that hour.

The game came to a bloody end when the rosy fingers of dawn poked their way through the windows, high up on the tenth floor. Erle Korshak offered to buy breakfast for all hands, and we realized with sinking dismay that Korshak had cleaned up. When Korshak offers to buy, world-shaking historic events pale to insignificance. As was the habit to escape the fabulous prices charged in the hotel, breakfast was partaken at a place a block away called The Bluebird, or Bluejay, or Blueblood, or Blueboy, or Blueplate, or Bluenose, or something.

Returning from the meal and treasuring in our memories the way Korshak had scooped up the checks, we ran smack into brothers Jack Speer and Chan Davis, dawdling along the street in a very dejected manner indeed. Sensing something of import concealed in their behaviour, our third-degree techniques soon revealed the information that they had been apprehended by the blue-coated minions of the law for causing our A-bomb and sewer-lid explosions --- namely, they had been caught tossing fireworks from the hotel roof. A shocking crime.

Seeking revenge for the desperate worry they had caused us, we founded there and then (and subsequently circulated) the rumor that Speer had been arrested for dallying with a chambermaid. Embellishing this, we said that the moneyed gentry among us had been called to the jail to provide his bail, and further, that Rothman would be asked to donate a part of the convention profits to repay the cost of bail.

It is hoped that at least a few worried delegates approached Rothman to ask if he was going to give any convention money to the Speer jail-bail fund. (And to my later regret, I failed to add to the rumor another embellishment: that convention funds would pay the bail, and later list the expense as "Money given to fans to return home on." But then we can't think of everything.

Lez, July 1948

PONG SAY: A promoter is a man who will furnish the space, if you will furnish the ship.

ibid: When ray-gun hiss, tarry not to inspect error in grammar.

ibid: As a whole, fandom round success!

QUOTATION OF THE MONTH DEPT: Beatrice Jordon, speaking of C. Degler in Cosmic Circle Commentator #14: "ghod how we love that fighting fool!" We question only the sixth word, Beatrice.

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