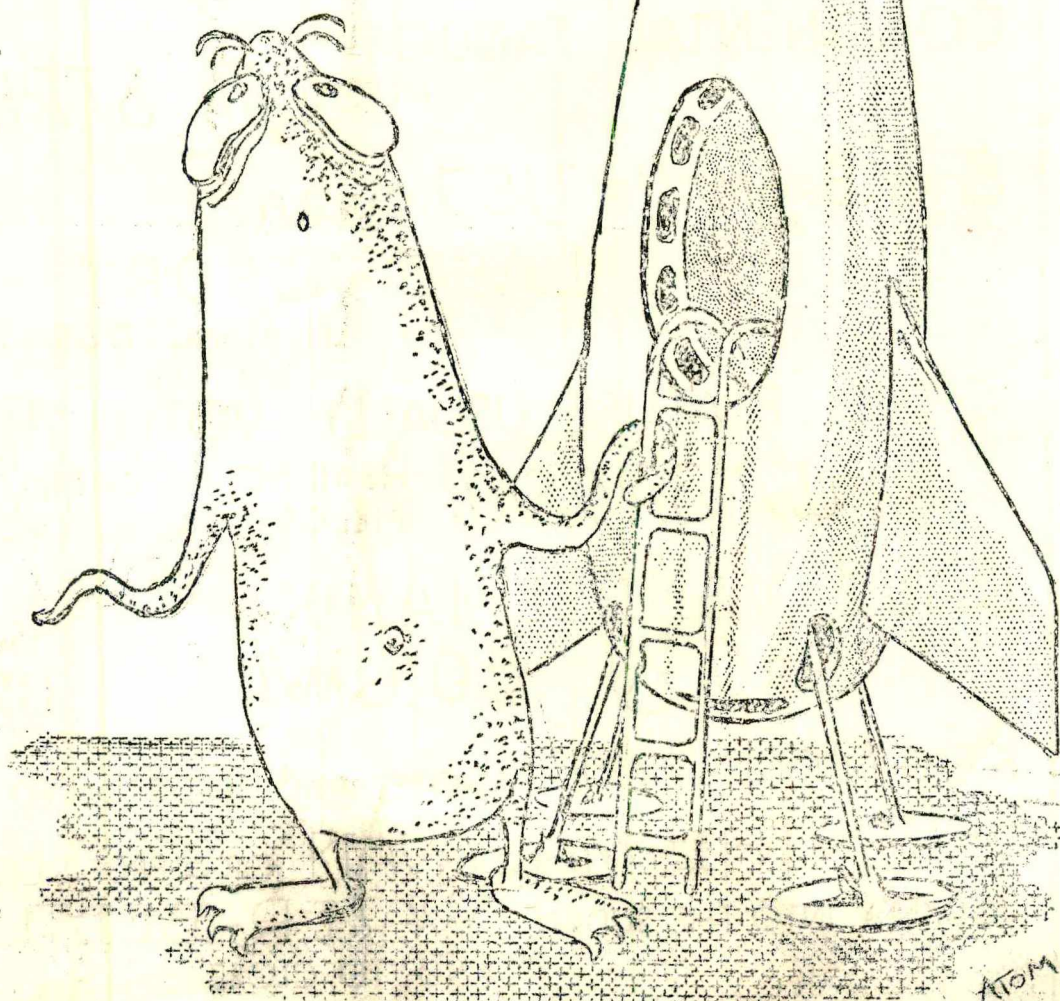


ALPHA

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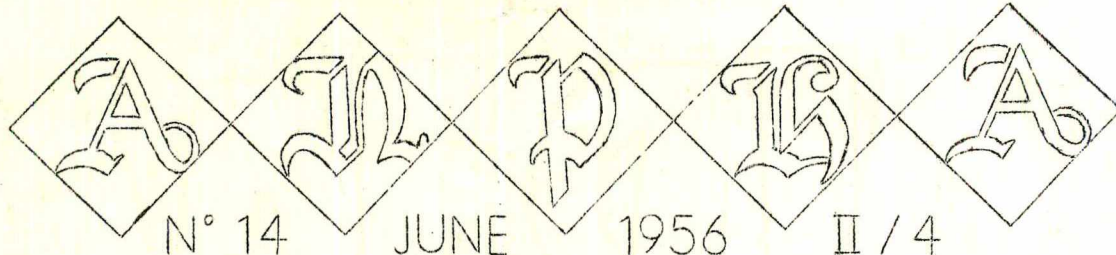


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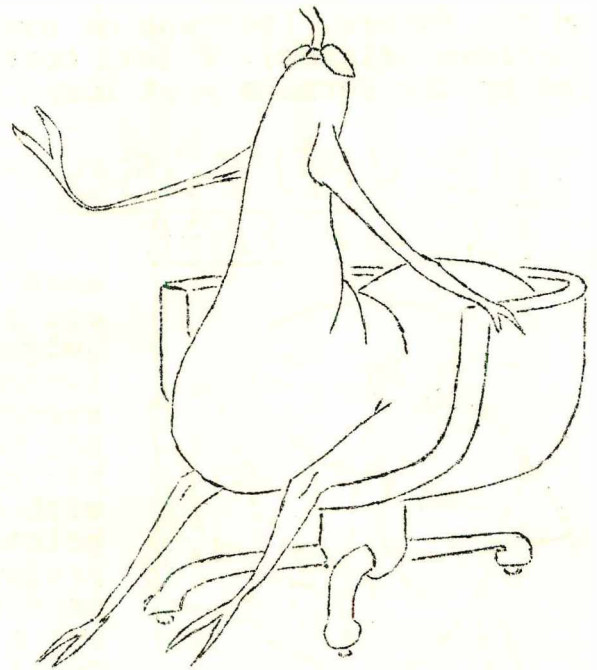
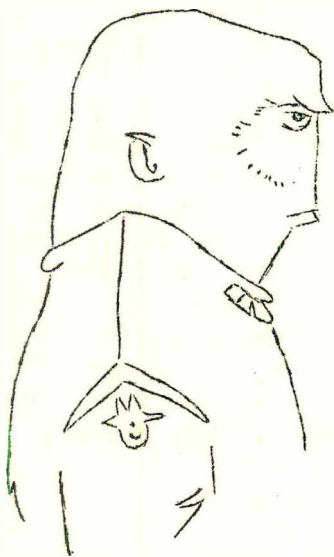
A selection of letters on a subject

OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY W ROTSLER =
SELECTED WITH MALICE AFORETHOUGHT
BY THE EDITOR.

THE NATIVE:

WALTER ERNSTING



....I was naturally interested in Eric Bentcliffe's letter. Although he expresses himself with the gentlemanly reserve and ambiguity which becomes an Englishman, I still sense his dislike for Germans. If I am wrong in this, then he (and you) must excuse my rashness in taking it upon myself to try and reassure him and any others who may be worried about this particular aspect of Gerfandom: although there are people in the SFCD who took part in the war against Britain and America (and against Russia, incidentally), by far the largest part of our members were only a few years old when the war broke out. It is German youth who carry the SF idea, not the old fossils of Generals. And even if a few German fans did participate in that cursed and wretched war, they certainly did not do it with pleasure or even voluntarily. I would have thought Eric Bentcliffe appreciated the following important psychological factor in SF fandom: certainly in Gerfandom! It is that if German fans

have any thoughts at all about politics or nationality, these thoughts are only about the final aim - to see young men from all parts of the world sitting at the same table, joined not only by their enthusiasm for science fiction with its frequent warnings about war's dangers and its occasional glimpses of a future united world, but also by the very fact of their belonging to humanity rather than to individual nations.

Eric would do well to leave the second world war in the past: there are still wars enough to trouble the world, wars in Cyprus and Algeria and elsewhere, wars we would like to belong to the past and not to the present. And if Eric merely dislikes Germans on principle, then let me say that I didn't like them either. In fact I even hated them at times - until 1945! But then a great change came over this people. If some atavist opens his snout with the old Teutonic roars the democratic forces of Germany make sure that he shuts it quickly. And we fans play our part in this! We Gerfans, Mr Bentcliffe! When we meet some day at the Con, Eric, then you'll find among the Gerfans people who did not only 'miss' holding a rifle in the last war but who are determined not to hold one

in the future. (Perhaps my own pacifist attitude arises out of my German-American origins). I feel confident that Eric will be pleasantly surprised by the Germans - at least by those who call themselves SF fans.

Walter Ernsting.

THE VISITORS:

JULIAN PARR

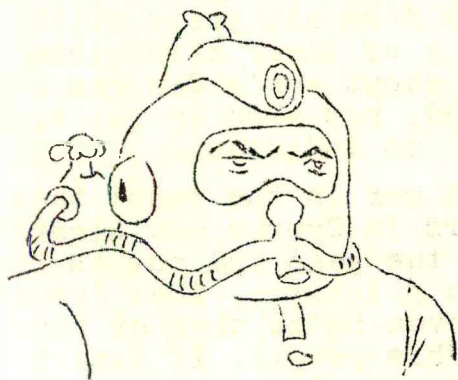


: ...As you can imagine I didn't think much of Eric's rather narrow and petty remark and your own shallow comment: any collective judgment of a people is bound to be inaccurate (because the actual members differ tremendously amongst themselves) and although such a judgment may be convenient for lazy journalists and politicians, who have the excuse that they have to with Germany as a nation or State, I'm disappointed to find fans giving way to such facile prejudices, for fans will be coming into contact with individuals, and these individuals are a very mixed crew, as I know. In fact I've found the 'Germans' of the North to be more like the 'British' of the Midlands than the 'Germans' of the Rhineland (who are often called 'French' by the 'Germans'); the 'Germans' of the cities:

Berlin, Hamburg - are so different from the 'Germans' of the outlying rural districts... And the younger generation of 'Germans' are once again very different from their parents and elder brothers. Of course there are 'bad Germans' (and many of them); but there are also 'good Germans' (some of them suffered and died in concentration camps) and any prior judgment about individual Germans before you get to know them and their background is in my opinion most unfair. It would be just as unfair as to condemn Lee Hoffman as an undemocratic antiNegro rioter just because she comes from the South, or to judge the Canadian fans from the reports of the hooliganism of the Canadian troops out here in Sennelager...and so on. May I suggest that you and Eric wait until you've met some of the Gerfans; I'm sure you'll find enough exceptions to your collective description that you'll suspend judgment with the rest until you really know them...

Julian.

GREG BENFORD



: ...Eric Bentcliffe poses a very interesting question which I just know Walt Ernsting will answer. Somehow Walt the Ern always defends everything connected with Gerfandom... and he usually goes a little overboard on it, too. I'm willing to bet a sawbuck WE will send you a rebuttal or some such thing. The answer to the question itself is hard to figure out, and I'm not a German or any sort of an expert on them, so I can't say anything much. Except that I don't think very many of them will boast - hardly any, in fact. The Germans were really smeared in the second WW, and any man who really fought on the front lines isn't too likely to start bragging. A man never boasts about

something like war, that is if he's really been in there with the shells coming in overhead and the mud and the machine guns... but you see what I mean. There are others who can go into the problem a lot deeper, but

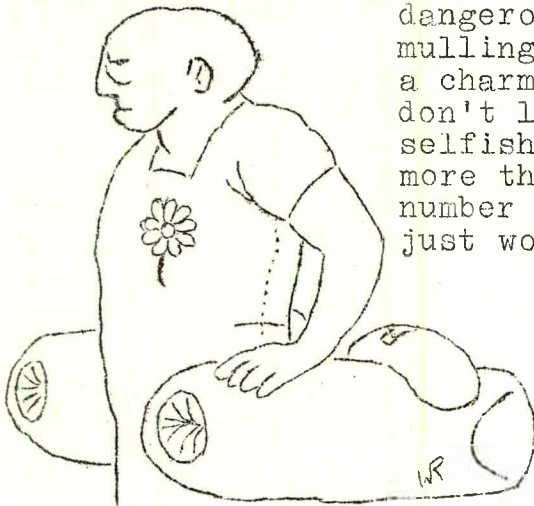
that's what I think, and anyone who thinks differently is welcome to.

You bloody continentals probably don't have any love for the Germans, but that's only natural. The Americans don't especially like them, but we're more like each other than the British and the Germans are. At least that's what several Germans I know think, and you can draw your own conclusions by the fact that the Yanks (us) treat the Germans like people to be respected. Maybe we shouldn't, I don't know, but the government says so, and das ist alles für uns, if they say so. Oh heck, let Walt say what he wants, I like the Germans to a certain extent and don't quite think it would be best to wipe them off the face of the earth. Not just yet, anyway.....

Greg .

THE ALIENS:

PAUL ENEVER



:Speaking seriously for a moment (a dangerous thing to do these days) I found myself mulling over that phrase "between wars Germans have a charming personality"... Now I note that you Dave don't like Germans, considering them arrogant and selfish. Well, you've probably come up against them more than I have, and I can quite imagine that for a number of years they were arrogant and selfish. I just wonder however, if it could be that Germans take a more realistic view of war than we do. War is such a filthy business that it demands arrogance and supreme selfishness if it is to be waged with any sort of success. The idea that war can be conducted on sporting lines went out (or ought to have done) when gunpowder and its offspring were invented.

