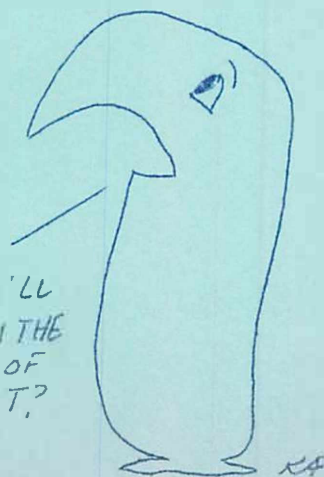


ALIF no. 16

THINK SHE'LL
EVER LEARN THE
SECOND LETTER OF
THE ALPHABET?



This is Alif. It is a fanzine. Color it blue, with smudges.

This is Karen Anderson. Color her frantic.

I suspect I'm going to be up all night. This is Friday, the post office closes at noon Saturday, and we want to leave Monday morning. I have to mail (1) Alif; (2) the completed portion of my masquerade costume; (3) the Prince Valiant books we borrowed from Ray Bradbury; (4) my art show entries; (5) the art show entry forms, with amount of return postage and insurance enclosed ~~xxxx~~ filled in. Obviously, I have to fill that in at the P. O.

None of these things have been prepared to mail.

I was hoping I'd get around to writing up the sequel to the Western; all about how we went to Phil Dick's for dinner on Independence Day, and played croquet with Phil's new wife and pack of stepdaughters, and how I found a gopher-hole between my ball and a wicket -- and filled it in with sheep chips; how we had shish kebab made from one of their lambs ("good ol' George"); how I showed the children what you can do with firecrackers and tin cans, bits of wood, sand, etc.; how Phil has been using the I Ching . . .

In short, I was hoping that Alif would be a great deal larger than the last Zed. Not much chance.

I was going to do lots of things this summer. I seem to have read too many books and gone to too many parties. I'm a compulsive reader. Right now I'm trying to figure out when I'll read the new F&SF that came today. I guess it'll go on the trip with us.

We're going first to Minnesota, where we have friends & relations. Then we'll camp and hike in Wyoming with Poul's mother and brother. Then to Chicago, and home around the middle of September. That's about six weeks away from home. Good grief, I don't even know what I'm going to pack Sunday. Lots, I'm sure, but what?

Gotta think of a cover for this, real quick now.

The above is a moment of silence in memory of Member #14 in the last FA, John Champion.

It's particularly upsetting to hear of the death in a driving accident of someone you rode with just a short while before. John drove us to the airport just four days before he was killed.

The oneshot in this mailing was put out that very night. It would have been a very different evening if we'd known.

Oh yes -- the oneshot was all done that night, even the running off. If I'd been sober, I wouldn't have let such poor repro get by. Nuclear fizzies are deadly.

I admit I'd thought of the title and sketched the illustration beforehand; but all the stenciling was done during the party.

Whee, end of page; I'll go run it off.

CuckooLand Revisited

I'm going to do that nasty thing again, and run the same conreport through SAPS and FAPA. I haven't the time to write it up twice, even if I felt like it.

We nearly went mad getting to the airport. The reconstruction work on the Bay Bridge made it necessary to close down one westbound lane on the upper deck, and I didn't react fast enough to the sign saying "Autos May Use Lower Deck" to realize why they could. So we spent half an hour between the toll plaza and Treasure Island. Eventually we got to the airport; we even got the car parked and our baggage checked with a whole minute to spare before flight time.

HOW can I go to a Westercon without at least one new song?

So I grotched, while packing and going to the airport and strapping in and refraining from smoking. Then, a minute after the No Smoking light went off, I got an idea. And then I wrote:

Fans of science fiction;
Campbell's dereliction
Fills his mag with fantasy;

From extrapolation
Turned to incantation
Now he's printing fantasy.

For sense of won-der ... that knocks you on your can,
Sub to ... Sci-en ... tific American.

Fans of science fiction
Fight his foul addiction
And to hell with fantasy;

"You're not being fair to John," Poul complained. No, I'm not. But it makes a great song, specially when you're crocked.

After the long drive from LA Airport to the hotel, it was after three o'clock and we hadn't eaten. (Western Airlines is a really cheap flight.) We dumped our bags and got some lunch, then moved into the bar with Avram and Grania Davidson and Stu Palmer.

