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EBENTOLIFFE

(Obscene writing about S E X)

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Let's talk about it some more eh ?

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If you strongly believe that the Christian form of marriage is the only way of life for humanity, then the very idea of persons (even in the far distant future) enjoying free love may be obscene to you. Wars have been fought over beliefs such as this often enough to prove my point. But let's not get involved with Religion... yet! That can wait for a later column.

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" She put her hands through the bars and held my face between them. She looked searchingly into my eyes as if straining to force her blocked telepath sense through the deadness of the area ((hah!)). She leaned against the steel, but the barrier was very effective : it blocked any real physical contact. I put my hands through, below the cross-bar girder and once more I felt that warm slender waist between my palms. Her body beneath the sheer silk of her dress ((whatever happened to nylon ?))

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was lithe and yielding..."

Nothing much in that is there; but there's more to come.

" Catherine said " I want you Steve". Inwardly I grinned ((Me too. I guessed what was coming next!)) and then, with the same feeling as if I'd laughed out loud at a funeral, I said : "Through these steel bars?" She stopped short as though I had thrown ice water on her emotions. She slipped out of my hands and moved back. One hand went down into that hollow between her breasts and came up with a little cylindrical key ((for her chastity belt?)). With one heavy-lidded look at me, she went to a brass wall plate beside the outer door, inserted the key, and turned. The door to my cell opened on noiseless machined slides. Then with a careful look at me, Catherine slipped a little shutter over the glass bull's eye in the door...

Catherine turned from her switch plate and came across the floor with her face lifted and her lips parted, ripe, full and willing. Her arms were raising languidly to slip around my neck in a lovers' embrace. Her breasts rose and fell, straining against the silk of her dress as her breath came deep and rapid; then they touched my bare chest as Catherine settled herself comfortably into my arms.

"Hold me Steve. Love me..."

And do you know what the clot does then ? He hits her in the stomach and escapes...

There's nothing particularly foul about this extract, even when taken out of context, which almost always makes such phrases seem infinitely worse. But this incident just didn't 'fit' the rest of the story. It isn't true to life either... to truelife life that is. If the hero Steve was really in love with her, as is professed in this story, he'd be more interested in her embraces than his freedom... Or he'd want her to escape with him...

Even the phrases are hackneyed... I must have read that line about " her breasts straining against the silk (nylon) of her dress (blouse) at least twenty times in the last year alone. Quite often when the voluptuous heroine isn't even wearing a "bra", in which case any amount of deep breathing she cared to do would be hardly perceptible!

I'm marking this one down as not really obscene, but as unnecessary.

Ron Bennett suggested I try "Fantastic Science Fiction" for subject matter for this column, so I dug up issue number one of this mag, the only issue I have and had a look through it. I didn't find much of interest. There is some little talk about the mammalian features of the naked female body therein, and one of the stories is entitled "Nude in the Microscope". But this is as far as things go; the Nude stays under the microscope and is never brought within reach of the scientist who perceives her in a bit of grit. (Shades of Ray Cummings). Frustrating isn't it ?

The once more revived "Other Worlds" provides a little more food for thought. There's a yarn in the May '55 issue "Gift of Zar", which has rather an unusual feature.

Pornography is almost always slanted towards the male. It can excite the female too, but it's pretty definitely aimed at men rather than at women.

Ray Palmer however, has decided to change all this. "Gift of Zar" is a weak story in which the galaxy is ruled by a matriarchy. This provides the background for a little satisfying of the female ego... in more ways than one! Here's a quote :

" He stood poised in a circle of light, dressed in silver, the slender body on demi-point stretched to its fullest extent, his hands lightly back-to-back at arms length above his head, the slim fingers with their long scarlet nails curved delicately. His black hair lay in short, crisp curls about his perfect head: hands and face had been gilded; beneath slanted brows, long wide eyes looked into Shanda's. As she stared back at him, the music started, throbbing, primitive, wailing; a single instrument whose like she had never heard, etc.. etc....

Personally I found it all rather nauseating...

Up to now I've confined myself to looking for pornography and allied matter in science fiction magazines; however, to end this column, I'd like to reverse the process and touch on a science fiction story in a pornographic magazine! Which, I feel, is putting the boot on the other foot, with a vengeance!

The magazine in question is Paris-Hollywood, a French publication which, until the censors caught up with it, had, for a little while, a British reprint edition. It was thrust upon me one day by a bod who said this was the best s.f. he had ever read !

The story is called: " The End of the World", which is nothing unusual in itself, but the writing and subject matter is certainly far different from that found in s.f.mags. As far as the plot is concerned - and there isn't any over-emphasis in this direction by any means- it's the story of a scientist who decides to wipe out the peoples of earth by means of a bacteriological weapon dispensed from his remote-controlled rockets. Before he does this however, he kidnaps Miss Universe of 1960 and stows her away in his secret artificial satellite, so that he can play Adam & Eve when his work is done! An excerpt coming up :

" A silent male nurse in a white overall watched over Miss Universe constantly, making injections at regular intervals to keep her asleep. From time to time he lifted the sheet, looked long at her body - after all he was a man. Several times he caressed her with wondering ((?)) hands."

"... but her visitor was too calm and too strong. He behaved like a tender lover and this, with his charm and masculine beauty, had rapidly caused her to feel a passionate love for the unknown visitor. But the man had in no way attempted to take advantage of her. He contented himself with kissing her and caressing her gently, refusing to possess her entirely, despite her desires, for she was driven to the brink of madness by these inconclusive caresses... Then, one day..... "

Which seems a good line to end on, don't you think ?

E.B.

Editorial note : Huh !?!

Well you guys, how about some comments on these columns. I'm sure Eric, and of course, ye editors, would appreciate them. Just drop us, or better still, drop Eric a few lines, giving him your views on the subject of pornography in s.f. : What you think of it and what you consider is fit or unfit for publication, etc... We thank you! DV & JJ.

CORNY QUOTES :

- 1°) She didn't like his appartement, so he knocked her flat...
- 2°) She didn't like the look of his head, so she broke it off...

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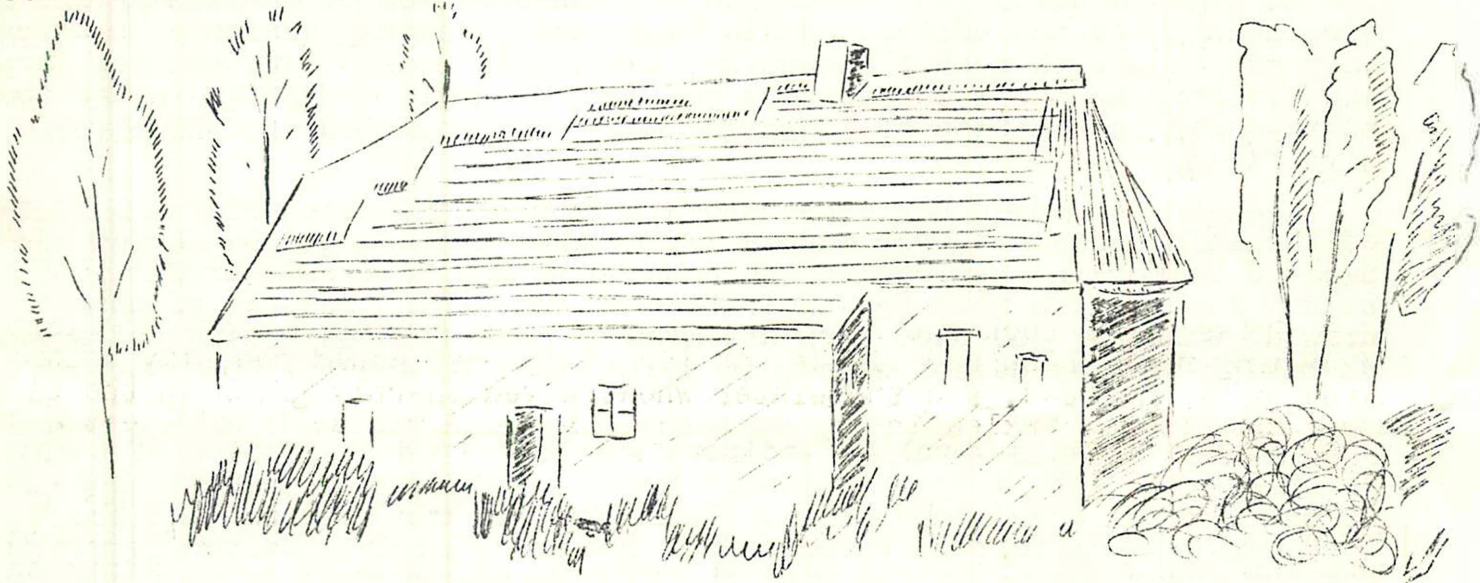
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Lying contentedly in the long grass, I looked at Spring and remembered a song that was popular a few months back and indeed still is. Now, I am not a lover of so-called "folk music" - and lately I've discovered what a range of territory that includes - but there's a simple tuneful ballad that I quite like called "This Ole House", and I like hearing no one sing it but Ernie Ford. There are baritones and baritones, but this Tennessee singer has the deepest, most powerful voice I ever heard and it's a delight to listen to him. So when he sings "This Ole House" you get your money's worth. What I want to say is that this particular song was written by Stuart Hamblen, and has a story behind it: He and a friend were up in the high Sierras one autumn day and came upon a broken-down old house miles from civilization. Evidences of a terrific storm were all about that part of the mountain and here they saw a large tree had blown down in the front yard... The door had been blown off the hinges and glass from broken panes littered the porch. A poor thin old hound dog lay on the porch, so starved he didn't even bark at them. In one of the rooms they found an old old man, who had apparently been dead for weeks....