Therefore I suggest that it is rather we who are effete and shortsighted in wartime. Such things, for instance, as the Geneva Convention and the Red Cross are schoolboy foolishness in modern war. If it is "fair" to bomb civilians, of whom the majority are bound to be women and children, it is fair to shoot escaping prisoners and butcher "undesirables" by the thousand - it all aids the "war effort". In short, I feel that the more arrogance and sheer bestiality displayed in wartime the better. When there is no longer a single spark of heroism or decency to be seen in retrospect in a war, then the masses of people who have to fight them may not be so easily gulled into entering another one...

Already the Germans have a new army and a new airforce. Soon we shall hear of them glorifying both, and who can blame them? We're still glorifying ours. Every nation is spending the larger part of its income building up war potential - to the direct detriment of civil consumers - and when the potential gets high enough there will be some convenient excuse for someone to begin to use it. Then the Germans - who may truly be charming people now - will be arrogant and selfish, and we British will be morbidly sentimental about "Dear Old England" and you will hurrah for plucky little Belgium and between us we shall do our damndest to wipe out all three. So, speaking for myself, if any German begins to boast to me of his war exploits, I shall gulp and ignore it. I've done a bit of boasting on my own account and expect to start boasting again before I die. WE make wars too, not Germany alone, or Russia, or the USA. If we weren't so easily led - misled I should say - those governments we so loftily blame for war couldn't fire a pistol between 'em. Yes, you're quite right, I'm a staunch pacifist -between wars.

Paul Enever.

DICK ELLINGTON

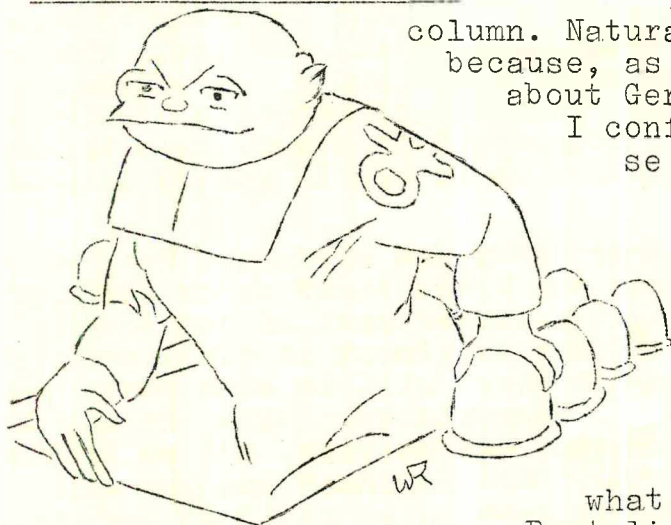


: You do raise an interesting - and rather touchy points on the Germans. Figure myself that so long as we're not at war with them why worry about it? As for national character traits - well, this is so silly as to border on the ridiculous. "They are this and that type of people" and so forth has no meaning whatsoever. Some may be this-and-that and some not but rules and generalizations have no point whatsoever. Why not just forget about where they come from and recognize them for what they are - fans? I'm quite pleased to see Germany produce a fandom - just as I was pleased to see Belgium come up with one, and I would be equally pleased to see fans from any part of the world become active. Have never been in Europe myself, but kicked around all

over the Far East for two and a half years and found no real "character traits" that could be assigned as a rule to any race, religious group or nationality, anyplace. Met and enjoyed Russians, Japanese, Filipinos and, while in Korea - Koreans, Turks, Frenchmen, Siamese, British - yes, and even Belgians, and found interesting people among all of them. So what's your kick? Have you really seen anything different or unusual about German fandom that would make you in the least leary about including them in Fandom as such? As for politics - hell, politics is regularly kicked around in fandom. I'm an Anarchist myself and will willingly argue with anyone who is willing to do so without losing his temper (I know I won't) There's room for discussions of just about anything in Fandom as long as the fugghead-section can keep their tempers. I disagree violently with G.M.Carr's ideas on politics but I enjoy and respect her for the way she expresses them.....

Dick Ellington.

JOE GIBSON



: Then Eric cuts loose in the letter-column. Naturally I wonder about this. Naturally because, as you may know, I've banged around about German fans in the Benford boys' Void.

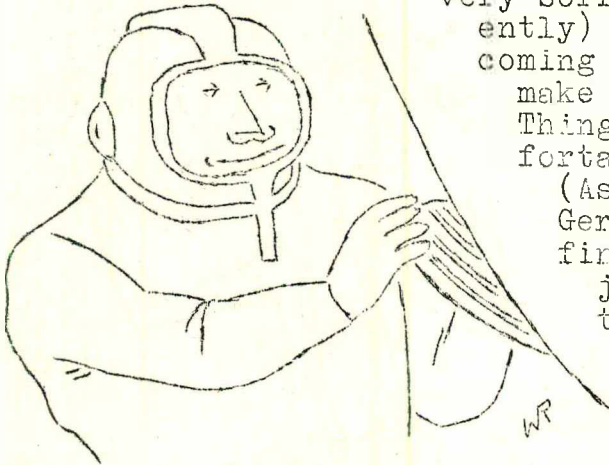
I confess I was trying to rouse some response out of those rumored German fans, get revealing word or six out of them. What I got was a rebuttal from Jan. Tsk. Awell. Anyway, I need never worry about this when I write infuriating letters to Ray Palmer; wonder how Walter Ernsting is to a good leg-pulling? Just my luck he's got a sense of humor.

But what I'm wondering, here, is what sort of reaction you've gotten to the Bentcliffe bit. Also, what and how much, did you cut out of Eric's epic. But now, look: if you fellows ever come across a German fan who fought against us in the last war, and you're uncomfortable about it, I hope you'll just send him on to me, figuratively speaking. With very few exceptions, I'll wager he hated the business every bit as much as I did, and we'll get along famously. However, if any of them boast about it (and do you suppose German fandom may have the

same trouble with individuals of our lunatic fringe?) I fear you'll have to take care of it yourselves, because almost inevitably they'll have been civilians or Rear Echelon soldaten. Maybe it's odd, but I don't blame European civilians for that, with what some of them experienced while having no way to strike back. Tsk. Awell. Who's for emigrating to Mars? Byyyyyy damn, there's a coooocol plot.

Joe Gibson.

ARCHIE MERCER

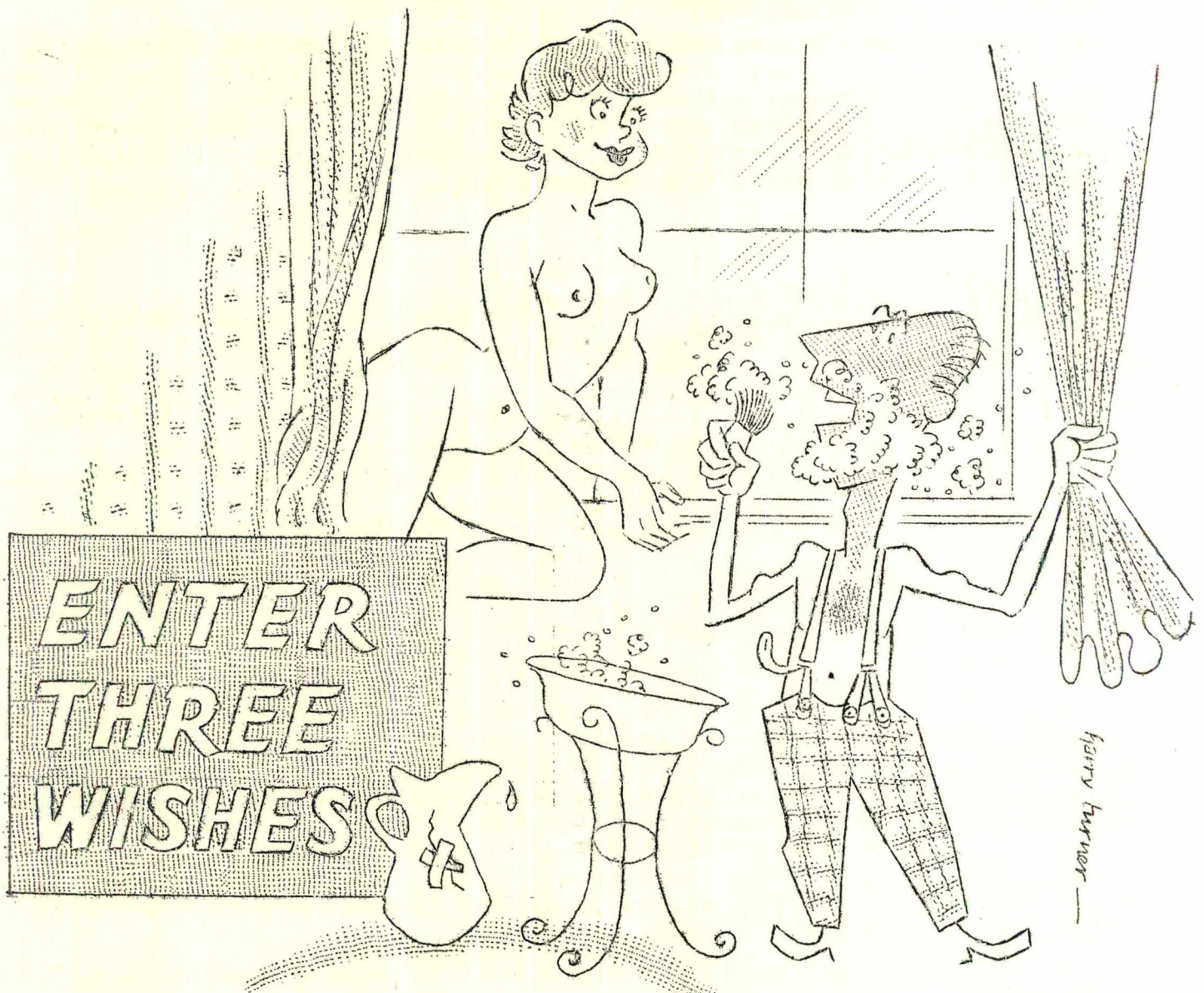


: And now - this German question. I'm very sorry indeed to see you think as you (apparently) do. As to your undoubted courage in coming right into the open about it, I can't make up my mind as to whether it's a Good Thing or not. Certainly, I'd feel very uncomfortable if I was Ann Steul, and read that. (As presumably she does, even if no other German does.) (Or doesn't your half of Alpha find its way there either?) Myself, I'm prejudiced in favour of the Germans rather than against them. (That's a favourable habit of mine I can claim, by the way, though it's me that says it - I'm prejudiced IN FAVOUR OF certain races more than I am AGAINST the rest.) Of

course, I might be expected to have a certain natural bias, because I have always been given to understand that I'm one-sixteenth of German blood. Similarly, I'm supposed to have a smidgin of Scots, Scotch or Scottish blood in me somewhere (dunno where or how much though). To prove it, I am generally fond of both Gaelic and German music. On the other hand, I haven't any Negroid blood that I know of, and yet, liking jazz, I am naturally prejudiced in favour of the race that invented it. Which proves nothing, if that.

But it's the Germans I'm on about now. We happen to have fought two wars against them in fairly close succession, so they are in rather a bad odour. The French were, I gather, in just as bad an odour in Napoleonic times - and judging from what's in the papers just now (\$Feb56 \$) there are a goodly number of Frenchmen I wouldn't care to call my friends. Certainly some Germans, a lot in fact, behaved badly (to understate things a trifle) when given the chance. Anybody who tried to do anything about this at the time (any other German I mean) would - if he tried to do anything CONSTRUCTIVE, be branded as a traitor and looked down on by both sides. I know that lots of non-Germans say things like "they're a lot of so-and-sos - it couldn't possibly happen in MY country." (Which-ever it is). I honestly think that, supposing Britain had been defeated in the First World War (I'm talking about Britain now, because I can claim to know what I am talking about) and had gone through the same circumstances as the Germans actually did - foreign occupation, inflation, trade restriction and general psychological repression - any anti-democratic demagogue who cropped up would have found a ready-made following every bit as beastly as was Hitler's. You've probably seen things about atrocities committed by Teddy-boys and the like. Not that I want to prove anything against Teddy-boys, I don't think the "Teddy-uniform" has anything to do with it, you get just the same thing in any age - what I'm trying to say is, the type that do some of these things - make mass knife-attacks on people and the like - if they could do it openly, without police interference, they'd jump at the chance. It's a

OOPS/- CTD ON P25



PART I

ARCHIE MERCER

This is the story of how I wished a goldfish on Nigel Lindsay.

It was all the hedgehog's fault, of course. I was walking home from work one evening, and saw it wandering rather aimlessly around right in the middle of the main Newark Road. Now the accident statistics for hedgehogs on the Newark Road are something pretty colossal, and judging by the amount of traffic then approaching from both directions they were, if left to themselves, due to rise another decimal or so in the very near future. So I decided to intervene.