It felt very strange to be in the Alexandria again. Mainly, because it's so much like the Leamington in Oakland; they have nearly identical ground-floor layouts. I kept getting confused by it, though: it seemed the front door should face west instead of north. I can just see myself coming out of the Leamington (site of the '56 and '61 Westercons) after the '63 Westercon and wondering what happened to Spring Street.

At eight o'clock Avram and Grania went up to their room to bring in the sabbath, but invited us all to come up at nine. I went to see about the art show.

There didn't seem to be anything for me to do; everything was confusion. Finally I simply unwrapped my entries, put name title signature and price on the back of each, and left . . . tripping over a strangely shaped brown mass.

"Oh, no!" I said. "Somebody read Ellick's thing in the art show bulletin and entered a piece of free-form fudge!"

As I reached the elevator, I saw Ron. "You thought you were kidding, didn't you?" I said. "There's free-form fudge in there!" He blenched a trifle and hurried on, muttering something about "oh, my ears and whiskers."

When we got to Davidsons' room, it turned out that Grania had gone to bed with a cold, but we were invited in anyway. The room filled up pretty quickly: Tony Boucher, the Busbys,

Traveling is a way of life. -- Grania Davidson
Harlan Ellison, Kris and Lil Neville, and so on. Around eleven I went to see if there was anything I could do to help at the art show, and there wasn't, so I went back upstairs. Later I began to want to filk-sing, and went down to recruit people from the bar. A bunch went up to my room, including Henstell, Pelz, Johnstone, and lots more.

Poul showed up with Tony and the others from Davidsons' party, saying that I should remove the filksingers in case he should want to go to bed. We went to (I think) Al haLevy's room just down the hall and continued singing. Poul went to bed, then more and more people went to bed . . . about that time, I was pretty hungry. A few of the holdouts, including Harness and Boucher, went with me down the street that seemed as though it ought to be Franklin St. but was really 5th, past Pershing Square, to an all-night place called Googie's. There, for some reason, we started playing Who Am I not. I stumped them with Carthoris (when they ask "Are you a human being?" it can't be answered yes or no!) and then Harness really hung us up (by this time we were in Boucher's room) with Superman's Kryptonian surname El.

And so I rooled into bed at six or so. Hm, I meant to say "rolled," but maybe I rooled at that.

Pershing Square is fenced so the fruits won't pick the people.
-- Harlan

First thing Saturday morning, 9:30 to be exact, Ellie Turner phoned me wondering why I wasn't in costume for the photographers. "Good grief! I forgot!" "And don't forget the sword for Paul, please." So I squeezed into my Fashion Show outfit and went down to the display room. The photographers weren't there yet.

God was there, and I asked him to pass a miracle and let there be a cup of coffee in my hand. After a while, there was not one but two cardboard cups of coffee in my hand. "I thought

you'd want coffee with a coffee chaser," he said. He was right.

At eleven o'clock the photographers still hadn't arrived. We decided to hell with it. I went back up and changed, then went to the coffee shop and had a Denver omelet for breakfast. Very good. Also, a 35¢ glass of orange juice was almost as much as I wanted.

"Is that a spider or a beetle? Eight legs good -- six legs bad!"

I saw part of the formal program, but ducked out on the discussion of the s-f market. I live with that. So I went to the bar. I wish I could remember who was there ... that's what I get for not taking notes during the convention.

Then came the Authors' Tea; I went in with Avram, who vouched for my being an Author. (I'm not trying to brag, I just want to have as complete a record as possible to keep the memory. I can forget just about anything.)

About four, I was pretty hungry again, and since van Vogt wasn't talking to anybody at the time I asked him to come along and eat with me in case there wasn't anybody in the coffee shop. There certainly wasn't ... the blinking place had closed an hour before. We had to eat at the Guv'nor's Grill, a dim-lit F&E joint that they have across from the bar. My grotchment at this being the only place to eat in the hotel is academic, since Van insisted on paying for my meal, but I was all set to buy my own and it cost plenty.

Perhaps he got his money's worth in egoboo, though. I told him about the cat I named for his Black Destroyer, quoted some Mulligan verses about his characters to him, asked all kinds of questions about his stories, and generally goshwowed at him. On the other hand ...