Later, driving down the mountainside to report their find to the sheriff, Stuart Hamblen could not free himself from thoughts of what he'd seen and from that afternoon's experience created the sad song "This Ole House".

I can understand things like that, can appreciate with Stuart the need to make tangible all he felt and heard. I feel akin to people like Stuart Hamblen because of a sad little ditty... But it has occurred to me more than once, this difference in the accessibility people have to each other. Some people, or perhaps only one person, can touch parts of you that others cannot. Can't remember just who it was who said one's next of kin was a true friend, but I feel the same way. As long as one can satisfy the need to communicate to the person or people who really matter to them, one knows contentment.

I came across a strange sort of poem recently and I would love to know its author. If anyone can tell me I shall be grateful. Just this bit of it was in a recent novel and is to me a haunting bit of philosophy :

" The skies, they are not always raining,
Nor grey the twelvemonth through,
And I shall meet good days and mirth
And range the lovely lands of earth
With friends no worse than you... "

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Marie-Louise Share.

WHY REVIEW FANZINES?

VERNON L. McCAIN

In a recent letter, Jan Jansen raised the question at the head of this article. He quotes one reader as having said " You don't see GALAXY advertising or reviewing ASTOUNDING", or vice-versa. What you trying to do, run yourself out of business ?"

The curious reader overlooks one thing. The magazines he cites are pro-zines, while the reviews under discussion are in fan-zines, and the prefixes to those two words sum up the difference very succindly! Professional magazines such as Astounding and Galaxy have one primary purpose : to make money (or at least a sufficient amount to pay the expenses of publishing and a living salary for the editor and his assistants, fantasy enthusiasts though they may be). With such a viewpoint, commercial considerations loom large, and advertising one's competitors has never enjoyed very high reput amongst businessmen as a method of improving one's own position in a highly competitive field.

Fanzines however represent another type of endeavor entirely. No fan editor in history has ever made a living from his avocation. A few have managed to work near-miracles and come up with a miniscule profit, but this seldom recompenses them for their time at more than about 1% of what they draw at whatever job they work at. Even if some fannish genius did succeed in making halfway decent wages, it would still be insufficient for him to live on full-time.

I have known several fan-editors who conceived the notion of turning their fanzine into a "professional" fanzine which would support them, but it has always proved impossible. Therefore, it can be seen that the amateur magazine differs in purpose from the prozine: it's editor is working for the sheer joy of it and with the full knowledge that it is financially profitless at best and, in most cases, an activity which constitutes a drain on his finances.

Some fans go to considerable lengths to avoid losing money on their fanzines. Most of us however accept fanzine publishing as a moderately expensive spare-time hobby we must underwrite. Facing such facts squarely, we find our editorial policy is limited only by our financial resources and the commercial motivations which must govern the professional magazines mean nothing to us. Thus, the parallel this reader drew is not really applicable. Fanzines cannot be "run out of business" by the success of other fanzines... only by ennui or personal problems of the editor/publisher.

Even the professional magazines have abandoned their ostrich-like habits and now admit there are other such magazines, even mentioning them by name frequently. I understand in the world's older cities it is customary to have whole streets devoted entirely to shops engaged in one type of business. In newer cities, such as those found in the western hemisphere, similar situations are arising, not through tradition, but as a result of the economic consequences of human nature. It has been observed that a filling-station which is losing money will suddenly become very prosperous if two or three of the vacant corners facing it at the same intersection also have filling stations built upon them. The location impresses people as a good place to stop for gasoline, and all the neighboring businesses thrive.

You'll find, now, in most large cities, that one type business tends to concentrate in a certain section.

Here is one parallel which can be applied to fandom. One fanzine is not too apt to arouse enthusiasm unless it is an unusually fine one. Half a dozen interacting fanzines, using many of the same contributors, and referring constantly to each other, stir up interest. This is especially true in a field like fandom, where so much of the matter is esoteric in nature.

So, even from a business standpoint, perhaps fanzines reviewing fanzines makes sense. But this is far from the main reason for reviewing them.

I suspect the motives for fannish activity could be broken down into three chief categories : about 10% devotion to science-fiction and interest in things literary; about 45% companionship; and about 45% the desire for egoboo.

Egoboo has frequently been condemned as a motive, but without it it is doubtful if fandom would have survived very long; certainly it would not have flourished to anything like its present extent, and even more certainly, fandom would be infinitely duller without the constant pursuit of balm for the ego, which has always livened the atmosphere.

Dean Grennell, the fabulously successful (considering his relatively recent debut on the fannish scene) editor of GRUE has a theory that a magazine's success and popularity is in direct ratio to the number of people who's names get mentioned in each issue. This may be a trifle extreme... I consider SLANT probably the finest fanzine I have ever seen but my name never appeared in it once; however I can't deny the satisfaction I experience every time I see my name in its successor, or, for that matter, in almost any other magazine, although the egoboo involved is in direct ratio to the esteem in which I hold the magazine... tempered, of course, by just what they are saying about me.

Fans do like to see their names in print, though; I believe we can all agree on that. Even though he may not go about it as deliberately as Grennell, the average fan editor realizes this instinctively, and being, in general, amiable and anxious both to please his readers and to have his magazine liked by them, he dispenses egoboo with a fairly lavish hand.

One of the simplest methods of doing so is to review fanzines. All the most active fans put out a fan publication of some kind or other, though not all are generally available. Thus it is possible to mention a sizeable majority of fandom's currently active element without having to go to the effort of thinking up an original method of doing so. This also has the advantage of spreading the egoboo fairly impartially where most other methods tend to concentrate the lion's share among five or six of the editor's closest associates!

Egoboo-provision is probably the most common reason (if not the best one) for reviewing fanzines. Perhaps a subdivision of this is reciprocity. Many fans must feel that they owe a review for a review. They enjoy seeing their own fanzine reviewed and feel that a way to insure this continues is to review in return. Some of the newer fans may feel that being a reviewer in their own right puts them in a better position to draw good reviews for their efforts and evade critical comments, but I suspect any fan harboring such notions is quickly disillusioned.

Some fans like to write and lack ideas, so find reviewing a convenient solution. In other cases (and this is perhaps the best reason for a review column), the fan in question has a number of things he wishes to say about various fanzines, and rather than going to the extra work of writing to the editors individually (some of which comments would find their way into print and some of which wouldn't) he puts them all into a review column.

The idea expressed by the questioner at the beginning of this article is a common one... namely that fan reviews are designed to boost the circulation of the fanzines being reviewed. This is particularly prevalent among new fan editors who somehow confuse reviews in prozines with those in their contemporaries. The fanzine review in another fanzine is negligible as regards attracting subscriptions. It will result in larger circulation in that many fanzines - especially new ones - use these as a source for compiling their trade lists; and these columns are of very positive value in keeping the fan current on what's new in fan publishing. They do a much better job than would be possible if limited to magazines reviewed in the promags or if one relied solely on those fanzines which are sent unsolicited.