"Shame on you, Spike," I chided it as I stepped into the road and loomed over its futilely barbed form. "This is no place for you. We lose more hedgehogs this way - - -" I gently nudged it with my foot to make it curl up into a ball, then just as gently trundled it over to the grass verge, giving it a last little nudge that sent it rolling in to the shallow ditch. I was just about to turn away with a satisfied feeling of another little job well done, when it suddenly stood up on its hind legs and began to grow. And before my astonished eyes it swelled to human proportions, taking upon itself the thoroughly eye-filling shape of an extremely handsome young woman.

"Oh - thanks ever so much," said this extremely handsome young woman before I had quite finished gasping. "You've saved my life. By doing which, you've also rescued me from the Curse. For that, incidentally, you've earned my undying gratitude - not to mention Three Wishes. What're you having?"

Now long ago I decided upon just what I'd wish for, in the event of the opportunity ever arising - the third wish being that no untoward effects would result from either of the other two. However, upon an instant's reflection, I decided that I just didn't believe it. People just DON'T get three wishes given them in twentieth-century Britain, and that's all there is to it. So I thought it best just to play along with this hedgehog-girl, and take her offer in the spirit in which it was (presumably) intended.

"Well, ta ever so," I therefore responded. "Let's see - first of all, I wish the Moon was made of fresh Gorgonzola."

"Righto," said the girl with an amused smile. "Your wish is granted."

"You mean - the Moon's now made of fresh Gorgonzola?"

"No - not now. You said you wished the Moon was made of fresh Gorgonzola. And so it was."

"But what's it made of now, then?"

"Stale Gorgonzola of course, silly."

"Oh." I pondered. There was something about that sort of answer that appealed to my better nature - the girl might make a Trufan yet. I stood and regarded her. No, you needn't all go getting ideas - the girl was perfectly decently clad, though not exactly exorbitantly so maybe. "I wish you'd get up out of that ditch," I told her. "You look as if you'd been planted there or something."

"Oh - that's easily granted," the girl returned, stepping up on to the verge as she spoke. "And the third one?"

This succeeded in taking me somewhat aback - I hadn't intended that for the second wish, naturally enough, it had just been an idle request. However, it was all in fun anyway, so I decided to let it ride. "Well," I pondered again, "for the third wish - I wish Nigel Lindsay would find a strange goldfish in his bedroom."

"Any specific Nigel Lindsay?"

I specified. "Done," said the girl. "That's your lot, then. And I must say, you've made a pretty good selection, as they go. These people who try asking for riches and power and immortality and things, it's a pity they don't try reading UNKNOWN and F&SF first - it's really heart-breaking sometimes to see the way their wishes turn out."

"You mean," I stammered, hardly able to believe my ears - "You mean that YOU read UNKNOWN and F&SF?"

"Of course," said the girl. "Why - can you think of anything better?"

"Certainly not - unless you count fanzines. Tell me - do you know any more people round here who read that sort of thing?"

"Only my sister," she told me. "And she's down on the South Coast at present, anyway. I say - did you ever see the last BEYOND? I'm a bit out of touch at present."

And from there on, the moves were obvious. You know, hedgehogs can be really interesting people when you get to know them.

PART II

SPIDER LINDSAY

That night the sound of his teeth chattering woke Nigel from his slumbers. .

His nimble mind quickly assimilated the phenomenon and arrived at the conclusion that he must either be (a) cold, or (b) scared to death. But he actually felt neither...and in this way of thinking lay madness.

So, making the cortical-thalamic pause, he applied Null-A logic to the situation and deduced the intervention of a third party.

Especially as his teeth were in a glass of water on the mantelpiece.

Jumping from his bed he switched on the light, and there.... wildly struggling in an inch of oxygen-depleted water (and incidently knocking hell out of Nigel's uppers) was a strange goldfish.

Now Nigel is an animal lover and cannot bear to see any dumb creature suffering. What is more, it is Nigel's custom to take his spaceman's helmet to bed with him just in case... as he says ...we should be invaded by the Martians in the middle of the night.

Here let me explain that whereas 99% of the population of the British Isles take a hot water bottle to bed to keep warm, in Torquay it is necessary to take a COLD water bottle to bed to keep cool. Nigel killed two birds with one stone by taking his spaceman's helmet to bed filled with cool, crystal-clear, sparkling-fresh water.

Is there any need for me to explain the denouement?

The strange girl in Nigel's bed said: " My wicked sister in Lincoln believing that no-one would be stupid enough to take a goldfish in a bowl to bed with them, arranged for the spell to be broken only by that eventuality. You, my friend....."

"You don't have to make excuses, " said Nigel. " When the Gods drop a divine gift in my lap I don't question their judgement."

"But I'm not making excuses.... I'm just trying to tell you...."

"I wish you'd pipe down!"

In the morning when his Ma brought his tea in, he suddenly wished she was a goldfish again, and lo and behold she vanished in the nick of time, and there was an angry goldfish tearing round his spaceman's helmet.

"Whatever will you get up to next!" said Nigel's Ma.

The goldfish seethed with rage and frustration. This stupid clot who had earned three wishes had by his very first wish prevented her from acquainting him with the fact. His second wish had put her back under the spell and automatically cancelled his entitlement to the three wishes.

That night when he took the goldfish to bed with him, the spell was broken once more and he became entitled to another three wishes. Unfortunately he had wished a golden silence upon her before she had a chance to put him in the picture. And in the morning he naturally wished her back into a goldfish again. Things were once more back to their original state. This went on for three months.

But one day... inevitably ... the cycle was broken.

Nigel and the goldfish disappeared.

Eric wandered home through the gathering dusk, clutching his latest purchase, a new razor blade. In the Flat, there came to his ears the distant rumble of thunder, as he sloshed soapy water over his face, in readiness for the first clean shave in months. Blissfully he placed the razor blade on the window ledge, and recoiled as a sizzling bolt of lightning flashed, and a clap of thunder deafened him. When his sight cleared he croaked in indignation, for the bolt had struck the razor blade, ruining it irretrievably. "Is this some cosmic jest?" cried Eric. "Am I no more than a plaything of the elements?" He gazed at the ruined blade, as thunder rumbled mockingly in the distance. "I wish I knew...." he muttered despondently, fingering his whiskers.

"You have three wishes" came a voice from the razor blade, which moved and wriggled slightly, "So I must explain to you." The blade grew and grew and grew and changed remarkably, until a young woman sat on the window sill, utterly nude. Eric blushed furiously, and wiped the soap off his ears, ashamed at being caught having a wash. "Come into the living room," he said. "Why do I get three wishes?"

The young woman sat down in his armchair. "I have two sisters," she said, "One in Lincoln and one in Torquay. They changed me into a lightning bolt to dazzle the vision of men and be gone. But they forgot lightning strikes only once, so I entered your razor blade, and you have given me deliverance from everlastingly breezing around." "Nice sisters you must have," Eric commented. "So I get three wishes, huh? But why should they change you into a lightning bolt?"

"Sisterly love," came the answer. "One of my sisters is a very down to earth type who reads SF and associates with characters who live in caravans near ironworks. She was changed into a hedgehog, by my other sister. So my hedgehog sister turned my Torquay sister into a goldfish. She's all wet, and keeps company with a drip by the seaside. I just laughed like hell, so they gave me the breeze, and made me a lightning bolt. That's all."

Eric stared at the fire in silence, turning something over in his mind. "If I have two more wishes," he said slowly, "it might be worth one of them to examine the situation more closely. What made you pick on me?" "Simple," came the breezy laughing reply. "You live in a draughty old attic, live with your head in the clouds... and I think you have the wind-up even now!" "So your sisters turned you into something airy and flightly, to dazzle men's perception and blunt their razor blades?" asked Eric, still staring at the glowing embers. "I wish all the participants were here NOW !"

And abruptly the room was full... Archie and Nigel, each with their respective partners. After the confusion subsided, Eric snarled "Sid-down and shurrup! There's something funny here!" When all those present took seats Eric looked around and sternly said, "Let's get this sorted out! Here we have a spirit of earth, a spirit of water, and a spirit of air... three elementals. There is an element missing....FIRE !"

There was consternation among the girls, shocked horror in their faces. "So my third wish is... fire to burn these three witches !"

Archie and Nigel sat in cold disapproving silence as Eric collected the ashes with the vacuum cleaner. "It's your own fault," said Eric, "for lumbering me with the first two chapters!"

CONTINENTAL FANDOM

W I M S T R U Y C K

Well, friends, here's something I never told you before. Out of false modesty no doubt. But now it must be said. No use denying it any longer. I, Wim Struyck, am a famous man. No less a person than notorious Jan Jansen asked me to write my autobiography. So have a look at genius. A last look I'm sorry to say. Because I won't write for Alpha anymore. And come begging, because it can't be done. From now on, you'll only be able to read me in hard covers, gilt-edged. IF you can afford the price!

That this was coming, had to come, someday, I knew. But I admit, I didn't expect it this soon. And so, it leaves me a bit unprepared. Which episodes out of my long and interesting life can I safely throw to an ever hungry public?

Well, it all started with my Mother and Father.

And after that they called me Wim. As I was still very young then, I can't remember much about that period. Anyhow it's long ago. My age now? Just young enough to look at pretty girls, with that certain something in my eyes. But old enough to leave them alone, being married and all that.

Furthermore, I'm a musician and I play the piano, as well as composing. However, this part of my genius shouldn't be taken too seriously as up to now I've only been able to compose absolutely unknown tunes. Not a popular ditty among them. Strange.... However, I play them myself. As a matter of fact, I only play the stuff of lesser composers, when you are crazy enough to pay me for my troubles.

But playing piano, composing, and being married are all very ordinary things. Anybody can do them, if you only know how. More important I'm also: A SCIENCE FICTION FAN!

Whatever that may be! In my case it's more fiction than science, but that's not the point. What is a science fiction fan, that is the question.

To some people, I know one of this particular tribe in Antwerp, a fan is someone who does NOT read science fiction. Neither fiction, nor science. A real Trufan is much too busy for that. The only things he may read now and then are fanzines, and this only because he has to. How could he comment on them, if he didn't read at least part of those fanzines? And, if he didn't comment on them, he wouldn't receive them and to whom would he send his fanzine then? To those few people who pay, actually pay cash for it? Do you think he's nuts?

Well, he is, but do you really think he's nuts enough to take all that trouble, editing and publishing that fanzine, for 5 à 10 suckers (like me) who pay for it? Don't you believe it.

Now I do read a lot. So I'm not a true fan. On the other hand, one of these days I read in an article something about myself. It was Greg Benford who told readers: "The land of dikes knows hardly any fans. There are about ten, (Where are they???) the most active fan being Wim Struyck, etc etc." So I am a fan, even an active one. And why?

Because I write silly letters now and then to other fans. Now listen here - don't misunderstand me! Before I became an active fan, I wrote silly letters to sisters, aunts and other unfortunate people. I did so for years and years. Those letters were, for the greater part, just plain lies - stories, sucked out of my thumb. Not that I'm a natural liar, but after a couple of years spreading truth to sisters and aunts there is nothing more to say. They know everything about you, so the lies start coming. And then, after a while, hardly any aunt or sister would believe anything in my letters. Can you understand now why I HAD to find another way to use some ink? And this makes me an active fan? Well, if you say so. But I never said it myself, don't you forget!

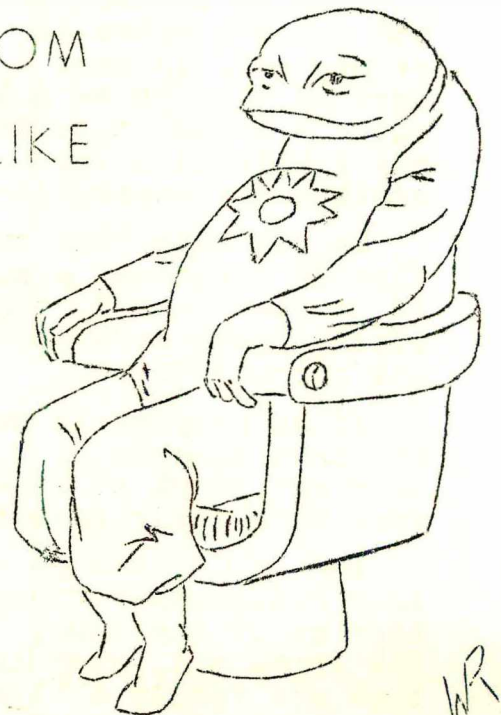
I still read a lot of science fiction. As much as I can, and in this respect, I have to make a confession. You see, I came into the field rather late, and after a bad start with Amazing Stories, I hastily switched to Galaxy, Astounding and the like. Good, modern sf. I didn't know any other type (not mentioning some real, bloody, space opera in the worst sense, I met on my way) I just knew good sf and bad sf, and I liked it, the good version that is.

I still like it, and yet I missed something in my Astoundings, and Galaxy's, in my Bradbury's and Sturgeons and Heinleins, that I vaguely remembered from the very rare fantastic books I read in my youth, and also later. Extending relations and correspondence, I also received more books and other magazines. The first Thrilling Wonder Stories I ever read were lent to me by Jan, not so very long ago. And I'm very sorry for you high-brow boys, but I liked them very much. I don't know exactly why (and who cares?) but I must confess: my favorite mags today are TWS and Startling, not those of the last year (if they're still publishing) but those from the '48 and '50 period.