Did you ever wonder just what Gilbert Gosseyn was doing at the beginning of World of A, with all those false memories of having been married to Patricia Hardie and the rest? I asked Van how that came about ... and he didn't know either.

"In sociology the answers stay the same, but they change the questions."

No, the interlineations have no relevance. I'm just cleaning out my desk.

After eating, I huckstered some more copies of VORPAL GLASS (Buy the fanzine Van Vogt reads.) (I'm working my way through fandom selling magazines) and made the mistake of trying to sell Pelz a copy. He has a subscription. What's worse, he was selling the Willis Papers. I bought a copy.

About seven, I went up to change into my costume, having been told to be in an ante-room off the banquet room at 7:30.

Forgot to mention: sometime in the afternoon, there was a walk-through for the fashion show. It seemed to take forever. Well, I got quickly into my costume; Poul was there, also changing (but only into a suit), and I got him to zip me into my costume. Then I faked some sort of piled-up hairdo, using lots of lacquer, and rushed through a makeup job. Then I dumped cigarettes, matches, key (but no money) into my makeup case and went down to the ante-room, double vodka in hand.

There was nobody there.

I sipped my vodka, smoked, faunched . . . Steve Tolliver showed up, and explained that he'd have to change from one costume to another in the middle of the show. He was to be my partner as "Couple from Mercury." I said I'd help him change, and told him about having changed the Wicked Fairy in a local production of Love of Four Colonels. (The WF has five very fast costume changes, and needs someone to help him.)

After a while, half the people were there and I'd finished my vodka. I asked a girl named Roxie (I forget her last name) to get me a double brandy -- I hadn't really wanted vodka -- and promised to pay her later. Perhaps she didn't have her money along either, because Bruce Pelz turned up with the brandy. Second thought -- was she under age?

Finally everybody was ready, and we were on. I just barely got Steve pinned into his Mercury costume in time.

Then, when it was done, I parked my empty brandy glass where I could find it again, rushed like hell upstairs, and spent five minutes finagling my costume zipper down and my dress zipper up. Next, I rushed downstairs, got my glass, got more brandy, and slid into the banquet room to hear the speeches. During the speeches I had to go out again for more brandy . . . let's see, that makes 3 double brandies and a double vodka, or 8 ounces of licuor between 7 and midnight or so. No wonder I was already feeling extrémely happy by the time we got to the party.

The party in question was at Harlan's, far out in the boon-docks of Laurel Glen. Andy Main drove the carload I was in. Avram and Grania were in the other car. We arrived about the same time, but after a while it was noticed that Avram and Grania weren't in sight. It turned out that the driveway was too much for Grania; a 45-degree slope (pretty long, too) isn't such a good thing when you're five months pregnant. Eventually the Davidsons made it to the party.

There were a number of people I hadn't met before, including a slight, white-haired man who turned out to be Robert Arthur. It was all a great deal of fun, but unfortunately I didn't record it in my spiral timebinder and I've forgottted what happened.

Back to the hotel, and a party in the convention suite . . . I think that was where. I don't remember much of that, either, except that there weren't enough chairs so I sat on Filik's lap for a while. Toward dawn, I went out for breakfast with some lovely people (I wish I could remember who they were) and when I came back the only survivors were Sid Rogers and I think one other person, sitting in a window at the end of the twelfth-floor hall. She said there was a bottle on her dresser (pointing to an open door) if I cared to go after it. I slipped in; Alva was sound asleep and never noticed me. We talked about

lots of things, I think including malicious rumors, and I asked her to tell me any she heard about me. Especially if they were good. She didn't know any. But the request had results, of which more later.

"It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Harlan Ellison of science fiction -- Harlan Ellison!" -- Tony, at the banquet

It was almost one the next afternoon when Ellie Turner woke me up with a phone call. This time she wanted to give my sword back. I dressed and met her in the snack bar. I ordered Denver omelet and orange juice again, but this time they were out of orange and I had to take tomato. This was a mistake; I find it very hard to drink enough tomato juice when I've started, and I had 70% worth of the stuff. Then I moved to the bar and started in on double brandy again. The bartender, so help me, asked my age! There were half a dozen people there, all fans, and we gave the bartender such a unanimous horselaugh that I didn't even have to fish out my driver's licence.