A review can result in subscribers, if it is in a prozine! Rog Phillips used to have a tremendous draw when he was reviewing magazines for AMAZING. Fandom's ranks swelled as never before as a direct result, but the calibre of the new recruits was not completely desirable and a Babbit-ish trend was introduced into fandom. Other professional reviewers attract new readers and subscribers with varying efficacy. It is by this route that most fans make their initial contact with fandom. But these reviews are extremely unsatisfactory (to me at least) in what I consider the most important function of any review : that of evaluation. No matter what lofty motives may be claimed, any new feature in any prozine is primarily geared to one of two functions : either that of a circulation-builder or of a circulation-pleaser, (the former of course is considered much more desirable). Neither captiousness nor scholarly analysis hold any great appeal to a public which delights in such rose-colored glasses publications as "READERS' DIGEST". "If you can't say something good, don't say anything" seems to be the motto, and most features, even in science fiction magazines - which are more independant than the average - reflect a depressingly pollyanna-ish mood. The "science-briefs" section implies that new gadgets are making for a Utopia before our eyes; the editorials (with the exception of Campbell and Lowndes) spin us intellectual cotton candy disguised as profundity; even the letter columns, hectic though they are, usually stress a certain editorial blandness and a preference for favorable letters; the book reviews uniformly stress the excellence of everything and are of a very superficial nature, with one magnificent exception, that of Damon Knight, who somehow manages to run counter to all the trends and still get published, if only in some of the lesser magazines; however, the fanzine reviews are the outstanding example of this "it's a wonderful world" trend. Editors seemingly don't wish to offend fans... any fan. I'm aware that in recent months Bert Campbell (the Ray Palmer of Britain), has been the author of some extremely irresponsible reviews. However, in the U.S. we have not had a fearless and honest pro-fanzine reviewer since Merwin checked out of the editorship of STARTLING STORIES.

Since my carreer as a fan editor started about the same time, I found this very frustrating. If a reviewer praises everything, then what does his praise mean ? How much is it worth ?

My magazines were praised highly, but I never could be really sure... were they actually as good as SLANT ?... or as bad as UTOPIAN ? Both received similar amounts of praise to that given me. To aggravate matters, fanzine reviewers were almost unanimously following the same policy at that time. There was no place you could get an honest evaluation of your product.

The editor himself is too close to possess objectivity and friends invariably are kinder than honesty dictates... I found the whole thing extremely irritating, so I determined to do something about it. This was the primary reason I started a fanzine of very limited circulation in the summer of 1952, titled simply "REVIEW".

In addition to other types of reviews and miscellaneous material, it featured extensive fanzine reviews written by me with the expressed purpose of reviewing fanzines honestly and stating whether they were good or bad and just how much of either. I had another motive... at the time I had a great deal to say on the subject of fanzine editing in general.

Since then there have been quite a few other fanzine reviewers who also review honestly, so I no longer possess my original motive. I long since said what I wanted to say about fanzine editing, so much of the satisfaction of writing the reviews has been missing during the last year and a half. But I still continue. Why? Well, it's very simple.... Although Review's contents have changed in various ways as time passed, the fanzine review section has consistently been the most popular feature in the magazine; so I guess it boils down to egoboo again! As long as so many people liked them that much I didn't feel justified in abandoning them. I'm quite sure that the biggest attraction in that section is that almost everyone finds their own magazine discussed. It is even egoboo working the other way since undoubtedly part of my motivation in continuing the column is because I enjoy receiving the praise it brings!

Anyway, that is the reason why I do a review column...

Vernon Mc'Cain.

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(B)

M A R S - ALLER - RETOUR

===== by F.L. NEHER. =====

With the possible exception of Anne Steul, I think that the name of Neher means nothing to you Alphans. Usually he writes adventures about sailors or pilots, but with this book he makes an excursion into the realm of science-fiction. Science-fiction? no, science fact!

The first book ever published about science-fiction dealt with space-travel and was called "The incredible story of the Greek (called) Lucien." It describes how a powerful tempest carries Lucien's ship right to the moon! ((Some tempest!)) However, I'm sure you'll have noticed that there was never an accurate description of the actual flight... Arthur C. Clarke is considered the Head of the astronauts, but yet his novels and books are too simple; he never goes deeply into the technical side. Take, for instance, his novel "Prelude to Space", which deals with the first flight to the moon. What about the ship? Do we know anything about it? It's atomic, yes, but apart from that? Well, we do have a description of the cabin... but could you build one from the indications given in the book? Mind you, I don't say that the novel isn't good, but the author seems only to have taken an interest in the psychological side of things! It is the same with "The sands of Mars" and "Take-off". Good novels I agree, but there again the same criticisms arise: How does the rocket work?"

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Buy it fen, I can't tell you often enough. BUY IT!!!

M. Delplace.

In addition to other types of reviews and miscellaneous material, it featured extensive fanzine reviews written by me with the expressed purpose of reviewing fanzines honestly and stating whether they were good or bad and just how much of either. I had another motive... at the time I had a great deal to say on the subject of fanzine editing in general.

Since then there have been quite a few other fanzine reviewers who also review honestly, so I no longer possess my original motive. I long since said what I wanted to say about fanzine editing, so much of the satisfaction of writing the reviews has been missing during the last year and a half. But I still continue. Why? Well, it's very simple.... Although Review's contents have changed in various ways as time passed, the fanzine review section has consistently been the most popular feature in the magazine; so I guess it boils down to egoboo again! As long as so many people liked them that much I didn't feel justified in abandoning them. I'm quite sure that the biggest attraction in that section is that almost everyone finds their own magazine discussed. It is even egoboo working the other way since undoubtedly part of my motivation in continuing the column is because I enjoy receiving the praise it brings!

Anyway, that is the reason why I do a review column...

Vernon Mc'Cain.



BH

THE MARKSMAN!

by JOHN KIPPAX

=====

" THERE IS NO SIMPLE CONCEPTION OF ETERNITY. BUT IMAGINE
A ROCK, A HUNDRED MILES HIGH, A HUNDRED MILES LONG AND
A HUNDRED MILES BROAD. EVERY HUNDRED YEARS A BIRD CO-
MES AND RESTS ON THE ROCK, AND CLEANS ITS BEAK... WHEN
THE WHOLE ROCK IS WORN AWAY.....
A SINGLE DAY OF ETERNITY WILL HAVE GONE BY !!! "

=O=O=O=O=O=O=

"There is no simple conception of eternity. But imagine a rock..."

He threw back his gaunt head and waved his rifle, and sent out a cack-
le of defiance to the sun which blazed out of a black no-sky.

"... a rock, a hundred miles high, a hundred miles long..." "

This was where he got his revenge on all those who had laughed at him at
first and then had let laughter turn to fear and anger.

They had tried to shut him up; they who talked of eternity as something
assessable, controllable. How wise, how skilful unto death-and beyond-were
these probers in the womb of creation! But he had outwitted them all.
THIS was the afternoon when it happened. He knew!

"... and a hundred miles broad. Every hundred years a bird comes..."

"Ha-yee!" he cried, and his voice bounced on the seemingly infinite
flatness about him, rolling out to nothing in responsions which died as
they multiplied.

"Ha-yee!" he cried again. " CREATOR; I have found them out. Can you
hear me ? I have found them out! I have only to wait! "

"...a bird comes and rests on the rock, and cleans its beak..."

He caressed the barrel of the rifle. "Not long, my beloved, not long"
he crooned to it. Then he shouted " Ha-yee, CREATOR, I have found you
out too! Send that bird! It's late!"

In the bright beamed blackness there appeared a speck, a speck which
took unto itself a scrap of the burnished livery of the sun...

He watched and laughed. He kissed his rifle, brought it to his shoul-
der and took aim... He talked excitedly and the spittle ran down his chin.

"... and cleans its beak. When the whole rock.... "

He fired..... The fugality of echo died away and he saw... that
the creature was still flying! Far, and so far away it was, and yet...it
was coming nearer.

That had been his only cartridge! His mouth was open, babbling...

"Oh, CREATOR, CREATOR, how can this be? How? How? HOW? Let me hide!" He felt his flesh crawling with fear and his fingers started blood, torn from his scrabbings at the bare rock, trying to dig himself in. He was sweating and crying. From above, there came a beating of wings... He knew there was no more hope now. The great circling shadow passed over him. He dared to look up... He screamed.