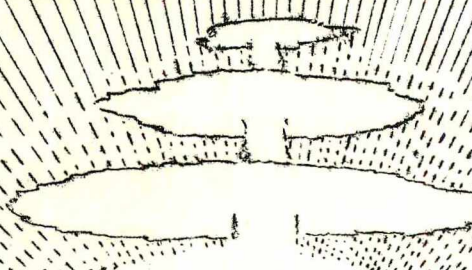
There's only one magazine appearing today that I prefer even to those. And that one is Alpha.

Wim Struyck.

CAN YOU IMAGINE FANDOM
LOOKING (AND FEELING) LIKE
THIS ? →
DON'T RISK IT!
VOTE
LONDON
FOR THE 1957 WORLDCON



LAST RESORT



KEENE

By

Eric Bentcliffe

This is going to be a serious constructive article because right now I'm feeling mighty scared. Why? Just bide with me awhile and I'll tell you.

Some few days ago, I purchased a new Government (British) White Paper entitled, "Nuclear Weapons". That's why I'm scared.

Most of us science fiction fen have been living with atomic energy and A-bombs since the early forties, we've read a deal about them in print, and, in fact I think most of us have read so much about them that we tend to be a little blasé on the topic. I know that I was, until I bought this little booklet. We've been living with atomics in our imagination for so long that we tend to shrug them off as just another s-f prediction come-true.

We all know what happens when a nuclear device is exploded, Boom Time in Boomtown, a swath of city and country is laid waste and barren, if it does go off, that is...usually in our imaginations there is a steely-jawed hero ready to risk his life (and that of any other clot who happens to be in his proximity), to see that it doesn't go off.

If he happens to be a little late (probably delayed by the passionate last embrace of his virginal girl-friend), a flock of flying saucers are bound to land at the last possible moment, and nullify the bomb with their most technicolored ray.

And if it does go off (our author being a moralist), well, Chicago is a radioactive rubble glowing blue by night but our hero was in Los Angeles at the time, and fortunately his scientist girl-friend was in New York. And, when investigations are carried out it's found that the bomb was really a blessing in disguise...it's a pity that several mil-

lion people had to die an agonising death but those that only suffered irradiation have turned into supermen! The enemy will be defeated, his weapon turned against him in a new (?) way.

We don't need to be afraid of the Big Bad Bomb, we know what the ending is going to be... and they all lived happily ever afterwards! It always is, isn't it ?

In fiction.

Snag is, it doesn't always work out that way in fact !

I wonder how many of you have taken your collective noses out of aSF, or F&SF, long enough to really think what might happen if these power-happy politicians we're blessed (?) with don't realise what they are headed for ?

Before I go any further, I'd better say that I don't want anyone to start swotting up on their physics, this isn't necessary, the facts can be garnished whether you know the meaning of $E=MC^2$, or not. And when stripped off their scientific codology they are a great deal more immediate and frightening.

For instance, the power of these awesome things. The first A-bombs put to use, those exploded at Hiroshima and Nagasaki are officially stated (in this booklet) to have an energy release equivalent to that of 20,000 tons of TNT. This doesn't look very dangerous on paper, but then, what does.... on paper.

The heaviest h.e.bombs dropped during the last world-war, were around twenty-tons. There may have been a few experimental bombs larger than these but I don't know of any actually used. Twenty-tons, compared with the 20,000 tons of the bombs that ended the war with Japan, sounds like a rather harmless toy...but...do you remember the deathblows dealt to the cities of the Third Reich by the R.A.F. with these 'toys'? And these had only a thousandth of the power of the first A-bomb.

That Bomb, of course, has grown a hell of a lot since Hiroshima. Not satisfied with the taste of Uranium it's got its greedy teeth into the much more powerful Hydrogen, the H-bomb is very much more powerful.

The power of the H-bomb is rated in 'Megatons'. A word which seems very comforting after all those terrible noughts used in thousand terminology. It's probably intended to reassure you a little... and it does, until you realise that a megaton means you are now in the million tons class!

There's no standard size of H-bomb, but for purposes of estimation an average of 10-megatons is postulated (that's nice)...; both larger and smaller bombs are made. The 10-megaton (family-size?) is quite brute enough for me and as the power of this is quoted and that for larger H-bombs is not, I'll stick with it.

You wouldn't even attempt to measure the power (or 'energy-yield', as the White Paper more kindly puts it) of our 10-megaton pet in thousands of tons, you'd have to use far too many noughts for convenience, and peace of mind. But if you did want to find out just where you were ...well, the 10-megaton is possessed of an energy yield 500 times greater than that of the first A-bomb.

Largest h.e.bomb: 20 tons. First A-bomb: 20,000 tons. Quite a jump up in power wasn't there ? But friend you just do a little multiplication if you really want to be shaken.

Multiply 20,000 by 500, and you'll get the power of the 10-megaton bomb. By my abacchus it comes out at: 10,000,000tons. TEN MILLION TONS!

Anyone for digging ?

And when you've dug yourself a hole, you may find it of use or you may not...it depends on how close you are to the bomb when it explodes, whether it's a groundburst or an airburst, and quite a few other factors. The little book can only estimate your chances of living through an atomic attack, until one has actually taken place.

There is however a pleasant little chart herein from the British Medical Research Council, on which I'll dwell for a moment or two. As most of you will no doubt know, degree of radiation is usually measured in roentgens. If you happen to be near enough to the bomb to get a dose of 800 roentgen (or over) then you'd better set your affairs in order, you've had it: death within six weeks in 99 cases out of 100. Not a pleasant death either.

If you're fortunate enough not to get more than a 400-600r dose then you've a 50/50 chance of living six weeks. After that: Best of Luck!

These dosages are over a short period. Naturally, if the dosage is spread a little at a time over a fairish period the effects aren't so bad. The maximum dose over a short period (two to three hours) which the average person can be exposed to without lasting after-effects, or lingering death, is around 25r. More than this....isn't too good for the system. To put it mildly.

Things don't seem to be too pleasant for anyone in the vicinity of a H-bomb explosion, do they? And whilst we're on the subject, what is the 'vicinity' of an explosion?

The prevailing wind can play a great part here of course, but with the met people gradually getting better and better at their task of forecasting the weather, you can bet your Sunday boots that the bomb will be dropped at a time when the wind can help it do the most damage.

Given a strong Easterly wind, and a bomb dropped on Liverpool, England, a wide belt of country as far as the Wash could expect a fall-out which would be fatal to all in its path. People at slightly greater distance: between the Wash and the East Coast of Suffolk, would have a 50/50 chance of living. For those unfamiliar with English geography, the approximate distance between Liverpool and the latter is about 220 miles.

Transpose these distances to your ^{own} location ,it won't be fun but you will get a better idea of what may happen if everyone doesn't wake up to the terrible power of nuclear weapons.

And whilst you are doing this, me, I'm going to find out if Ray Palmer still needs volunteers for cave exploration work.

Cave.

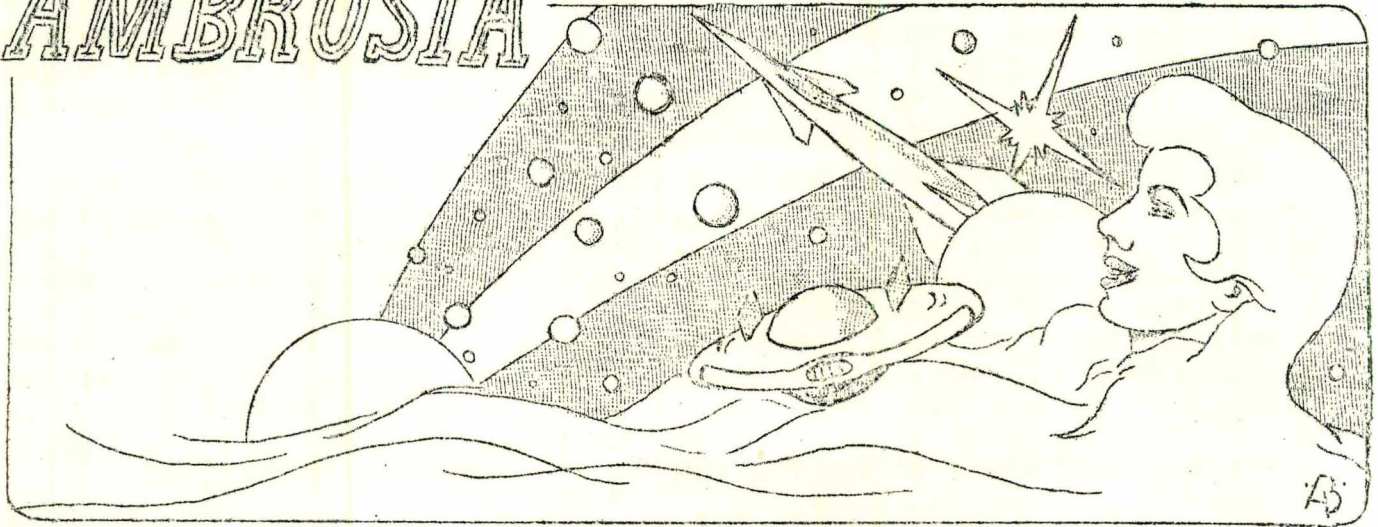
Eric Bentcliffe.

Fantasy Times

"The World Of Tomorrow Today!"

The Newspaper of the Science - Fiction Field !
From: FANDOM HOUSE , P.O. Box 2331 Paterson 23, New Jersey.
J.V.Taurasi Sr. & Ray Van Houten. \$2 per year (24 issues)

AMBROSIA



STEPHEN SCHULTHEIS: Many thanks for the sample copy of ALPHA. I've read many reviews of your fine mag and have often intended to subscribe, but it has been one of my more regrettable omissions that I have not done so before now. Enough of this procrastination, however. I enjoyed reading issue 13 very much, and so have sent a money order for \$1.20 off to Dick Ellington for 8 issues, requesting that any available back issues be sent me. If there are more back issues available than the \$1.20 will cover (more than I could optimistically hope) I will resubscribe, of course.

I would like, especially, to read Ragatzy's article in the last issue, to see what had such interesting repercussions in no 13. I find these replies fascinating. What a shame though, that Ragatzy declines to tear into Kuttner to determine the location of the Kuttner tongue. He obviously believes it to be in the Kuttner cheek, and so do I. This question, moreover, requiring research into fannish antiquity and concerning a fannish ghod of some long standing, seems even more interesting to me than the question of whether or no Ragatzy is on the level. It may well be that all Kuttner says about Satanism is true; I am no authority on the subject and am thus in no position to evaluate that; but Kuttner undoubtedly realized, whether 13-year-old Tigrina did or not, that the validity of "sensational, hokumy, fictional devil-worship" or the "somewhat theosophical and cabalistical philosophy" of Satanism depends entirely upon which one you believe in. It is apparent, and it must have been to Kuttner, that when Tigrina spoke of Satanism, she was referring to what he chose to call devil-worship or black magic. Again, the validity of either system does not depend upon the name by which you choose to call it. If Tigrina wanted to perform spells, recite incantations, etc., she was probably going about it in the right way. She apparently wasn't interested in Yoga.

It looks to me very much as if Kuttner was using his authorial skill and erudition to "snow under" a rather giddy young girl. (I especially note the irony of his last paragraph and the loaded last sentence.) If this was true, he was doing a beautiful job of semantic misdirection. Furthermore, if one takes Mr. Ragatzy's letter in "Ambrosia" at its face value (which I must do, not having read his original article) it seems that Birchby was employing a bit of mis -

direction himself, by writing around the subject of the original article, rather than considering the merits (or lack of same) of Satanism or Ragatzy's argument in favor of it. On the basis of these two gentlemen's offerings in the issue, I would give the round to Ragatzy -- even with Kuttner on the other team.

The trouble with this kind of argument, however, and the thing that makes the seriousness of it suspect, is that all the contenders have to agree on one condition -- which is highly debatable -- that is, a fundamentalistic conception of religion. Not that I would question the right to believe in or argue such a conception, of course. It is rather unusual, however, to find fundamentalists in fandom, even among those of us who are religious. I think that most fen (though you had the two viewpoints pretty well balanced in Ambrosia), like myself (and Mr. Athey) are rather inclined to believe in the relativity of good and evil and doubt the existance of heaven and hell -- even in hyperspace.

The rest of the contents were equally as interesting as the Satanism discussion, and quite often even more enjoyable. I was especially pleased to find the familiar names of Bob Shaw and John Berry present -- and to the former, I would give the laurel for the best (or at least the most humorous) work of the issue.

Wish I could read Flemish, French, German, et al., but, gad! I am having a hard time muddling my way through Spanish. Is it not amazing (thrilling, astounding, etc.) how so small a movement as science-fiction fandom seems to have such a world-wide appeal? I expect, any day, to read of some fan editor having received a fanzine from Russia. I wonder if Uncle Hugo ever dreamed of what he was starting.

Here's looking forward to future issues of your enjoyable fanzine.
Yours truly,

Stephen F. Schultheis.