Miriam Knight had heard from Sid Rogers my request for any lies that were being told about me, and tried to make some up, such as that I wear Army shoes at home.

"Come on, Miri -- you can do better than that, can't you?" I said. A pretty good one about Al HaLevy was invented, which I believe Miri is publishing in QED; and I made one up about Ron Ellick. This had to do with Ron's "Squirrel Uncaged" speech, which was to be given several hours later that afternoon. I said that when he got up on the platform, he was nervous and his mouth was dry, so he filled a glass from the pitcher on the table there. He drained the glass at a gulp, discovered too late that it was straight vodka, and passed out.

I told Poul that I absolutely had to have a Fritz Leiber spatter painting in silver on black cardboard, so he let me get it. I went right up and bought it lest anyone else grab it. Then, drifting back toward the bar, I saw Bob Bloch. So I didn't make it to the bar for some time.

I wanted to hear the Ackerman-Bloch-Gordon panel (Bert Gordon is the one who did the delightful George-&-Dragon movie starring Estelle Winwood as George's foster-mother, the witch, and Basil Rathbone as the sorcerer who kidnaps Princess Helena), so I hurried down to the bar for more brandy. Poul, Miri, and some others were having a hilarious conversation, but I really wanted to hear the panel. And the bartender couldn't seem to see me. I admit he was busy, but ---: I got more and more furious, and finally rushed back upstairs to the Ballroom on the verge of tears. Alva Rogers, bless him, lent me a handkerchief; and in a few minutes I was feeling almost okay.

Just almost. The panel consisted of a series of questions by the moderator and brief answers from the panelists. They couldn't talk to each other, only to the moderator. I couldn't stand it and went back to the bar.

And there was Ellick sitting at the bar:

I told him what was going to happen when he gave his speech, putting it in past tense. It didn't seem to bother him, though he insisted that what he had in his glass was only a coke.

After the panel ended, Poul and Miri and Bjo and some others went out for prime rib while I waited for the auction to be over so I could hear Ron's speech. Then I found that Poul and I were invited out to Bradbury's that evening. Bloch and Boucher and I had to leave Ron's speech early in order to eat before heading out. We went to a fairly F&E place called Lyman's, where I had a champagne cocktail and decided I don't like that junk in my champagne. Then back to the hotel, where I got my pictures from the art show -- half an hour later than I should have -- and my prizes. Four prizes (and one sale) for five entries ... that's not too many.

My entries were: Starmaker's Toy (He fashioned toy cosmos after toy cosmos -- chapter 14, The Starmaker), first prize, outré art. Isildur's Bane, showing the One Ring sinking into the river after slipping off Isildur's finger, first prize, Tolkien art. Star Elm, one of those things from Doheug's country, third prize, fantasy. Salamander #1, a large copy of one of the salamanders in VORPAL GLASS #3, bought by Elmer Perdue. Barnum & Betelgeuse, an eetee clown. All together -- first prize for Most Improved Artist.

My Leiber, Flight for the Third Planet, won second prize as fantasy art, and his entries all together took third prize for Judges' Choice, so I asked for copies of the awards as owner. While these were being made out, I caught the last part of The Genie. I wanted to see the other movies, but there was no time. I took my pictures up to my room, met Bob and Tony and Poul in the bar, and we left.

"She's so tough she shaves her legs with a labrys."

Bob drove us out to the Valley to pick up his wife, and then the five of us headed back through Sepulveda Canyon to the Bradburys'. I was sure I'd been that way before, but it wasn't till Wednesday that I realized we'd driven in the opposite direction along Sepulveda on our way from the Kuttners' to Lee Jacobs' place in Pacoima or wherever it was, Dec. 29 or 30, 1957. It still hurts to remember that casual "Goodbye, we'll be seeing you..." But back to the point.

When we reached the Bradburys', Avram and Grania were already there. She hadn't been feeling well and had to take an antacid every hour, on doctor's orders. We had a nice quiet time, talking about a great many things; it seems Ray is the number-one Prince Valiant fan, and I borrowed a stack of book-version Valiant adventures from him. He also has a copy of Milt Gross' all-cartoon novel He Done Her Wrong, which is hilarious and ought

to be reprinted. We got to talking about the great bad books, such as Cleek of Scotland Yard, and Perelman's wonderful collection of essays, "Cloudland Revisited" (whence the name of this con-report).