"Oh, CREATOR, I did not know it was that big ! "

"... the whole rock is worn away..... "

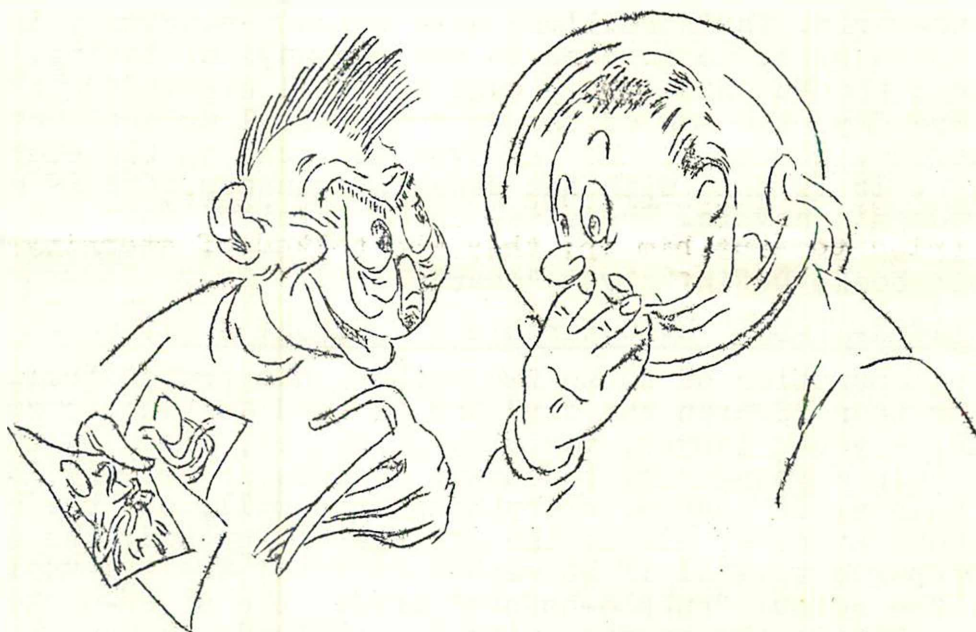
Talons, Talons...

He screamed again as he saw the beak of it, and he thought : "for wearing away, for wearing away..." Then, there was only his sobbing, and a gritty sound as the giant bird walked towards him...

"... is worn away, a SINGLE DAY of Eternity will have gone by!"

°o°o°o°o°

J.K.



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LIB'S CORNER

Hi!

As you may remember, I'm taking over Lib's Corner, Jan being too busy (he says!). If you don't like the way I handle it, you'll have to complain to him. I refuse to take any notice of all the horrible things you may care to say about me. I shall not read the letters anyway... And now, to work!

A) "OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS" by William Tenn, Ballantine 99 - 35 ¢:

Seven stories (and an introduction which is in itself worth the money) by one of the best SF authors. Why not buy it? Why should you miss such delightful fantasies as "Me, Myself & I"? or such satires as "The Liberation of Earth"? or dramatic stories like "Down among the dead men"??? I suggest you buy it you fen, you certainly won't regret it!

B) "RE-BIRTH" - by John Wyndham - Ballantine 104 - 35 ¢:

Wyndham is back with a third novel! as good as the others; maybe even better! It is the story of children possessing strange powers, in a post-atomic war-world. The 'normal' men have found a sanctuary in Labrador, and have but one desire: to go back to the old ways of living. They fear only one thing: the Mutants! They hunt and kill everything that isn't normal. Then one day, the son of the most fanatical mutant-hunter discovers he has strange powers... To tell you the rest of the story however would be unfair. It is told with the usual smoothness that is characteristic of all Wyndham's novels. There is, in my opinion, only one story about mutants that is better and that is Van Vogt's "SLAN". Nevertheless, you should buy this book. Definitely a "must"!

C) "GLADIATOR-AT-LAW" by C.Kornbluth & F.Pohl - Ballantine 107- 35 ¢:

The collaboration of these two authors has proved fruitful! This novel is better than "Search the sky" and as good as "The Space Merchants". Charles Mundin, a young lawyer, manfully struggles, aided by children of the slums, to help a young girl to outwit a sinister Company, owned by two immortal beings. Of course, everything ends well, but the novel leaves a certain discordant note, due to the strange background: the slums, where one must be prepared to kill if he wishes to live; the tribunal, with its jury-machine; the odious "bubble-houses" trade; the stock-market with its 'pari-mutual' machines; the arenas, with their bloody shows, where the loser dies.... All this speaks of a decadent world. The authors have filled the novel with hallucinating scenes (the interview between Mundin and the immortal beings is breath-taking). To be marked with a white stone...

D) "ALIEN DUST" by E.C.Tubb - Boardman - 9/6;

Here we have another "Martian Chronicles", but entirely different to Bradbury's book. Where Bradbury used poetry, Tubb uses realism. There is another major difference: Ted tells the story for itself whereas Ray satirises our civilisation. Naturally, the "Chronicles" are much better, but Tubb has done a very good job and ranks with some of the best authors. Recommended!

Now, we leave U.S. & U.K. and turn to Continental Europe:

E) "LES ROBINSONS DU COSMOS" by Francis Carsac - Gallimard- 38 B.Fr.:

Old Alphans will surely remember an article in French (seriously mishandled by Nutty- talk about my bad English!) - ((you can say that again Maurice. The headaches this guy has caused me...)) about "Ceux de

Nulle Part". Well Carsac, the author of the novel, is back with another story - entirely different (I like this expression)- It's about the collision of our Universe with an alien one, in 19... Our earth is the victim. Parts of it are stripped and carried to a new planet called Tellus. The narrator, a geologist, tells us about the adventures of the population of a small French village; of their battles with reptiles, tigrosaurs and men; of their meeting with centaurs; their building of a new civilisation, etc... Although maybe inferior to "Ceux de Nulle Part", "Robinsons du Cosmos" is nevertheless a good book. To Alphans who can read French : Buy it! You'll enjoy it.

F) " KILSONA, MONDE ATOMIQUE" by Festus Pragnell- Hachette- 38 Frs.B.

I think some of you must know this book, an oldie first published in the thirties: Charles Spofforth has sent his young brother, Learoy, or rather his mind, in the body of an ape-man living on Kilsona, an electron world. There Learoy meets danger, love, adventures and miracles of science. The background is melancholic : Kilsona is a world where the human race is in decadence, except for a small group. The Masters of Kilsona, mollusks with a great intelligence, are finally overcome by this small group of human scientists, aided by Learoy. The book is full of well-described details of battles in the desert, fights between ape-men, etc... Pragnell seems to have intended his book as a warning for the possible consequences of an atomic war: mutations amongst men, animals and plants. Destruction of civilisation etc... I think it is well worth buying, despite the fact that there are some outdated things in it.

((Ed's note: I believe this tale appeared in the July 1935 issue of "WONDER STORIES" under the title of "The Green man of Graypec". Right?!))

G) " LES SABLES DE MARS" by Arthur C. Clarke- Fleuve Noir- 95 B.Frs.

I have nothing to tell you about that book. It has been praised enough already. We all know by now about the tribulations of author Martin Gibson in space and on Mars. French and Belgian fen: BUY IT !

H) "FAHRENHEIT 451" by Ray Bradbury - Denoël - 72 B. Frs.

This book is also well known to British and American fen. In my opinion it is one of the best novels of the future and Bradbury at its best. Another "must"!

I) "LA MACHINE A FRANCHIR LA MORT" by Jean Lec.-Métal- 49 B.Frs/

Of course this machine to by-pass Death is a time-machine. It is invented by a young engineer who uses it to send himself - or a friend- into the Future, the Past being inaccessible. The practical side of the machine is well used : new wines are sent into the Future and come back old and mellow. The machine actually works both ways, for some men come back not a day older than at their departure and others come back much older. The young engineer sends himself beyond his line of death and finds himself in a strange country where there is only a kind of temple. When the men die, they must cross the threshold of the temple in order to get back to earth, or else they may stay in the country which is akin to Paradise: they enjoy immortality and good weather and other countless boons... If you like stories that are a bit mystical and philosophical, buy this one.

J) "MARS ALLER-RETOUR" by F.L. Neher Calmann-Levy - 132 B.Frs.

This novel, translated from the German, is the subject of an article I'm sending Jan with this book review. It will be published now or later.

Well, frankly, this time it's the British and American authors who hold the palm. What can we show to compare with Bradbury & Clarke? Of course Carsac's book is well done but it's nothing compared to F.451! Nevertheless I think there will be a time when French novels will win the day.... M.D.

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M. Delplace.