WM DEECK: Well, here we have another fine issue of Alpha for which I haven't paid. Don't worry, tho, my money should now be on the way to Master Ellington.

Two things in Alpha have raised my ire. (It's not your fault, Jan.) I have in mind the two anonymous letters you published.

The first is from a Mrs "ellipsis." My mother -- even tho I love the sweet old soul dearly, I must admit this -- is of average intelligence and therefore must of necessity be the type who regards conformity as an essential prerequisite to happiness and society's blessing. If I allowed her to handle my mail and my magazines, I should have no mail and no magazines. I tell my dear mother what I read, but she is not allowed to touch it; it's personal property. Having passed the age of reason, I feel that I am a rational creature and should be allowed to choose whatever diversions appeal to me -- as long as I'm not harming anyone by them. Any person who would let his mother censor his mail and destroy what she thought harmful, is, I fear, suffering from that malignant disease which Philip Wylie calls "Momism". Poor kid.

The second is the letter immediately following the one from Mrs. somebody-or-other. Its author, hiding behind the protective cloak of anonymity, wishes us to think of him as "not merely a narrow-minded bigot". For one, I shall be glad to think of him that way if his "merely" was intentional! I postulate that he is also a pompously stupid man. (I'm assuming for convenience that the author was a man). He states at the beginning of his letter -- this is paraphrased -- that anyone who is not a Christian does not believe in God. Do not the Jews believe in

the same God as the Christians, and just do not recognize His son? Being a "non-professional" theologian", perhaps the anonymous author doesn't have the time to look closely at the ancestry of his religion. You're lucky he doesn't subscribe.

While I'm on the boob, I might as well say something about his most singular comment: he suspects you of atheism! I am employed by the company which puts out the U.S. News & World Report, the best news magazine in the U.S. (I'm biased.) They publish articles on the Democrats, which, if we use our favorite idiot's logic, makes them an organ of the Democrats and Democratic. However, they also publish articles on the Republicans, which information puts us in a hell of a fix. Maybe -- more boob logic -- they're Communist. Jan, don't publish anything dealing with hermaphrodites!

There's so much to comment on that I couldn't possibly do everything justice. I shall just say "cheers" to all who wrote for you. The whole issue -- with the exception of the two anonymous letters, and I shall no doubt begin laughing at them as soon as my anger wears off -- was superb. Much egoboo for all. You have the best fanzine in fandom (does that sound right?) -- with the exception of course of those who accept my sterling contributions.

Birchby's little article deserves a few barbs before I quit. M. Birchby makes some very good points in the beginning of his article; but then, alas, he dissolves to a blob of nothing. What care I of Ragatzy's past activities in fandom? What care I if Ragatzy was or is a homosexual, a communist, or, God wot, a chauvinist? What he has to say is of primary interest, not what he might have done or been in the past. Tell Birchby he'd better try again, Jan, because he didn't succeed the first time.

Irredacably,

Wm. Deeck.

ARTHUR HAYES

I've just received the latest Alpha and already I'm complaining. I was complaining even before I opened up the Envelope to see the contents. I don't know who to blame, so I'm going to blame everyone I can think of. The addressing was a little odd. Box 135, Matachewan, Ontario, was correct. The country it was destined for was England. I doubt that it was delayed any by that but -----

A few days ago I had reason (not important reason, but reason) to send \$2. to Holland. I decided to do things technically correct and send a Money Order. The first place I went was the Post-Office. They were willing but preferred I went to the bank because they had to fill out too many forms and notify Ottawa -- so I went to the bank. The manager was a little busy. The clerk was not. I only had twenty minutes before embarking on the bus for work, so after looking things over he became cross-eyed, and I saw that I wasn't going to get much done. I told him to keep the stuff and I'd come in the next day to pick up the M.O. I went in the next day and he had it ready, (I never did see it). He gave me three forms to sign. For a while it looked as though I wouldn't even get the letter back, but I did. He kept the money order and said they were the ones to send it. Then he told me what it would cost me. 15¢ for their mailing. 75¢ for their commission. I had already placed 6¢ on my letter, so to send \$2. I had to shell out with another 96¢. With the \$2. Canadian bill you may have had to go to a bank, but I doubt if it was as costly or as complicated as it would have been if I



had made out a M.O. I also had to send \$3. to Brazil. That was not quite as complicated at this end. It only cost 20¢. The M.O. I got. It's payable in the U.S.A. How the hell is he going to cash it? I think he has to use a broker in the U.S.A. to do it for him. NUTS....

Arthur Hayes.

DES EMERY

Caught your innuendoes about handwriting being better than nothing. So, you asked for it. Just realized I wrote you a while ago re Alpha with the split personality, but can't remember whether I had this letter then or not.

Anyway, I must devise a system so that I can remember which letters I answered when I wrote about the fanzine and which I'm holding to write next time I write about the fanzine and which etc etc. I used to tie strings on my fingers so I would remember things, but all of my fingers got used up and there'd be thirteen strings which I couldn't place. Yes, thirteen, that's what I said. When I got to tying them - the strings that is - on the various extrubences of the body, like the ears, nose, buckteeth, and - uhh, you know. This of course led to certain difficulties at particular times and caused some discomfort at others. You can figure that for yourself.

Not only that, but eventually I got picked up by the police and was sent to the museum - the Egyptian section - where they made me pose with the other mummies. This was embarrassing to say the least, I always thought that I would be a daddy when the right time came.

So I discarded the string system since it tied matters up so, and began trying to develop my memory itself. Falling back on the old school system, I began reading long poems and then quoting at random from them. This worked fine while I was reading only one poem, but when I started the second, having mastered the first entirely, I started mixing Barbara Freitchie with Elegy On The Death Of A Mad Dog. "Who touches a hair of yon gray head, dies like a dog, the man recovered of the bite, the dog it was that died." Which is hardly what either author wrote.

So I just roll on.....

Des Emery

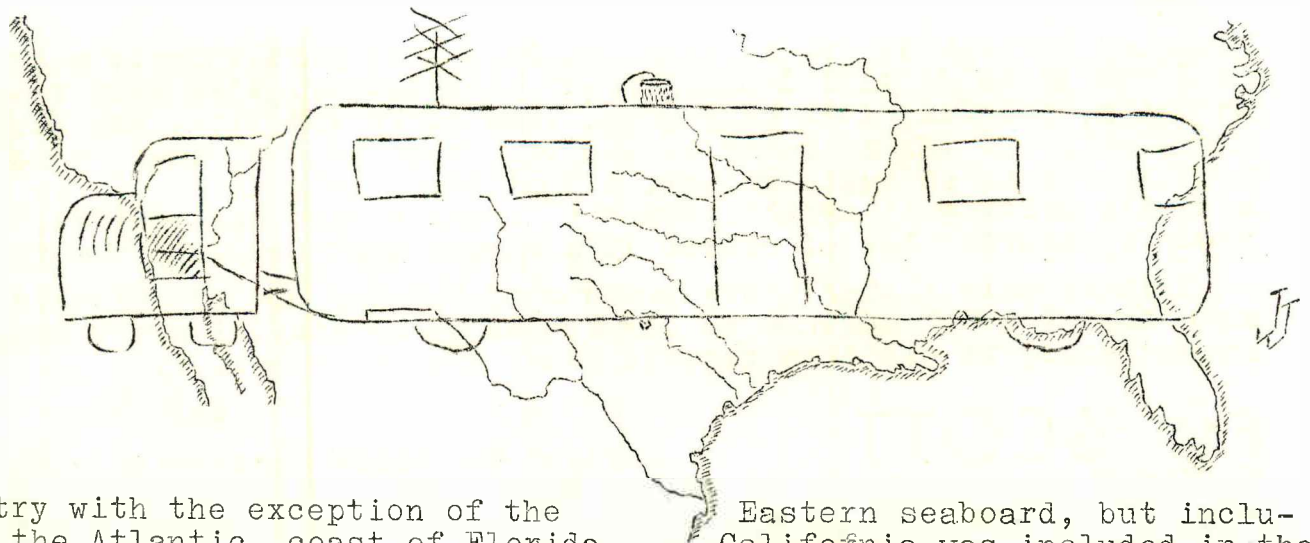
CHAS. ATHEY

:As to the trailer business - in 1950 my wife and I decided that we would take time each year to travel and see some of the country. We soon found that traveling by the usual methods was entirely beyond our finances, so the following year we invested in a trailer. We are now living in our second one, a thirty foot, aluminium job, mounted on four wheels, equipped with four wheel brakes. It is completely modern, even to shower and tub bath, air conditioning and T.V.

The film version of "The Long-Long Trailer" was not as revealing of true trailering as was the book. The book was far better than the picture and is really fascinating reading. Everybody that has ever traveled in a trailer has his share of experiences, both amusing and serious, but few persons have the talent to set them down as did the author of that book.

Very few persons, once having lived in a trailer, are ever satisfied in a house again. Pulling a trailer from place to place is not what I would call a pleasure, although it has its highlights. But the satisfaction in having your own home wherever you may be, more than makes up for the chore of handling a 47 or 48' rig on the highway. I do, however, use a G.M.C. Hydramatic pickup truck that has the power and handling ease to take care of the job.

So far we have managed to cover most of the southern part of the



country with the exception of the Eastern seaboard, but including the Atlantic coast of Florida . California was included in the first trip we made, sans trailer. Unfortunately, we are unable to get away during the summer, when travel in the northern states is possible, so I don't know when we will be able to see the great northwest. Someday, perhaps.

Last year we spent some of the winter in Brownsville, Texas, the southernmost town in continental U.S. The town is essentially Mexican being, much to the horror of Texans, a suburb of Matamoros, Mex. Everyone, that is almost everyone, speaks Spanish or a corruption thereof. The country is not too interesting, does not care for Nawthern tooorists, and certainly not on the recommended list as far as I am concerned. The climate is good and the temperature is as near constant as any place in the country. The drinking water is horrible and even coffee must be made with bottled water. It is an international seaport, connected to the Gulf of Mexico by a channel large enough to accomodate the biggest freighters. I might even have liked the place better if I had been a fisherman because there are plenty fish there to be caught, and I have seen them brought into the trailer park by the truck load.

We did go over into Mexico, but got little kick out of it as we were unable to get into the interior, and the border towns are not indicative of any country. I am hoping that before I get too damn old to make such a trip, that the Pan-American highway is put through. From where I sit I think my kids will be too Damn Old. The dern thing is only done in patches here and there, and there are hundreds of miles that are impassable to anything but an Indian or an alligator. If it were only possible to stir up a commie scare down there it might get done. They keep the Alcan Highway to Alaska open - even in temperatures of eighty below, so they tell me. A ffriend of mine made that trip last year - it takes most of the year too. Sorry to have spent so much time on the travel business but it is my love, or one of them at least.....

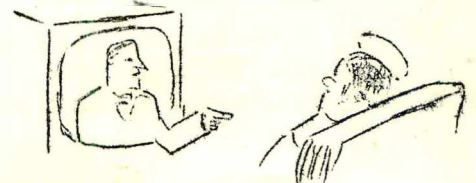
So long Peace and Good Eating

chas.

WALT WILLIS

: Yes, it's me. As you can imagine I haven't had much time for fanac these last few motnhs, but I'm slowly creeping back. Everything is fine here, except my fanac.I've sort of got into a state of amnesia about all sorts of things..did I promise to send you a FAPAmailing or something? If so please remind me and I'll do it. They had an outside broadcast from Antwerp on tv tonight and I was momentarily expecting you to appear and ask about it.

Alpha arrived some time ago and after



glancing through it and reading the bits that particularly attracted me I put it aside till I could write this letter. I've just read through it again, and Jan, it's very good. John Berry was fine, Bob Shaw was excellent, but for my money de Grunwald beat both of them, which I personally regard as quite a feat. I just loved this thing of his and only wish I'd written it myself. Now that someone else has done it, the idea seems a natural; but of course it's always that way with something good.

Birchby made rather heavy weather of Ragatzy and his history, so much ^{so} that I'd be inclined to suspect he is Ragatzy. I can't imagine anyone going to all that trouble about someone else.....

Walt

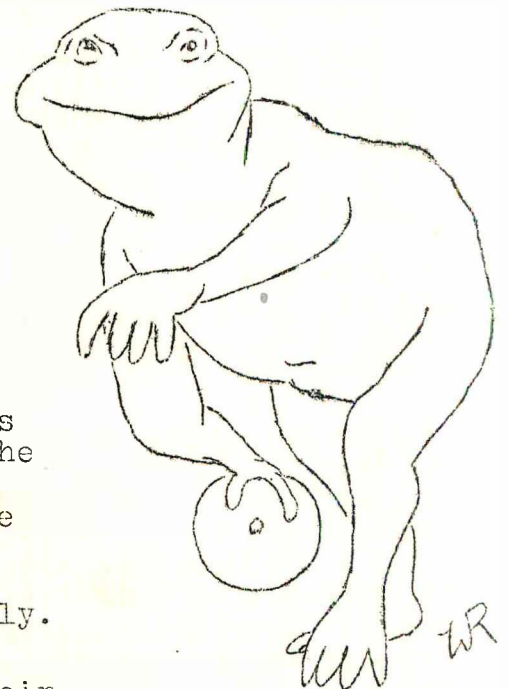
PAT SCOTT

: Enjoyed the brief discussion on language difficulties, particularly of the difficulty in getting humor across via the written word. Humor is of course, the unexpected. Almost anything falling in this category can be, with the right treatment, humorous. Right there is the rub, to wit, what constitutes the right treatment. The problem is a thousand times increased if the comedy of a given situation, phrase, etc. must be gotten across to a person who has grown up or been educated (in the sense that one is educated by living) in a different culture. Even in the same country, what is hilariously funny to one group might be only mildly so to another. Or even in some cases actually distasteful. This of course has to do with the subject matter itself. But even in dealing with identical subject matter the treatment from group to group is bound to differ.

