

# THE SKYRACK

## NEWSLETTER No. 30.

This is SKYRACK 30, dated 13th March 1961 and published by Ron Bennett, 7 Southway, Arthurs Avenue, Harrogate, Yorkshire, England. 6d per copy, 2/6d for 6 issues. 35¢ for 6 issues in USA (65¢ for 6 issues sent airmail)

where subscriptions should be sent to Bob Pavlat, 6001 - 43rd Avenue, Hyattsville, Maryland. News of interest to sf fans always welcomed.

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### DEATH OF DOC WEIR

Fans everywhere will be shocked and saddened by the news that Dr. Arthur R. Weir, "Doc" to us all, died suddenly in Standish Hospital, Gloucester, at 3 a.m., Saturday, 4th March.

Doc, who is understood to have been in his early sixties, came into fandom only two years ago, through the then newly-formed British Science Fiction Association. He attended the 1959 Birmingham Convention where he was voted B.S.F.A. Secretary, a position he later had to relinquish because of increasing ill-health. At last year's London Convention Doc read a paper on the works of Karel Capek, of whom he had been a devotee and friend. Until only recently he was contributing items of book news to Skyrack.

Doc, who taught at a private school in Gloucestershire, was probably the most learned personality on the British fan scene. His writings for the fan press showed a great understanding and literary ability which while expected was nevertheless uncommon.

Despite his constant battle against asthma, Doc was always cheerful and full of an enviable vitality. Only a day before his death he had written to Eric Jones of his convention plans. Doc will be remembered in fan circles for his marked and enthusiastic interest in Capek, in Tolkien and in the Atlantis theory he propounded at the Birmingham Convention and in New Worlds as well as his qualities of sincerity and mixing socially without being condescending. Without doubt Doc greatly enriched the fan scene during his short stay with us and all fans will mourn his untimely passing.

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From Hans Stefan Santesson (Interplanetary Exploration Society, 37 Wall St., New York 5, N.Y., U.S.A.) comes news that the second issue of the Society's Journal is ready to go to press, featuring articles by Isaac Asimov, Lester del Rey, Ivan T. Sanderson and Major George Fielding Eliot. The first issue arrived a short time ago, and featured articles by del Rey, Poul Anderson, and James E. Gunn, with artwork by Hannes Bok, who will also be present in the second issue. Subscription rates to the Journal are \$5 for the first four issues.

Lynn Hickman writes that Don Ford's TAFF report is now ready for mailing and that this operation will begin on 15th March. \$1.25 to either Eric Bentcliffe (47 Alldis St., Great Moor, Stockport, Cheshire) or Don Ford (Box 19 -T, RR2, Ward's Corner Rd., Loveland, Ohio). All profits to go to TAFF.

[TAFF -- Eric Bentcliffe's account of his 1960 TAFF trip to the Pittsburgh World Convention -- has now been published. This is the convention-plus report of Britain's own representative at the Pittcon and is a thoroughly entertaining work, featuring Eric's doings in the States -- his flights, his journeys by road and subway, his meetings with Ellison, Tucker, Hickman, the Kays, the Kyles, Ford, the Smiths and many other American fans -- and his views on many facets of American life. Throughout the report there is an overall abundance of the Bentcliffe level headed personality, sprinkled with the inimitable Bentcliffe humour, traits which afforded Eric the 1960 TAFF honour. The pace of writing is fast and interest never flags; EPITAFF is an outstanding piece of work. Layout and presentation are first rate and the report is greatly enhanced by the photographic artwork of Eddie Jones. EPITAFF is obtainable from Eric (address on front page) at \$1 or 7/-.

COLONIAL EXCURSION -- my own account of my TAFF journey across the States to the 1958 Los Angeles SolaCon -- has also now been published in complete book-form. Arthur "Atom" Thomson has done the artwork in his usual observant and impish manner. 7/- or \$1 from Ron Bennett or Bob Pavlat.

THE DIRECTORY OF 1960 SF FANDOM contains the addresses of over 500 fans, a 14th annual listing. This valuable publication is also available from Ron Bennett or Bob Pavlat @ 1/6d or 25 cents.