Another two months gone by end time again for Last Page. It has been moving about the last couple of issues, so it probably is no surprise to you to stumble over it halfway through the issue. Nevertheless, it should have decorated the last sheet of this issue, but well... I sort of got carried away by Ambrosia, with more and more letters clamouring for attention and publication. And as most of you find Ambrosia the best part I spilled the nectar over the resting place of one of the lesser ghods and bade him move over. Last Page now fills the room that should have been occupied by a variety of promag-reviews. Mags I have read and enjoyed the last weeks and months, and wanted to say something about. They ranged from Authentic and Imagination which one could almost call professional fanzines for the friendly atmosphere they carry, to New Worlds and If, both capably handled by their respective editors, to the lights of the field, Galaxy, Asf and F&SF, with the latter's French edition Fiction. A small grumble about the amount of fantasy in the latter, and a grouse against statements by one De Soto in Amazing might have closed the review column. Alas...

Then there ought to have been another room for the fanzines - hundreds of them it seems to me. With the USA well ahead in quantity, England surely overtaking them where it concerns quality - meaning that one finds more worthwhile material per 100 pages British than on 100 pages USmade. Canadian mags striving for attention and bemoaning the fact that they don't get reviewed often enough compared to some crudsheets. Ploy: with a wonderful suggestion by Vinz Clarke, henceforth entitled to the byname Beast of Welling, who proposes to behead all prospective faneds and half the existing ones. Orion: where Ted Tubb laments the disappearance of our mother (SF) from the pages of fanzines to be replaced by childish gibberings. Perhaps he ought to get together with Mr De Soto. Hyphen and New Futurian, just for their varying approaches to fandom; tears for Review and Psychotic which have left us; and for Grue and Satellite, temporarily 'on the shelf'. With perhaps gleeful sounds at the mailing of Geiss' new mag. We'll soon find out...

Cries of joy again at the birth of a French fanzine (professionally printed though) where Mr Renault and his colleagues at Fiction and Mystère Magazine have erected a fanclub to cater for both sf and detective/mystery readers. CELLULES GRISES is very sercon though...

Same noises again from Germany where Walter Ernsting, ed of UTOPIA, with Walter Spiegel, Julian Parr and others, have unveiled themselves as an expectant mother. Name of the child to be Andromeda (don't get mad, Pete) to cater for German fans, in their own language. No info on format, policy or reproduction method yet available. And whilst mentioning Germany - several fans who receive Alpha might as well know that they needn't be scared of submitting material in German. Preferably through Julian as he'll be the poor slave who translates for the powerful master... And how about some more comments from out of that country?

Amazement at Sweden where they seem to have more clubs than they have fans... But all the same, welcome. Hope you enjoy yourselves in fandom.

And a hint at another faned not to start accusing me for all the 'continued's ' in this issue. Dave seems to like them, and as you'll note by the typekey ' he did type out all the articles. My ' stands. But then he is older, whilst I'm not too particular where headings find themselves.

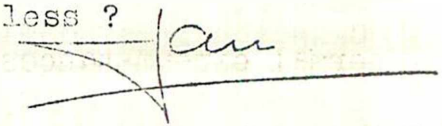
And lastly, there is that ever recurrent problem of money shortage. To be frank it's rather bad... I don't know just how much other fanzines lose, though lose they do, but ALPHA receives enough cash from subscriptions to pay for TWO out of SIX issues. That was on an overall accaounted for circulation of 178 for last year (or up to last issue if you prefer!) That wouldn't be too drastic a figure were it not for the additional cost of postage connected with the magazine which runs up to between five and six dollars monthly. And that does not include the postage on mailing out Alpha.

As I have mentioned early, the original price was calculated for an issue of maximum twenty pages - but we have consistently been publishing more from the time we started charging for Alpha. We've reached and bypassed 30 pages on occasion... So that the only way out seems to be an increase in price. Suggested ~~in~~ that case would be basis prices of 1/- or 15¢ and their respective approx. values in other countries. This would mean a six-issue subscription coming to: 6/-; 90¢; 3,50fl; 4,-DM; 325 Frfr or locally 45 Bfrs. This instead of the prices listed on page 13 hereof.

I think we can safely include the present envelopes in that price, for peter Rigby was not the only one to ask re the possibility, albeit he was the only one to take drastic steps...

Alternatively, we could just issue on the 20 pages originally scheduled. I would prefer to keep the present size, which gives us more of a chance to publish a rounded-off issue than 20 pages would, through the variety of material than can be squeezed in. I refuse to consider even buying an "elite" typer! The matter has been breached to various fans on the continent, and they are on the whole in favour of increasing the subscription price. Rather than just pulling off the deal though, I'd like to receive your opinion on it, the majority ruling. So please let's know by return?

Will you pay more? Or will you be satisfied with less?



F I R S T P A G E

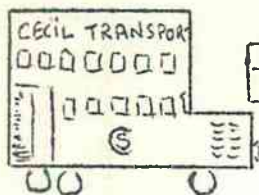
===== continued from page 2.

Jean and I devoted all Friday night and Saturday afternoon to the rigging up of the bar, the placing of chairs, tables, radio, decorating, etc. etc. Pin-ups, copies of Alpha and other fanzines were liberally displayed in order to give the place a fannish appearance. I think we made a good job of it too, eh, Jean?

Next I must mention Mr & Mrs Nic Oosterbaan, a real nice couple who also contributed a great deal to the general gaiety of the party. Most of you have already met Nic of course. Then there was Diana Roscoe and my wife Yvonne who worked liked slaves to prepare sustenance in the form of sandwiches and what-nots. Harry Roscoe, our treasurer, was of course the barman and a very nice job he did too. We even had some bheer over!!!

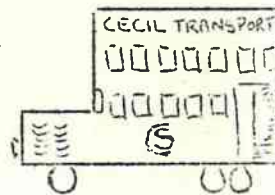
Also present was a chap called Jan "Killer" Jansen, who seemed to have some difficulty in controlling his legs, and possibly his arms... and then there was Maurice "don't touch it" Delplace, alias Sourpuss, who kept pestering us with the same question: "when are we going to discuss sf?"

Milly and Jean had ^{also invited} a couple of friends, Mr & Mrs J. Bockstal, and a jolly good idea it was too. I had a very interesting discussion with the chap about jazz... Maybe I can induce him to sub... Next we have a fellow called Frank van Betten, a very nice chap who works at my office and last but not least our guest of honour Ron "love 'em or leave 'em" Bennett and MONIQUE! I'd better eggsplane that Monique Steel is a girl from the AMI too, and with whom Ron Bennett tried to get off, but apparently he didn't know his way around because she had to show him where to get off. Still, we all had a pretty good time, and to quote our friend Maurice: "The Twerpcon might have been better... but it might have been much worse...." p.p. 2. 2. 2. 2.



BUSMAN'S HOLIDAY

RON BENNETT



When we were about five miles outside Wakefield my driver turned on the inside lights for a second. This of course is the trade signal that an inspector or other VIP is about to board the bus. And here certainly was a Very IP. She was about five foot five with the proverbial blonde hair and blue eyes. My driver turned and winked as I rang him off. I grinned and went to collect her fare. She booked right through to Castleford and settled down to read away the journey. You're ahead of me here... The book she was reading was "The Illustrated Man"! I believe someone once let it slip out that I was a Bradbury fan. This is not true. I'm the Bradbury fan!

"I'm surprised at you", I said to the girl, "reading tripe like that". Does your mother know? I'm sure she wouldn't like it!"

"She wouldn't like me speaking to strange men either", said the dreamboat, and grinned. I was hooked.

We spoke of science fiction. She loved Bradbury she said, especially the straight fantasy type of tale he used to produce. I asked her about George Richards, but she didn't know the name and said that the only thing she read was science fiction. This was grand. As soon as we got back in the depot I asked if I could be put on that run permanently, a request which was immediately granted as it's not such an interesting run, under normal circumstances.

The next morning I looked out for her and was extremely pleased to see her waiting at the stop. We talked more about science fiction and I told her all about Fandom, fanzines, fanese and conventions. She was intrigued. I promised to lend her some fanzines and send her a copy of PLOY. I lent her the mags the next day and she returned them the day after and said they were grand and asked to explain what certain fanwords meant... There were more free rides that week on that run....

Within the month she'd read practically everything I owned. She always returned the little pile of magazines, fan and pro, the next day and commented on them in detail. She said she'd subscribe to some of the fanzines and perhaps even write for some of them.

Then came the fateful day when I lent her my entire file of Bradbury WEIRD TALES. She thanked me profusely. The next morning I looked out for her again but the only person who got on at her usual stop was an inspector who threatened to report me if I didn't hurry up and take the fares and fill in my way-bill.