Americans, for instance, rely almost wholly upon the unexpectedness of exaggeration. Whereas the English, presented with the same situation are apt to resort to whimsy, in other words: facetiousness. To an American unused to understatement, buddy, it just ain't funny. He is used to exaggeration and the fact that understatement presents things in an equally untrue or unexpected light, just doesn't mean a thing to him.

Fortunately fandom as a whole is more cosmopolitan than that. What we are mainly troubled with is, as was mentioned, the difference between the spoken and the written word. This is a plenty big trouble all by itself. There is also the fact to contend with that in one culture what can be joked about, in another is seldom mentioned except as an insult. I can give a concrete instance here. To wit, your own words following my light comment upon the word tijdschrift (which I presume means amateur). To the ear accustomed to the rather clipped sound of English, most words in the Germanic languages have the meaty sound of the more admirable swear-words. Thus giving rise to much, perhaps misplaced, hilarity. I have assumed that my comment was taken as such. I also assumed (correctly I hope) that your words were in the same vein. However...and here is the nub of the whole thing, it would be easier for me to read sarcasm into your words than to take them in the spirit of Good Clean Fun. Simply because it is seldom alluded that one does not face reality in any other way except insultingly.

It may not be so Over There, but here it is one of those things one does not say unless their face is plastered with the well known smile. (§How'm I doing?§)



Smiles do not reproduce very well on papersad to relate, so I must assume that one was intended. If it wasn't I'll forgive you anyway, for you must have misunderstood me, in that case. (You see I don't think you would be wilfully nasty.)

While we're speaking of things that crack the funny bone, I might as well say that all this palaver about the worship of His Most Satanic Majesty strikes me as being most laughable. I regard it as a perfect example of what lengths seemingly intelligent humans will go to in an effort to make asses of themselves. Particularly the little missives berating your poor taste in publishing the original article.

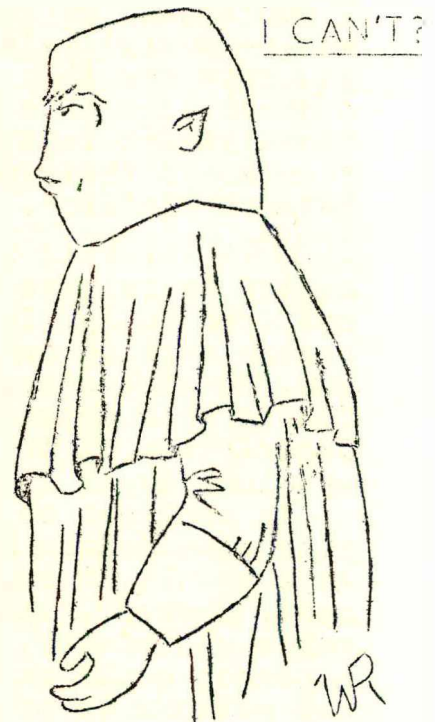
And about that, too. I think you ought to publish any well written article. If for no other reason than all the interesting (and funny) repercussions they produce. Frankly I think all discussions of Godism belong in the same category as 'how many angels can dance on a pin-head'. The answer to this one being 'as many as the pin-head in question will allow'. Don't get the idea that I'm completely against this sort of discussion tho. If they don't get too cluttered up with dogmas and sillinesses I think they're the most rewarding sort there are. The very uncertainty of subject matter lends interest. But if they are to get you anywhere, then the creeds to live by must be livable. To this extent I rather lean to the idea that 'the proper study of Mankind is Man'. One is bound to get some pretty good ideas of God in the process.

.....

Scottie.

JOE GIBSON : All this stuff about your sense of humor has touched me deeply, old Flem. In fact, it's the most awful thing I've ever heard! You with a sense of humor ? Now look here, Jan, you simply can't do this, you know you can't! We love you without a sense of humor, old grapeshot, and you mustn't ever do anything to change that. Why, a Jansen with humor is like ---- like Flemish spoken with an Irish accent. Think how terrible that is. Jan, you just won't be Jan with a sense of humor. You can't do it. You mustn't.

Seriously, I have a sense of humor too that gets me into all sorts of trouble. I'd be better off if I couldn't express mine at all -- the expressions it usually evokes lead to mayhem! I've been slugged on the jaw by Sam Moskowitz, reproved firmly by Sprague de Camp, slighted most devastatingly by Bob Tucker and literally damned into Lower Hades by Ray Palmer -- all because of that sense of humor being incapable of expressing itself properly. (Proof that it was humor lies in the fact that all above-mentioned BNF's except Rap -- I feel a little sorry about that boy -- have since caught on to my sly tricks. But you hadn't, Jan, and I've held such high hopes for you.)



Of course, there's the crux of the matter: how one expresses his sense of humor. It hasn't much social value when you can't communicate it. (It's even worse when you can't communicate it as humor, believe me!) From what I could deduce -- and I'm certainly no expert -- a good bit of the trick of expressing one's humor is as much stereotyped formula as any nightclub comedian's repertoire. There are motions you've

got to go thru; and even then, only if you retain your humor thru that does it get across to others and evoke proper guffaws. The expression for failure, I understand, is "laying an ovate". Personally, I always get the hook, myself.

Now wait! I wonder... gads, surely the hook is known over there? I know it as an expression from our vaudeville; perhaps you've a different phrase. Let's check. Our hook was something used by a stagehand, no doubt a husky one, to haul a not-so-funny comedian offstage when the audience started booing him. The instrument became a necessity in vaudeville when it was found that some self-styled jokesters just wouldn't give up -- whereupon you had the bothersome task of clearing the stage of rotten vegetables before the next act could go on.

I do wish you'd start dividing your Alpha in a manner dictated by the current form of fandom. Seems an Anglo-American section and a European section are called for; then when you occasionally got an article in French, Dutch, German or something Scandinavian that would interest both sections, you could run the original in your European section and an English translation in the other section -- and vice versa. It's gradually coming to the point where something like this was at least started. On a small scale, I mean, not yet as a regular feature, tho I suspect it could eventually come to that.

Joe Gibson.

RICH ENEY : By golly, it's great to feel I'm not alone in my disreputable hobby of "rearranging" magazine-stand displays! (Of course, it's true that I haven't read any science fiction magazine for the past eighteen months -- but I feel that I'm a trufan, deep down inside...)... I don't know whether that letter was from an American address, but if it was -- sorry! (I'd send this apology on State Department stationery, but you know how they are about giving it out to laymen...) ... I never see a cover like this (Dave's) without being reminded of Merton Alger's: "Intelligent reptiles always consider human women more desirable than females of their own race..." in his series, "Things I have Learned from Science Fiction".

JOHN MUSSELL: The Druggist and Me: One of the main qualities of good satire is reserve and it is this quality that Greg appears not to have mastered fully. In several places throughout the piece, he seems to become carried away with himself to the extent of becoming overly humorous. He also stoops to crudeness, a level which is particularly distasteful in this type of satire. As an example of crudeness, I give you his description of the druggist. He shows promise of a sort, though, as some original humor is apparent in spots.

In contrast to the lack of development in the above, Bob Shaw's offering, The Modern Mariner, shows a good deal of talent and experience. As a result it read much better, and furnished for me more reader enjoyment. However, upon reflection, the theme of the piece had no significance whatsoever, whereas TDAM had an underlying theme (i.e. the extremes a person could reach while applying the advice of professional magazines and authors to promote sf), TMM was merely the description of a trip across the Irish Sea. Here is the conflict between a well written article which says nothing and a not-so-well written article which has some sort of gist to it.....

ROBERT COULSON : ... I can't understand why anyone should take a fan-editor's words seriously, though. Maybe it will hearten you to know that I take very few of your statements seriously. (Oh, you don't like that, either -- I must say you're very hard to please.)

DALE R SMITH : I'm not at all sure just what is happening to science fiction. But if anything, interest seems to be lagging somewhat. With the announcement of the Earth Satellite program it looked for awhile as if s-f might be getting a shot in the arm. But now, I wonder. If anything it may turn out that s-f will just be slowly but surely absorbed into the mainstream of literature. And then where will the fan be?

He will be just another collector - and a highly specialized one at that. So, I'm going to hang on to all fanzines that come my way - long before the end of the century they will be relics of an almost forgotten era, as will the pro mags of today.

BOB BLOCH : Yes, ALPHA arrived just the other day. I hesitate to review it twice...since I have already reviewed it for the FANDORA'S BOX column in IMAGINATION. The only trouble with my Imagination reviews (aside from the fact that they are no good) is that one has to write them so far in advance of publication. As a result, the current ALPHA won't be commented on until summertime. You can understand what this does to news-items. For example, last month I got a very nice wedding invitation from Harlan Ellison. No sense for me to make any mention of this in the column: by the time the notice appears, Harlan will probably have "scooped" me by becoming the proud father of twins - - - named "Cheech" and "Beldone" respectively, of course.

...Of course, Tucker and I don't edit the way you and Jan do. Neither of us is upside down, to begin with. We write everything starting at the top of the page. It must be quite a thing to see Jan getting out his half of the magazine, with the mimeograph bolted to the ceiling and he having to wear suction-cups on his shoes. Granted that he wears shoes, that is: he sometimes strikes me as more of the barefoot type. What I want to know is how he keeps the ink from spilling? I am calling this to the attention of readers in IMAGINATION and may run a contest on it. The winner to receive a one-way ticket to the moon. ...

GAUDEAMUS HIGGINBOTTOM : Unaccustomed as I am to the rigours and tribulations of fannish correspondence, I have (thanks to the courtesy of the a/m maternal grandson) for some time now been following with the greatest of interest your ALPHA magazine, and can no longer restrain myself from commenting thereupon in as fannish a manner as possible. My roving and enquiring eye alighting first of all on your beautiful cover, I am deeply moved by the insight the artist must have for the pachyderm's soul. Surely few, if any, with pretensions to artistic merit can have so perfectly portrayed the innermost secrets of the great beast's bosom when his tusks begin to ache. The two downward pointing protuberances are suggestive of more, far more than I can attempt to describe with mere words. Whilst the trunk curling out into the left-hand bottom corner of the cover, having in its agony broken free from the confining frame, is positively a stroke of genius.

No more - ~~per~~typewriter will not stand it. (\$?%)

EINDE

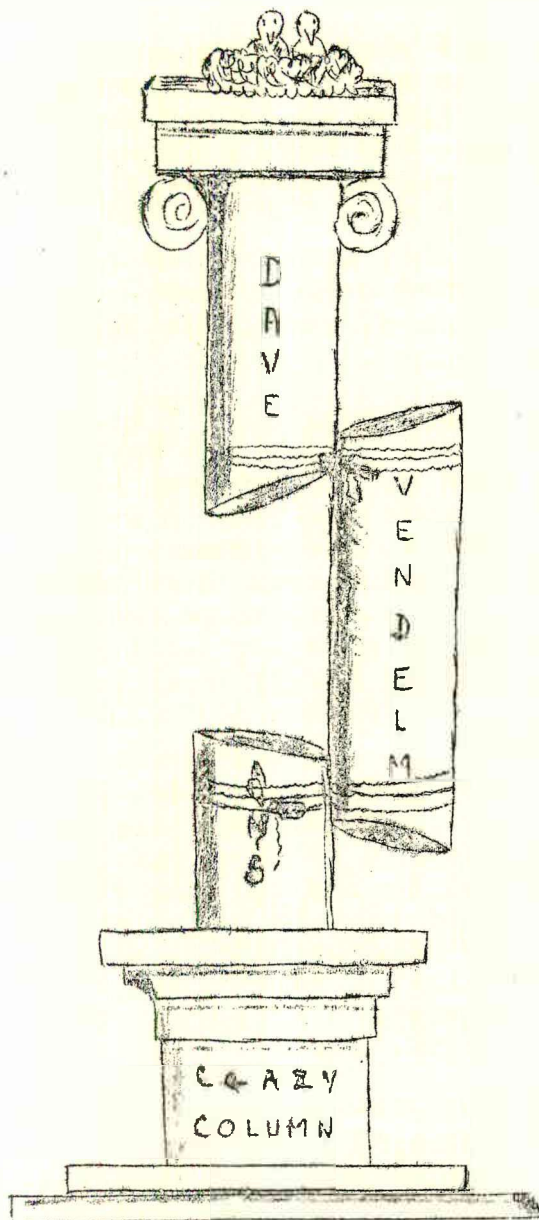
ENGLAND CONFIDES THAT EVERY FAN WILL DO HIS DUTY Adm. K. Bulmer

C.T.D. FROM PAGE 7

case of (to quote the phrase in the spirit rather than - in my case - in the letter) "There but for the Grace of God go I."