HERE ARE ONLY THREE WEEKS to go to the LXICon, the British national convention that promises to be the biggest and best for some five or six years. Held over Easter weekend at the New County Hotel, Gloucester, the LXICon will have as its Guest of Honour the author of "Lucky Jim" and the recently published "New Maps of Hell," Kingsley Amis. Over 70 fans have now registered as convention members and the latest news on personality attendees is that Dave and Ruth Kyle, names of long standing ("You can't sit here") in New York fandom, will be sailing from the States on 17th March to attend the con. Dave of course was a surprise attendee at last year's London convention, but neither Dave nor Ruth is unfamiliar with the rigours of British conmanship. Ruth attended the 1957 Worldcon here, whilst Dave attended this and was also over here for the 1956 Kettering convention. The LXICon programme looks to be an entertaining and well balanced one. Known features include fan films, panels, the Don Ford slide show, a special showing of "Forbidden Planet," Eric Bentcliffe's TAFF talk and "This is Your (Fan) Life", auctions and the fancy dress ball. Eric Jones tells me (there's a phone in Cheltenham it seems) that there will be a pleasant surprise laid on for this ball.

Incidentally, Lynn Hickman reminds me that subscriptions for his Hugo-nominated fanzine JD-ARGASSY are now up to \$2 per year. He has donated 5 two-year subscriptions to JD-A to the TAFF auction and these are meanwhile open to postal ballot at this address.

This will undoubtedly be the last issue of SKYRACK to be published before the convention and it is hoped that the next issue will be out shortly after the con, covering the entire weekend in detail.

THE SKYRACK POLL for 1960: Although voting forms were distributed with SKYRACK two issues ago and reminders were printed last issue, the response to this proposed determination of opinion regarding the merits of British fandom in 1960 has frankly been most disappointing. I'm extending the deadline date to 29th March in the hope that more votes will be returned. All votes should refer to British contributions to the 1960 fan field. Categories in which to vote are Ten Best Fan Publications, Two Best Individual Fanz Contributions, Two best Columns, Two Best Fan Artists, Two Best Prozines, Two Best Fanzine Covers, Best Fanzine Report and Five Best Fan Writers of 1960. Meanwhile my many thanks to those fans who have already returned ballot forms.

John Martin Baxter (the editor of BUNYIP) writes to let us have news on recent Australian affairs: "Don Stuefloten, the US fanwriter and semi-active fan (he edited SHADOW BOOK and of course we all know about THE DYING OCEAN, even if opinions are divided) was through here last month. He visited with me at Bowral, and is now preparing a trip around the coast of Australia, stopping here and there to earn enough money for the next leg of the journey... Our latest addition to the ranks of Aussiefandom, Mervyn Barrett, is now working in Melbourne selling plaster gnomes at a department store. One would have to travel far to find anything more fannish than that. His job is going well and I wouldn't be surprised if another issue of FOCUS mightn't be out shortly... Pete Jefferson, the Sydney fan, is reviving his fanzine MC<sup>2</sup> and the third issue should be out next month. Note also that I've changed my address...."

**CHANGES OF ADDRESS:** John Martin Baxter, PO Box 39, King St Post Office, Sydney N.S.W., Australia.

Sgt. Locke G.W., 24 Field Ambulance, B.F.P.O. 10.

Don Geldart, Sgt's Mess, 3rd Carbiniers (POWDG), Aliwal Bks., Tidworth, Hants.

George Gibson, 3 Beech View, Aberford, Nr. Leeds.

GEORGE LOCKE has taken another step up the promotion ladder, as is seen from his African forces address above. In a recent letter, George writes: "It's warm down here, even though I'm residing at the Continental Hotel at the Army's expense. (Too small for a convention and the floors are too well polished to allow for midnight zap-gun fights without injury). There's a good chance of learning to fly cheaper than in England and there's a gliding club about 90 miles away. Then of course there are the snakes, some quite pleasant ones I believe. Like the puff adder, spitting cobra, black mamba, python.... it almost reminds me of the Penitentiary." George also says that the book situation in Nairobi is poor but that current U.S. pbs are easily obtainable at 3/6d.