She never caught my bus again. When I'd left the bus company and had returned to College, I sent a copy of PLOY out to the address she had given me. I had it back within a week with a polite note from the Postmaster General stating that no such address existed and the name was not on the GPO's directory...

My trust in human nature had been shattered. I cried; I rent my clothes; I even did some College work...

About two months later, I had to go to Barnsley for an interview, and travelled by bus through Wakefield. We were about five miles out of Wakefield when she got on the bus... For one awful, ghastly moment I

(continued on p. 21)

MY FIRST FUNNY STORY

GREG BENFORD

The other day I decided to write a funny story. I had written several satires before, but you couldn't term these things as stories. For some reason I wanted to branch out into another field. I dunno why, maybe because I was about to be expelled from the others!

Anyway, I sat down at my typer and tried to think of an idea. To coin a phrase : my mind was as blank as the paper in the machine... Suddenly a great blinding flash of thought hit me! I would write a story about a fan who had dreams of being a BNF and died of heartbreak because his name was one with only seven letters! What an idea! I thought. And yours truly set to work...

Man, my typer almost burned up that night! The words gushed out of me so fast my fingers were worn down half an inch before midnight! At one o'clock in the morning I jerked the fourth - and last - page out of the typewriter. It was finished! Since I was going up to see Jan in two days, I saved it to take with me.

When I burst into his room three days later the story was clutched in my paw.

"Jan" I blurted out, "here's my first funny story! Read it and tell me how you like it! "

He didn't say a thing, but wiped his ink-covered hands on my white shirt and reached for the papers. His face didn't move at all as he read it! I think he blinked his right eye, but I'm not sure.

" Well, how do you like it?" I inquired.

He grunted and threw it over to Dave, who was busy pronouncing cuss words to some girl. Dave wiped his ink-covered hands on the girl's skirt and picked up the story. When he finished reading the first page the girl picked it up and wiped the ink off her skirt.

He finished the other three pages and threw it back at me. It landed in the trash basket.

"Well fellers" I said, picking it out of the trash basket, "how do you like it?"

"Ugh! "

"Why?" I asked, my temper rising slowly but surely.

Dave went back to examining the girl, so Jan explained:

" Greg, that just isn't a funny story. That sort of stuff just isn't done these days. All that was done way back in the forties. Nowadays everybody writes modern fan satire. You're old-fashioned! "

" Whatta mean", I muttered.

"Well, I've got a little something in the typer that's about finished now. Come here and I'll show you what's it all about."

Jan searched for the typewriter until it was almost time to leave. He didn't find it!

"Well", he said, as he pushed me out the door, "You get the idea anyway. My satire would have shown you and would have served as an excellent example, at least if I could have found it. Your story was good, but it's not up with the times. You ought to keep up with the trends instead of writing anything you like. ALPHA is a modern fanzine and we don't use old things like that."

"Come around this time ten years from now and let us know how you're getting along", Jan said as he kicked me down the stairs and out on to the street.

So that's how my first funny story was received... "Old-fashioned" is it? Har,har,har,har,har! Those guys knew my story was too good for their lousy little scandal sheet, and told me it was no good because some other good fanmag might publish it.

They can't recognise talent when they see it...

Some weird people....

Greg Benford.

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

Continuing:"BUSMAN'S HOLIDAY"
(from page 19) :

didn't recognise her. Then all of a sudden I realised. I half-moved over the gangway to her seat, but she looked at me without even the flicker of an eyelid! She took out a magazine and began to read.

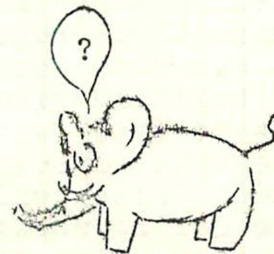
The conductor collected her fare and, overcome by those blue eyes and that fatal grin, was soon in earnest conversation about her reading matter.

"It's the only thing I ever read", I heard her say.

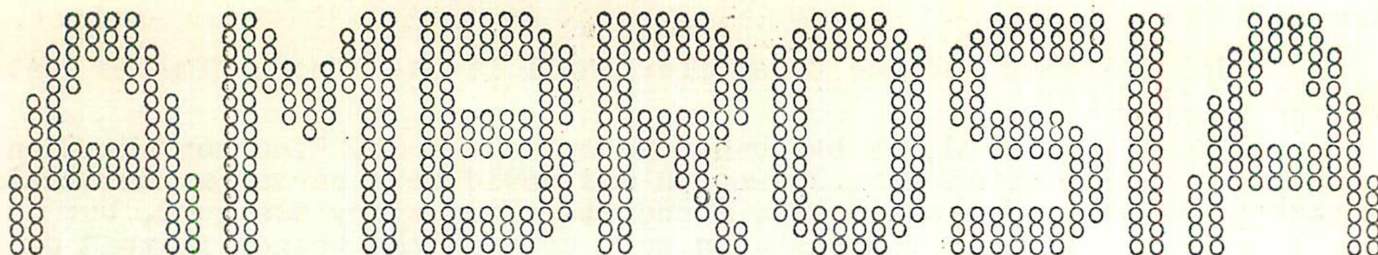
I strained my neck trying to read the title of the magazine on her lap.

It was " TRUE WESTERN ADVENTURES".....

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



"Now I wonder who let that silly character in here..."



ERIC NEEDHAM :- From your letter I get the impression that Roza is a terrible woman, and is not very much different from most women I know. They do make a hell of a fuss over the silliest things, don't they? Shoes on the floor, books lying about, a coat on the back of a chair instead of being hung up...ahhhh, I can't be bothered. It won't make me live any longer if I do, and worrying about such things will probably bring me to an early grave. Still, women have to show their authority and influence some way, if only to show how loving they can be when they're in the mood, such as when you get a broken spine or pneumonia. I wonder why women expect to be loved when most of the time they are the most obstinate contrary wilful bitches imaginable?

§§§§§ For your own sake, Eric, I hope you are not including femmes, fannes, fanettes, or whatever they call themselves, in your above generalisation. You'll never get someone to use your pressure cooker that way...

ARCHIE MERCER :- Here's a little story that may interest you. You know of course, that in a village or a small town there are no secrets. For example, wherever I may go In Hykeham, and usually in Lincoln too, somebody's bound to say next day - "I saw you in such-and-such a place yesterday". Unless it's a thing they can't very well say to your face, when they compromise by telling everybody else instead. Anyway, at work, there's allsorts of gossip comes out. Particularly being as I am in an office with a dozen others, half women, I get to hear a lot. In particular about a certain family. But I'll begin at the beginning.

There is a certain Hykeham woman - she's getting on a bit now of course, but I don't think she's retired yet - of notoriously loose habits. Anyway, she eventually produced a daughter, and this daughter grew up to take after (if not before!) her ma. Also, she came to work at the Malleable. (All this was before my time, of course, it's entirely hearsay. I daren't investigate for myself.) At the Malleable, she succeeded in fascinating a young man who also worked there. There was a bit of a scandal about it - as far as I can make out, somebody discovered them together in the laboratory, where the gal was measuring his potentialities with precision equipment!) Anyway, they both left, married each other, and continued to be a public scandal to all the good Lincolnshire folk. The man, it seems, slept regularly with umpteen women, including his mother-in-law, and his wife was as bad. One of our women, whose husband is cashier at a local building site, has a story about an apprentice who was sent to their house to fetch water for tea-making, and stayed an hour or so. This happened several times, so eventually the cashier went along and peeped in the window. After which the apprentices were forbidden to call there - at any rate during working hours. (I understand it was all on the house too.) And other tales of a similar nature - of commercial travellers, innocently calling, who only just escaped with their honour - or SAIS they did.

Then the husband of the girl went to work alongside the husband of another of our women, and the air really began to burn. Every day we were regaled to tales of just what this bloke had said at work, what had been said to him, what he'd done, etc etc etc. How he'd left his wife and was living with various other women - and still sleeping with his mother-in-law on the quiet. He was seen around town, his wife was seen

around town, how he was questioned at work in some fashion or another, all the rest of it. He'd take weeks off work at a time to play with his women. (He got paid for it too, pretending he was ill!) Then - came the sudden bombshell. The police had caught him living in sin with a young male student, and were prosecuting. (Oh, yes, before this happened, he'd produced a G-string affair with a figleaf attachment at work, and had told them he was now doing artists' modelling in the evenings).

Anyway - he'd copped it now, and the case was coming up. It came up. It wasn't in Lincoln it had happened apparently, or else they were holding it elsewhere for some reason. His wife - I'm not sure just whose side she was supposed to be on now - attended dressed up to the nines, with the avowed intention of trying to seduce the judge. And they adjourned it or something. He'd left work now, so for a few weeks we had no news.