But I DO agree with you in one particular. "The subject is one of major importance."

Archie



by
DAVE VENDELMANS
(Now how did you guess ?)

-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-

Hi!

Who'd have thought a couple of years ago that I would be writing a column for Alpha. Ridiculous isn't it ? However, if you've read the enclosed circular from the "Twerp" you will know all about it by now. If, on the other hand, you haven't read the enclosed circular, then I suggest you do so first, otherwise this column might appear somewhat confusing...

The reason I'm writing this particular column is because I'd like to rectify a few "slips" I made in the last ish of "A".

First of all, in Eric ~~Sxx~~ Bentcliffe's column "Yet" I inadvertantly left out a whole paragraph! Can you imagine anybody being that stupid ? All right, don't answer that! Of course, Eric pointed it out to me - quite rightly too - and I shall rectify it at once. The slip occurred on page 6 and the missing paragraph should appear between the 8th. and 9th. para., or, if you prefer, before the second-last para., or again, if you prefer, after the one that starts with "if the story continues, etc..." , and before the one that starts with "there have been, etc..." (I hope you find it...), and reads as follows :

" On the other hand, if it turns out that the spaceship crashes on some alien and unknown planet, totally unsuitable for a human birth and the crux of the story is hinged on this point, then the love-scene was necessary and completely legitimate."

There, that's the first "slip" rectified. The second one may or may not have been a slip. It depends on your point of view, I mean the one about the Germans... O.K. relax; this is the last time I'll bring this up (it's been ruminated long enough... ???). In the last ish I quoted an extract from Eric's letter and made some complementary (with an "E") remarks of my own on the same subject. Since then I have had numerous replies from fen, some of which were constructive, some

indifferent, and some that went so far as to say that I was stirring up the old hatred... Now that is plain ridiculous. I merely said - in a casual manner - that I wasn't too keen on Germans on the whole and that I hadn't met any really 'nice' ones yet. I'm not retracting that statement; but I never said there weren't any nice Germans. I dare say there are. Just as there are some nice English people. (I'm expecting some interesting letters shortly).

As a matter of fact, I received a very nice and sensible letter from Walter Ernsting that I hope Jan will publish in the present ish, along with some others I submitted to him, in which he (Walter) takes up the defence of his countrymen most admirably.

As Walter says, I sincerely believe the present generation of Germans is different, especially those who have "seen the light" of science-fiction fandom...

But then I think we may consider a "s.f. fan" as something "out of this world" and therefore not affected by petty international intrigue. Let us hope that the rest of the "Herring-folk" (I'm sorry, I'm not very good at German) follows their example. Meanwhile I shall make use of that famous old English saying "Wait and see"...

+++++

As a pleasant change from politics, I think it would be a good idea to discuss, say, Time Travel huh? Now I can just hear some of you say "Why pick on time-travel?" Well, I think you've got something there, but anyway, I think it's as good a subject as any other and there is one aspect of time-travel that fascinates me. I have often wondered about it and one night I brought the matter up in bed (a silly place to discuss time-travel isn't it?) and expounded the following theory to my long-suffering wife (bless her little heart): "In my opinion, time-travel is impossible! and here's the reason why: If it is at all possible, someone must necessarily try it in some future age, and if they do try it, someone must eventually decide to visit our time (1956) or some time previous to it; therefore, the very fact that they don't or haven't (and there is no definite proof that they will or have) proves that time travel was impractical or impossible! That seems fairly reasonable doesn't it?

Now, before I go any further, I expect some of you will have heard of this theory before. As a matter of fact, I read a story in F. & S.F. to-day (an old one) wherein the same theory was brought up - although the author came to a different conclusion - so I'm not the only one to think of it (dash it!), but I can assure you that I arrived at this conclusion all on my own (heh, heh, heh!). All right, all right, I'm not trying to set myself up as a great ~~th~~ thinker or something, but, well, it just struck me that's all. A guy can be struck now and then can't he?

Has anyone any argument to offer in contradiction to that statement? I hope so, because the matter is very near and dear to me and besides, I think it ought to be straightened out. I can't stand these unsolved mysteries. Of course, I appreciate that if time-travel is proven impossible, it will deprive a lot of s.f. writers of an excellent subject to write about. But then, there are always other interesting things to write about, such as, for instance, er... sex?

There is still one possibility I may have overlooked. After all, I'm human aren't I? (shut up Jan, keep it dark!) and that is that if one does manage to travel in time and decides to visit the past, one may, through some unexplained scientific phenomena, be projected into some "co-existent" past; which would of course explain why we, in our own time and universe, would never hear about it...

Whatever the solution to this vexing problem may be, I should very much like to have your views on the matter.

In any case, it makes a change from Jazz, doesn't it?

Talking of Jazz (I bet you knew all along I was going to talk about it didn't you? Well, you're wrong, I'm not, see? All I wanted to say was that I'm still hoping to get my Jazz Parade N°2 out this summer. I had hoped to have a few extra articles, but I don't think you love me anymore for getting out of actifandom... so I'll have to make do with what I have.

And now, to finish, here's an interlineation that is not an interlineation...:

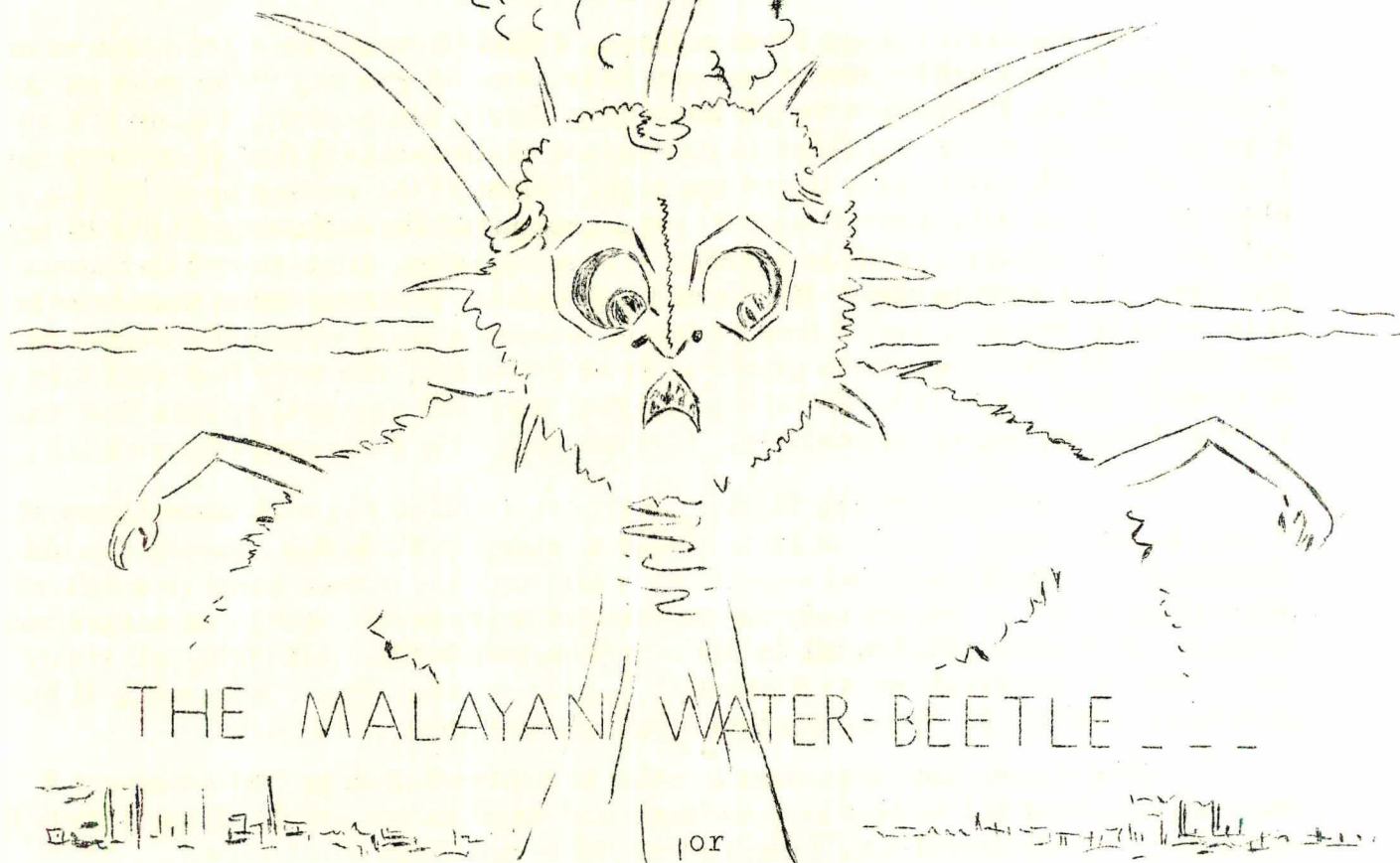
" WHATEVER BECAME OF THE 1955 " TWERP CON " PHOTOGRAPHS ?? "

" bye for now, Dave 27

KEN

MC

INTYRE.



Prof. Sigismund Fraued's Journey into the Sudan.

Have you ever noticed that when an extremely sensational statement is made in a film story - that hard upon its heels come a flock of repetitions, used in a variety of ways - other films, television, sound radio, stories of all kinds...? I refer of course to S.F. stories primarily, and in particular I'll quote the S.F. film "The day the world ended". The example I offer is the teleplay - "The end begins".

Now, in the picture "The day the world ended", we have a scientist. Now get this you dribbling boneheads, he stays! He's essential! So far, so good. We have a scientist, who, due to great forethought coupled with vast quantities of scientific know-how, plus the odds-on chance that he's the only geezer with the savvy to pick the only spot on the earth's surface where there is a modicum of safety in the event of an all-out atomic war! - e --- eer --- rckh !!

He has managed to remain sitting fairly pretty after all the big bangs have ceased, and the world outside his little valley is just a smouldering ruin. (I borrowed that 'smouldering ruin' bit from a certain American author - but on second thoughts I don't think it's so hot after all.) So, as I was saying, this scientist is alright for the present, thank you Jack. He's not the only one though, there's his pretty daughter as well. She stays too, dontcha know all scientists have pretty daughters?

He has planned to accomodate three persons for what he considers will be a safety margin, when suddenly his plans (not the producer's) are

knocked all to hell by a big handsome bum with cast-iron knuckles who damn near breaks the door down, just knocking. This bum has a dame in tow, and what a dame! Has she got some electronic equipment!! OK. So eventually they get in and are instructed to wash and change clothes as a preventative measure against contamination. Right about now, another big handsome guy does his little bit to demolish the door, also with a fist of cast-iron knuckles. This one's carrying an unconscious man across his shoulders. As he explains: "I couldn't just leave him lying there, he made the place look so untidy!" This he-man is a right guy, not a bit like the other one, who is all wrong.

He lugs his burden in and deposits it gently on the couch as though it was an armoured car he'd carried for fifteen miles - which doesn't do the couch much good. Right away the gal with all the scenery moves forward for a better look-see, but the scientist warns "Don't touch him, miss, he's as bright as Einstein right now!" There's a lot of chit-chat, and a play for power by the bum, but the second he-man proves that his knuckles are harder, and that is the last of the first of this gangster's abortive attempts to take over.

The poor guy who has absorbed many times his fair share of lethal radiation proceeds to give the lie to all premises in this direction, by not only staying alive, but actually recovering within three weeks. It appears that he has mutated in one fell swoop (don't know what that means but have seen it used before and I think it looks quite impressive! I always thought a fell-swoop was a buzzard coming to dinner!) There's one thing to be said for becoming a mutant however, it saves quite a bit in razorblades and shaving soap.

But about now, the gangster is getting very bored with his immediate surroundings, and very lonely for his usual haunts, so he bursts out with "Boy! am I sick of this crummy joint! I'm getting outa here!" Whereupon the scientist says "Where wouldja go?" "N'York, of course" bleats the heel. The scientist tries very hard to humour a character who isn't bright enough to know what it's all about, but was smart enough to dodge the holocaust. "Listen, there ain't no N'York, nor Chicago, nor no N'Orleans. There just ain't nothing left. Out there is several hunnerd t'ousand square miles of sweet fanny adams!" Which is the cue for everybody concerned to be absolutely astonistruck. "No N'York" gasps the gangster, "you're outa yore mind, the guy's crazy!"

Which brings me up to date, and my example: A similar astounding declaration was made by one of the characters in the teleplay "The end begins". It seems that altho' the great idea's already been sprung, the next best thing is to use it again, and again and again, -- quickly while it's still hot. Y'see it's a gimmick. There are lots of gimmicks and this is one of 'em. But the biggest laugh of this piece of celluloids corn was when the gangster warved up his pin-up with a kitchen knife and flung her beautiful body over the cliff. Now this being one of the last two remaining women on earth, tell me, who was the mutation?