Grania was feeling worse than ever, and so Ray's wife took the Davidsons to some place where they could get a taxi to Grania's family's home at a bearable cost. I haven't heard yet how her trouble turned out.

We ran out of whiskey, and started drinking creme de menthe. Our tongues turned bright green -- it looked most remarkable.

It was pretty late for the Bradburys when his wife came back, so we left then. Bob drove us all the way back to the Alexandria before going home to the San Fernando Valley; for which, our blessings on him.

It had been pretty quiet at the Bradburys'. We were ready for a nice noisy party and thought we'd try the convention suite. I decided to stop on the way up and get my zap-gun. It buzzes loudly and throws a ray, choice of red, green, or yellow -- you just turn a goojie.

We were hardly to the corner of the cross-corridor when we heard just what we wanted -- a very noisy party. Whoopee! We plunged into the racket, zap-gun blazing, looking for something to drink. Niessen Himmel had a half-gallon bottle of white rum. It was even my brand -- Bacardi -- the kind with a bat on the label. From now on, it's Niessen Heaven, as far as I'm concerned! Miri was there, also Pelz, Johnstone, Harness, Adrienne, Perdue, Buz, Elinor, and I don't know who all. For a while it was conversation in the living room and a bull session in the bedroom, with a little quiet filk singing on the side; but after a while the filk singers came into the living room and the ones who wanted to talk went into the bedroom. And we heard The Big Red Cheese, which Pelz has promised to publish.

For a while there was even a splinter group in one corner, with Poul singing "Kabul River" -- a poem by Kipling -- to his own tune.

Somewhere along there, we were singing the Orcs' Marching Song, and Harness noticed that it has a square-dance beat. Thus was Filk Dauncing invented!

The phone rang. "Trantorian Embassy, good morning," I said. It was the management wanting us to be quiet. That was the only interference from Mundane that I know of through the whole con; doesn't it set some kind of record? At the Leamington there was a bellboy who would tell us to stop disturbing our neighbors, and one at the Hyatt House who kept chasing people out of the swimming pool and asking them not to keep the neighbors awake. And the last time there was a con at the Alexandria -- the Solacon -- there was a very fine Korean house dick who broke up some five or six parties, as I recall. I wonder what ever happened to that Korean?

So we were quieter, and sang all the dirty songs we could think of, including "Seven Trufen Locked in a Lavatory," though come to think of it that's quite clean.

And so breakfast-time came around again. Poul, Adrienne, Tony and I went out to find some. I don't recall why we didn't go to Googie's again, but we went in the other direction. I reminded Poul that he hadn't sun "Die Beiden Grenadiere" yet, so he did, picking me up and carrying me for some reason.

We found a chili place, but Poul and Adrienne decided they didn't want chili. Tony and I did. Then we went back to his room for a nightcap, and talked until nearly eight . . . Tony was sleepy then, but he had time to sleep. I decided to stay up the rest of the morning. I figured that to catch the 2:00 plane, we'd have to leave the hotel by the 11:30 limousine, and that meant to start packing and getting Poul fed at 10:30. If I went to sleep for so short a time, I would wake up groggy.

In the lobby, I saw Wally Weber, and we settled in the coffee shop (which was open for a change.) As time passed, we were joined by Rory Faulkner, John Champion, the Busbys, the Rogers, Al haLevy . . .

'64 Frisco or fight!

I went up, packed my things, and shook Poul. He grunted, but I decided he had heard me and went back down. He even came down soon enough for us to leave at 11:30, but it wasn't necessary, for Champion had offered to drive us to the airport. We even had time to go to haLevy's room for a farewell party with Sid and Alva.

I was forgetting the shoes. Miri had bought a pair of gold Mercury-looking sandals (the god, not the planet), and decided that I should have some too. When I saw them I agreed. So, that morning when I saw her, she told me where the store was and I bought a pair. The cost \$3.00 -- what I got for the picture I sold -- so they actually cost me one salamander. (And no quibbling about plus-tax or less-commission.)

So we made the plane with a half-hour to spare, that time, and sat in a bar right next to the gate we were to board the plane from. Very nice. And I went to sleep over the Prince Valiant books after we took off.