Then came the payoff line. His former fellow-workers had had a card from him. With a Belgian postmark. So You Have Been Warned. He's all yours!

§§§§§ Thanks for the warning, Archie. I received a letter to include in Ambrosia from my fellow-worker. As he didn't mention anything about censoring any of the material in it, I'll run off the whole thing. This certainly clears up some questions...

BOB BLOCH :- I have deliberately held off answering your letter so that I ----- might report briefly on the Bellefontaine Midwescon of this past weekend.

Actually it turned out to be a very quiet affair...amongst the 100 or more attendees there was not a single door-breaker or fist-cuffer or public passer-outer. The informal program was even more teneous than in previous years, thus affording more time for visiting back and forth. Unfortunately, owing to the fact that people kept moving around between 2 hotels and 2 motels and Doc Barrett's 2 houses, there was a little difficulty in managing to see folks for as long as one might desire. Still and all, the weekend passed happily enough.

Amongst the new attendees this year was Howard Lyons' wife, the former Pat Patterson, who proved to be an accomplished caricaturist and a very charming gal to boot. I never saw anyone trying to boot her, but I'm sure she'd kick them right back. She made a very favorable impression, as did the whole Canadian delegation.

Quite a number of pros present, considering the small total attendance, and Tucker was there too. New pro on the scene was Harlan Ellison who has just made two sales -- a story to Larry Shaw for his new sf 'zine, and an article on teen-age gangs. New twosome was Joe Gibson and Roberta Collins, recently engaged.

When Bob Tucker arrived with Fern at their motel, he found a blonde wondow-dummy in his bed. Nobody seems to quite know how it got there: nobody on hand before except Barrett, some of the Canadians and myself, and certainly all of us are above such childish pranks.

All in all it was a nice gathering: next year it may be transferred to Cincinnati or some larger community where there is a single hotel big enough to house everyone and better transportation facilities available. Doc Barrett and the Ohio crowd have certainly built themselves a real fannish tradition with these unprogrammed and impromptu get-togethers and nobody would want to see the annual Midwescon gaffiate.

Lots and lots of music-talk from the Canadians: you would have enjoyed it. Tape-recorders and movie-cameras very much in evidence too.

I have kept your Dreadful Secret: told nobody that you are Br-t-sh by birth. Everyone thinks you are an Antwerp.

Will keep this short as I must now catch up on mail and on the work schedule here. Give my best regards to Jan, and please excuse my delay in replying.....

PS: Dave Kyle got the dates mixed and flew to Bellefontaine one week in advance of the con! Then he flew back/... and returned a second time! This makes Dave my personal nomination for True Fan Number One. But I shudder to think what might happen if **England** got a World Convention and the same thing happened. Can you imagine Dave swimming the Atlantic twice in a week?

§§§§§ In order of appearance: thanks for the gen on the con, Bob. Best wishes from local fans here to Roberta and Joe. Thanks for the 'revelation'. Self-explanatory, that. And yes, let's second that nomination...

SID BIRCHBY :- You've seen those adverts that go : "For many years I have ----- been a user of your wonderful product and I have great pleasure in declaring how great a relief it is for all ailments?"

Well, that's really the reason for this letter. I've been reading "ALPHA" for some time, and I thought it was about time I wrote and told you so. Even if you do nothing else with this, you could print it under the heading "Genuine Unsolicited Testimonial" !

You'll be disgusted to hear, though, that the copies I've read have been ones lent me by a Kind and Benevolent Old Gentleman who sometimes buys matches from me as I stand in the gutter. I can't afford to pay for my own copies, since all my money goes in riotous living at the Conventions.

But I haven't always stood in the gutter. Things were better once. I used to stand on the pavement. And one of these days, if I can overcome this Con-crave, I'll be a success! I'll be rich again ! I'll be able to take it easy, and sit in the gutter.

And when I do, one of the first things I'll fix is a sub to ALPHA. Many's the time when trade has been slack, I've brightened up my cheerless existence reading your 'zine, and as the pitch-black smog of Manchester descends over the city you might often see me striking match after match in my gnarled old hands so that I can see to read the bits where there's not much ink. I owe it to you to repay some of the happy moments I've had with ALPHA.

How many matches do you want per issue?

§§§§§ Rather exceptionally, I'll quote my own letter for a change:
Dear Sir,

We thank you for your letter of the 29th last, and appreciate the fact that you have shown such marked approval of our product. Unfortunately, we can hardly condone the existence of people actually underselling copies of our precious magazine, and we would like **you** to draw **the** attention of the offender to the laws regulating the loan of magazines. Due to lack of space, we have not often been able to list these ourselves, but we are sure that if you would care to check the editorial notices of other magazines, quoting from memory we would suggest Illustrated and Everybody's, in which magazines you will find a statement to the effect that "resale and lease of the magazines is prohibited, and liable to be punished with fines or imprisonment".

We have the intention of circulating, ourselves, a circular to this effect to such Kind and Benevolent Old Gentlemen as might be found on our mailing list, though search as we may, we have not yet been able to Turn up any such creature this far.

Suspensions point however to undercover agents of rival magazines being at work, especially the agents of the now-folded Astroneer and Zenith most likely being responsible. We feel it foolish that they should hold our magazine responsible for its demise, as after all it was their utter unreadable matter and illegible printing which caused their downfall. Having however heard the news that a new magazine, under the title of N & T has since been founded, it is well possible that, by lending out ALPHA they hope to collect the cash that should normally have gone to our representative, for their own meagre and irregular zine.

We have however decided not to press charges in view of your willingness to arrange trade material, and though such is not the custom, we shall enquire about the matter at the next exchange of correspondence with out representative. From the Belgian point of view, the amount of material should be approx. 16 boxes, mint, sent postfree to our representative, but the possible lower price in UK will have to be checked first before we can definitely agree to this. Please note that the given price is 'per issue' and not an annual subscription....

SID BIRCHBY : again:- Oh, how humbled to the dust I am. I see now how ----- unwise it was to try pulling the wool over the eyes of the International Alpha Organisation by disguising the identity of the Kind and Benevolent Old Gent who has been lending me copies of Alpha to read. Yes, it was indeed the agent of a foreign fannish power who slipped them to me. I cannot tell you his name, since I don't know it myself. He always identifies himself by the code-name Roneo.

The whole business started quite innocently on my part. This Old Gent used to supply me with scraps of food as I sat in the gutter selling matches. I thought it was rather kind of him. But presently he began to wrap them up before handing them to me. Handing, did I say? He isn't all that kind. I meant throwing.

The wrappings were back issues of Alpha! Before I could help myself, I was an addict. I can't manage without the stuff now. Well, I'm prepared to go to any lengths. I've gone to any lengths! I've sold the match business and sent you a subscription, in real counterfeit money. You or rather your agent should be getting it soon.

And how shall I make a living now, you ask, pretending to care? Well, confidentially, I'm in on the ground floor of a brand-new invention, that will sell like hot cakes. A gadget to stop those shoes falling off the feet as you slop along to work. It's called.... Not a word to the world, remember,! This is big.

\$\$\$\$\$ Well, I haven't told 'em what it was, Sid. And I was glad to note that you'd brought it as far as to sit in the gutter before you handed the match-business over. I am now looking into the matter of whether it is legal to use Alpha as wrapping paper for scraps of food....

DICK ELLINGTON :-...These French articles intrigue me summat. Never got ----- around to learning - or even studying - French, but it looks real interesting. Only trouble is that it comes out something like this: -

Title: Hmmm. Here, Loupe?, that's something a jeweler wears isn't it? On dissecting? Oh well, on to the article.

Hah! It's a great honour for me.....shucks. for the suthin' Belgian (or belch?) review that specializes in Science-Fiction for something heatt suthin' suthin' literature (two words here that didn't print but look like European maybe) literature of Science fiction something it is? (What the hell?)

But (oh-oh) the house something red is something without doubt the blah, blah blah. Suthin' suthin' the services of a magnificent

(phallus - no, it couldn't be) of young talented authors, mumble, mumble the first place.

Something the young authors merits (?) very (meritous maybe?) something mumble mumble first mumble our mumble and friend Jimmy Guieu who something (won?) the grand prize of Science-fiction 1954 of the Club of the French Intellectuals, mumble for the (or from?) the grand poet and literateur Jean Auvray. (Don't get any of this next bit) pure science (hah!) of the something psychological future.