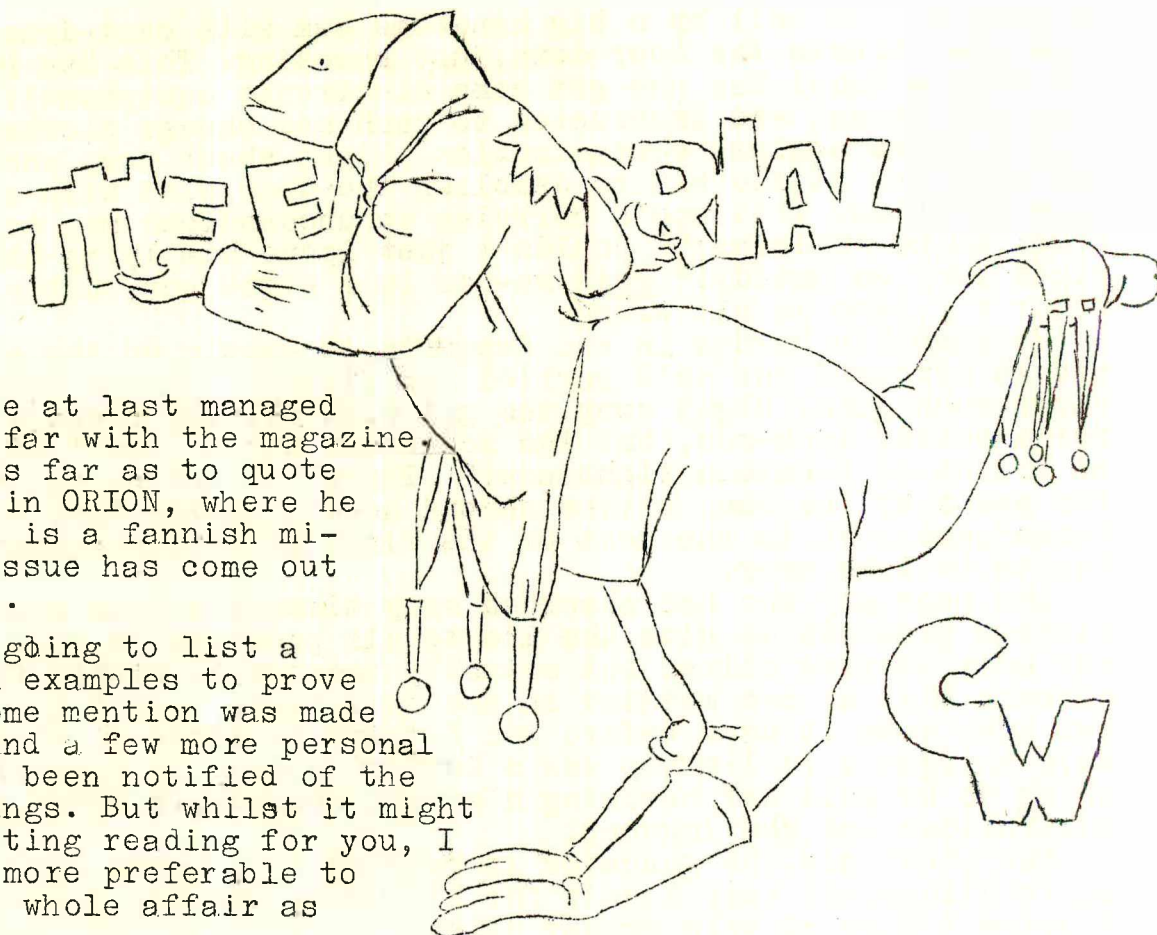
In the teleplay, although mainly tragic, was one spot of humour. The almost lifeless body of a man is washed up on the shore like a piece of rotten soggy seaweed. He is discovered, picked up and carried to the house where the doctor says: "Put him on the bed and fetch some water!" Assuming that the poor chap's ⁹⁴ parts drowned already - what in the hell is the water for, huh? But getting back to the gimmicks, I suppose you wondered what Prof. Sigismund Frayed's Journey into the Sudan has got to do with the Malayan Water-beetle? You didn't? Well, I don't suppose it matters.

Ken Mc Intyre.

Footnote: Don't panic boys. In these two highly improbable epics, please observe that everybody gets wiped out including all Royalty, Heads of Stae, all religious dignitaries - Bishops, Archbishops, Popes and Popettes, all Politicians and Arms Manufacturers.

So ---- you're quite safe.

KmcI.

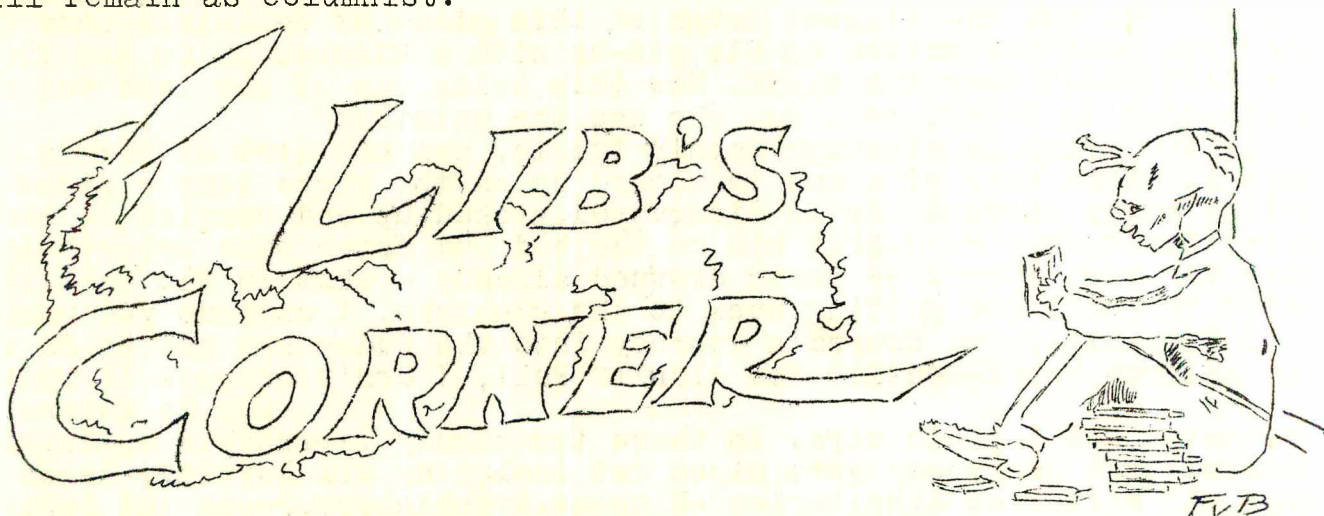


Well, we have at last managed to get this far with the magazine. I could go as far as to quote Paul Enever in ORION, where he states..."it is a fannish miracle this issue has come out at all."

I am not going to list a couple dozen examples to prove the fact. Some mention was made in UMBRA, and a few more personal friends have been notified of the state of things. But whilst it might make interesting reading for you, I find it far more preferable to consider the whole affair as ended.

Let us therefore re-examine the cover, and wonder at the meaning of "tweemaandelijks". It could of course be taken to mean that Alpha will, in the future, arrive at your mailbox twice every month. Please don't get carried away with any such idea. The thought of it simply makes me shiver. I know that it is even bad enough to get it out on a bimonthly basis. However, having seen Orion (Paul, what's my commission?) appear here so regularly, I am again tempted to have a go.

Commitments in other fields have led to Alpha going quarterly - but these having been finished with, I can again turn my main attention to these hallowed pages. Dave has left our staff as editor - due to pressure of work, both at the office and during leisure hours - but he will remain as columnist.



In his present column he has made some apologies about errors in the previous issue. And committed one in this issue at the same time. For Dave did not pass sufficient copies of his circular to me - and of these some were already distributed at Kettering. So if you do not find any special circular - sorry.

There has been a day's lapse between typing up this stencil and the previous page. Due to holidays, I am having to arrange for the greater part of the stencils of next issue to be ready (and run off) before the 21st of July. (And undoubtedly some of you will only see this at a later date!) You see there is only one week in the whole of August which can be devoted to running off the next Alpha, and I would appreciate it very much if you who are going to comment on the issue anyway, would try and do so at the earliest possible moment.

This of course will make that bimonthly schedule a real race against time, and I wonder how most of you are going to place your bets. I can always get out of it by explaining that contributors have left me high and dry - but will that be necessary? If any of you feel I shan't manage, relay me your bets won't you? Though to tell you the truth I'm hoping someone will come forward and say: My hundred quid to your one, I'm sure you can do it!

Reading through this issue's Ambrosia, most of you will wonder how come I didn't comment on anything therein. Honest, I meant to give all those comments right here, in a semi-editorial fashion, as some of them would apply to more than one letter. However, I found that I had material for about six pages, and only just over two stencils to finish the issue. Shouts about more stencils and more paper will gladly be listened to - subject to their being accompanied by parcels of the same.

What might be touched upon though, is the subject of sending money through the post. As far as Belgium is concerned, paper money may be imported by letter post, if the letters are 'registered'. For the small amounts usually involved this is by far the best solution. International Money Orders may be obtained at most Post Offices, but are often severely scrutinised, especially in countries, such as France, where the official rate of exchange is far higher than the exchange of the currency on the free market.

As far as the USA and Canada are concerned however, the quickest, and one of the cheapest ways of settling amounts are American Express Money Orders, which you can make payable to the person same as any ordinary bank check, and which is insured incase of theft or loss.

The above, by the way, is only relative to Belgium - Great Britain has several restrictions on the importation of currency as I have found out a few years ago. Though IMO can be sent quite freely.

Comes the matter of subscriptions. Contrary to custom I have quoted two letters in full, anent people subscribing to Alpha. One would gather from the current crop of fanzines that cash-subscribers do not exist. For even fanzines which are well worth the price usually charged, that being in the region of 10 to 15 dollarcents, have carried the astonishing mention: free for a letter of comment.

There has always been a fair amount of free-copy distribution in any amateur publishing venture. Not only in science fiction fandom. And I can understand the editor who wants to ascertain good copy-material for his letter column, trying to entice fans to produce it by offering his mag free. And at one time the free copy was usually considered earned if the editor actually used your letter in his magazine. Things have degenerated since.

There is no need to write a quotable letter nowadays, at least such is no longer requested. Some mags carry it even further - you don't even have to write every issue. "Once every three issues is a good minimum" to quote one respectable fanzine. And it's not the only fanzine to do so either.

Presumably the editors of these fanzines are unaware that such practices are unfair. I believe that there have been similar cases of merchandise being sold, or given free, far below the actual cost price, in an attempt to seduce customers from their rival competitors. It has even happened that laws had to be passed to stop this cut-throat business, which in the end threatens to ruin a nation's economics. I would indeed suggest a Congressional Investigation Committee to be formed to look into the matter. Only I happen to enjoy a monopoly (at least at present) in my country.

Though seriously, several people complain that fans do not support fandom's publications - but others through their actions insists that support isn't wanted. Why bother to collect the few measly pennies? Why bother to slog through all those commenting letters? Why bother to keep a balance-book? (Though that latter must be a silly excuse as I assume that every fanned does at least keep a mailing list, where a simple annotation behind the name would be sufficient to keep tags.)

If you are financially solvent - and don't need the cash, why don't you collect it and send it to TAFF. Surely that is project that could use far more than has been contributed these last years? Or if you think your fanzine isn't worth more than just a letter now and then, or even regularly - why do you publish it? It is a fallacy to say that your fanzine serves as a letter ...for in most cases letters of comment get replied to, even if only to justify yourself when you've been panned. It's nice of the letterwriter to spend his cash on a stamp to write you, but your reply surely cancels out that (not in my opinion) obligation, and still leaves you with a fanzine, unpaid for.

The damn laughable point about it is that the fans who really are interested in fandom, and not just casual hangers-on, are those who do subscribe, write letters of comment and even contribute. All of them.

And I haven't any cause to worry, really. There's been no drop of subscriptions for Alpha, nor a drying up of contributions or letters of comments. Nor do I expect any of them to be influenced. It's just one of those bees that keeps fluttering, or is it buzzing?, around. To the honourable fans who will think of the most obvious objection, namely that a fanned is free to do as he likes with his fanzine - sure, I agree, I even say that a fanned has the freedom to write what he likes.

Which I have done.

And of course, subscriptions are still welcomed here if nobody else wants them. Or to save money-exchange problems:

Dick Ellington, 299 Riverside Drive, Apt 11A, New York 25, NY. will accept anything in dollar currency, at the rate of 60¢ for four. (Though the habit some people have of sending dollar bills has made me feel like a philanthropist, and I credit 7 issues then.)

Ron Bennett, 7 Southway, Arthur's Ave., Harrogate, Yorks, collects the sterling contributions, 4/- for 4 issues, unless you haven't got it, Ron likes bookkeeping and he'll note down shillings too.

So won't you all arise and join the Be Fair to Fanzan campaign?
Be seeing you around in another Alpha come August. Still betting!

"What the heck is this co.-titled 'lib's Corner' for?"

fan.