From Norman Shorrock comes an issue of Pantosfinx, Liverpool University's Rag Magazine which sports a Bill Harry cover. Bill, ex-art editor of the virtually forgotten British fanzine PLOY, is this year's assistant editor of the Rag zine and his artwork is scattered throughout the magazine's pages, sometimes easily recognisable, sometimes disguised in style and byline.

ALAN RISPIN is still making his periodic jaunts round British fandom. Last week he was down in London and next weekend should be saving me postage on COLONIAL EXCURSION by collecting his copy in person. There's little news on hand from London, though I doubt whether this is really the Rispin influence. The SFCoL is preparing for the LXIcon by working on its annual Combozine. This will be on sale at the con and will cost 1/6d. Contributors include virtually all SFCoL home county members, Atom, Joe Patrizio, Bruce Burn, Don Geldart, Ken and Irene Potter, Paul Enever, Chris Miller, Jimmy Groves and George Locke. Sounds like quite an array of talent. There are, however, conflicting reports which seem to indicate that the SFCoL might be considering the publication of its own regular fanzine. London will certainly be seeing new talent shortly, for recent newcomer to BSFA circles, Pat Kearney, who works in a High Holborn bookshop near Chancery Lane station, is working at a new zine of his own. (33 Elizabeth St., London SW 1).

BSFA Officials for year Easter 1961-62 have lined up as Ina Shorrock (Chairman), Joe Patrizio (Secretary), Ted Forsyth (Treasurer) and Jimmy Groves (Publications Officer). The position of Vice-Chairman is being decided by ballot

An x here means your subscription expires this issue \_\_\_\_\_; next issue \_\_\_\_\_

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OMPA Officials for the coming year also look to be settled, though Bruce Burn still has to say yea or nay to being blackmailed into the apa's work hotspot, the Editorial chair. Ron Bennett will again be Treasurer and for the first time in the apa's history there will be a non-British official, for Bob Lichtman is to take over as President.

More news from Germany, where fans seem to be holding conventions every month. The "Euro-Paischer sf kongress, Stellaris- Eurotopia" is to be held over the weekend of June 3rd/4th, though plans are going ahead to have informal meetings on 1st & 2nd of the month, in Bad Homburg near Frankfurt/Main (ah, memories of Helmet Gebogen!). Anyone interested in booking rooms should write to Hein Bingenheimer, Friedrichsdorf/Taunus, Postfach 11, Germany. (Burkhard Blum)

BRUCE BURN lost his motor scooter on 25th Feb. The machine appears to have been stolen.... The same weekend saw quite a mini-con down in Stoubridge when local fen Darroll Pardoe, Dave Hale and Ken Cheslin hosted Jhim Linwood and Alan Rispin. Both Darroll and Dave wrote me on the affair, during which Alan's beard managed to get itself singed. Over twenty public houses were visited during the weekend. Linwood had to be carried home. Darroll mentions phoning me early on the morning of 26th, but no call was received here. I wonder who you got through to boys? Several postcards from the gathering reveal that the bush burning was due to a fanatical Mosley supporter getting angry when CND leaflets were being handed out, or so Ken says. Alan merely states that he got too overheated during a jazz session.... Many thanks, Betty Kujawa for the card (giant size) from San Juan, Peurto Rico where husband Gene is getting eye-strain scouring the local scenery.... Last weekend (4th/5th) saw a vast gathering at the Intake, Sheffield home of Valerie and Terry Jeeves, the headquarters of the Stockport & Intake Dog & Cake Walking Society. Norman Shorrocks, Ina Shorrocks, Roy Shorrocks, Janet Shorrocks, Lindie Shorrocks, Eric Bentcliffe and Eddie Jones made much of sampling the local brew, taping, filming and playing football in the park. Terry and Valerie have kindly offered to have me push their car down to Gloucester on Good Friday. See you at the LXI con.....?

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