But anyway you get what I mean. I think I'll try to dig up a French-English dictionary and see what I can get out of this...

§§§§§ Hope you managed alright Dick. Thanks ever so for the snapshots of the FavVetCon. Nice to know what our subscribers look like, especially when they're Trina's type... But then, you haven't seen Monique.....

WILLIAM GERKEN, Jr :- Recently I received a letter from a fan-friend of ----- mine, Greg Benford, in Germany, telling me you were running a con' in Antwerp on the 29th of this month. He suggested I send you some copies of "Fen", a small fanzine I edit, to sell at the convention.

In consonance with this, I'm sending in a separate envelope, 25 copies of the current issue. The price on the mag is 10¢ but if you want to sell them at a nickel per, it's okay with me. Also enclosed a small sign to stand by them.

If possible, send the money collected in US postage stamps to me; deducting the cost for return postage. Thanking you in advance....

§§§§§ Whereas they say that science fiction is principally pessimistic, one can't say the same about fans... I was scared stiff I'd have to ask Bill to send me stamps to pay for the return of the mags, but I believe the difference isn't more than a couple of cents, so ...

RICK SNEARY :- Ahhhh! My fame is made... I get free zines from Belgium. ----- Really, thanks for the thrill... I have awarded Ellington 60¢ in the coin of our realm...

You know, in a way you people who are nearly isolated - any fans, anywhere - are lucky. Then you don't have to think of the people you could be seeing, but don't... And when someone comes.. Wow! Here in Los Angeles (South Gate is part of L.A. County, and only 15 miles from the Heart, in which no one in their right mind lives) there are probably 200 or so fans, of one degree or another.. Yet LASTS pulls an average of 15-20 people. Probably not 25% of whom have any other fan activity than going to the club. There must be nearly a dozen FAPA members in the area, yet even they rarely see more than two or three of each other. It is all a vast network of little cliques and groups. Just a disinterest in others. I probably know 100 fans within 20 miles of me. Yet I regularly see only 8. None of whom are active.... I say this, because I honestly think you sound like you had more fun, fannish fun, than we do. I'm sure Willis does. When fans are plentiful, it seems sort of foolish to go and see them. Beside, they might not care to see you. So everybody stays home, in their own drunken, juvenile, mundane, or writers circle.

§§§§§ You made your fame yourself, Rick. When you defend a mag you haven't seen, cause the review wasn't to your liking, I could hardly pass the matter by without further action. Hence the long search for odd pages in order to get you a complete issue (the one under review) and the illogical two blank pages between page 15 and 16. You were quite right. There are no numbers between 15 and 16. I didn't number them, did I?...

DON ALLEN :-



"Would've been much more Continental if they'd had some girlie photos in !!!

PETER RIGBY:- Alpha survived its long journey with just slightly frayed edges that are unavoidable. Now, I don't know anything about the PROFIT and LOSS of fanzine pubbing, except that the latter seems prevalent, but I'd like to see you splash out on large envelopes in which to send your zine. Andromeda, Hyphen, Orion and Satellite all use envelopes, and the fanzine arrives in first class condition. Do you think the price is prohibitive in your case? Pity if it is...

Lib's Corner was, well...so, so. The writing needs peppering up a bit. I hope Maurice Delplace will start to realise that book-reviewing does not, and should not, consist of a full summary of the plot. This part should be brief. What should be dwelt upon is the author's style of writing, (or lack of it), his characterisation, his readability. The general impression the book gives the reviewer should be stated. A synopsis which is too full helps spoil the story for later readers of the book; a thing all good reviewers try to avoid....

(§In a later letter§) - As regards envelopes, I'd be glad if you would put my next half-dozen Alphas in these. Okay?

§§§§§ As Peter has probably realised by now, since I sent him a copy of TIOT in one of his envelopes, they are too small, being half-quarto, English size. Our size paper, I believe you refer to it as A4 - is larger, and one has to fold the mag three times to squeeze it in. However, we can take a hint, and besides me is a pile of envelopes, already addressed for this issue. More anent this in Last Page, though.

WIM STRUYCK :- Jan Jansen is an ungrateful...well, person. You spend at least an hour or so of your valuable time to write some, even more valuable prose for his magazine, and what does he say...?

First he insinuates that I don't know what I'm talking about. So I don't know about women do I? He! It's just because you and too many of your readers are much too young, and the older readers just mentally retarded (and how!) for these first-hand revelations. But believe me, I could tell you something. What do you know about the stork, please? I thought so.

And that's only one thing. But I won't disturb illusions.

Second: he doesn't want to praise our efforts. He doesn't say they are bad, mind you, but gently tells us we are no Willis', Grennell's or Bloch's. And who may these gentlemen be? Who wants to be wasting his time reading amateur prose of such authors?

Thirdly: Our English has to be corrected! And not just a word here or there...whole sentences he mentions! Now if one of my friends and colleagues (and that is spelled the right way, 'cause I checked in the dictionary!) as Arthur (A.C. to you) Clarke, or Aldous Huxley, or Bill Shakespeare (good old Bill, wonder what's keeping him from replying to my rave letter) would tell me so, I might accept it, but coming from an illiterate creature like Mr Jansen...Oh, no, ! Fans, I should really publish some of the letters written by that half-baked editor of Alpha; mistakes and misspellings by the dozens, so that even my wife with her

meagre knowledge of English can spot them on the other side of the room. (§ Is this the modern version of the writing on the wall?§) But I had better not antagonise him too much. I'll keep it a secret as long as I can.

To top his shameful writing, Mr Jansen asks in his editorial: "Maybe some readers will feel cheated - missing the usual Alpha mixture!" You know the mixture: Jansen and Vendelmans, Jan and Dave, Vendelmans and Jansen, and so on, don't you. Yeah, how we miss them. But Ann, Marc and Leopold, Belinde and the rest, WE all know better. Thanks to us (without bragging, but we must face the facts) this issue of Alpha has become something....well what has it become....? Something apart! Something surpassing description. Yes, it must be said, must be shouted from the rooftop and cathedral spires: something to be preserved throughout the ages! It is something fine...(Laat ie fijn zijn!) AN ALL STAR CONTINENTAL ISSUE!

And Jan, why always pick on me when there's a smattering of French in the issue? People will start to think that I have something against French! And just because I once told you that I can't understand some words. I do understand some words. (§ So, evidently, does Dick!§) and it looks nice anyhow. Better than those sentences in a language you call Dutch or Vlaams. Well, perhaps it's Vlaams, but Dutch? No it ain't!

And co-authors in this issue, I hope you will continue on the good path in following issues? And don't expect me to do the same. Alpha is too good for that, really, and besides it is little fun having to write under the threat of the cat o' nine tails and other torture instruments, and then knowing what is in the issue before you even open it...No thrill, no tension...OK, Jan, take that whip away. I'll start right now...

§§§§§ Well, Wim did start, and I have just received a story by him. I shall not however tell him in which issue it will be found. Keep him in suspense to repay for the lost thrills.

ANN STEUL :- About Lieber Klaus, I have already explained, I could not break your heart with just two words! After all, I still love you mit der gleichen Wucht wie zuvor! What else could ever be between us but those measly old miles? You know how my heart listens to every word that comes from you. Wie könnte ich je die Hand vergessen, die mich die erste Schritte ins fandom tun liess. Ewige Dankbarkeit lässt mein Herz schneller schlagen. Sehnsuchtsvoll schweift ein Blick ins Weite und sucht den Stern, der auch über dir leuchtet! usw. And it was just a simple way of addressing people you know, I would not dare love someone else as long as you are around. You really are the one and only love of my maidenly heart, please believe me. What do you care about Klaus! But you, Jan, are the innermost life of my soul and how much deeper can you get....

§§§§§ Some letters one is thankful for receiving....letters like these, and one is thankful that one's wife doesn't read either English or German....

ANDY & JEAN YOUNG :- We also enjoyed the French bit; we're perfectly ----- happy to continue to see such pieces in either French or German, as Jean reads French, and I, German. In fact, we'd urge that you have something in one or the other of these languages in every issue. So be sure that not all of your English-speaking readers demand English all the time!.....

§§§§§ Is everybody happy?.... I hope so, cause this is the end of another issue. Please write in and tell us about this and that herein, for appropriate egoboo, and another enjoyable Ambrosia.

Sorry for the too many 'continued's', but Dave likes his articles to start at the head of the page. Continuation of First page is found on p.18 instead of 26 as mentioned on p.2.

This sounds complicated..... 