

What's New

There's been a great deal happening on the Southern convention front recently, both good and bad. First, DeepSouthCon /Bhamacon has announced that their professional Guest of Honor, Jack Vance, will be unable to attend the convention next August 28-30 due to prior commitments made with his European publisher concerning a convention in Europe. As a replacement, the convention has announced that Bob Shaw, pro and fan writer, will be the GoH. Shaw won the Hugo recently for Best Fan Writer, in case you forget quickly... memberships are \$10 until August 1st, \$12 at the door. Bhamacon 2, PO Box 57031, Birmingham, AL 35259.

There still seems to be a little bit of confusion over Satyricon, to be held in Knoxville April 3-5, 1981. One source of information says memberships are \$15, another says \$10--I'd send the smaller amount and ask them to advise you if more money is needed. The announced Guest of Honor, Anne McCaffrey, will not be able to attend the convention for medical reasons; replacing her will be Gordon Dickson (pro GoH) and Guy Lillian (fan Goff). Send money or requests for information to Satyricon, PO Box 323, Knoxville TN 37901. ((SFPAs may be interested to know that the committee intends to schedule some celebratory event concerning the 100th SFPA mailing, which will go out the week prior to the convention.))

MidSouthCon, scheduled for June in Chattanooga, TN, has been cancelled altogether. The convention lost its Guest of Honor, Spider Robinson, a month and a half ago, and chairman Andy Purcell has been unable to secure a suitable replacement. Furthermore, health and personal reasons have made it difficult for Andy to work on MidSouthCon at all recently.

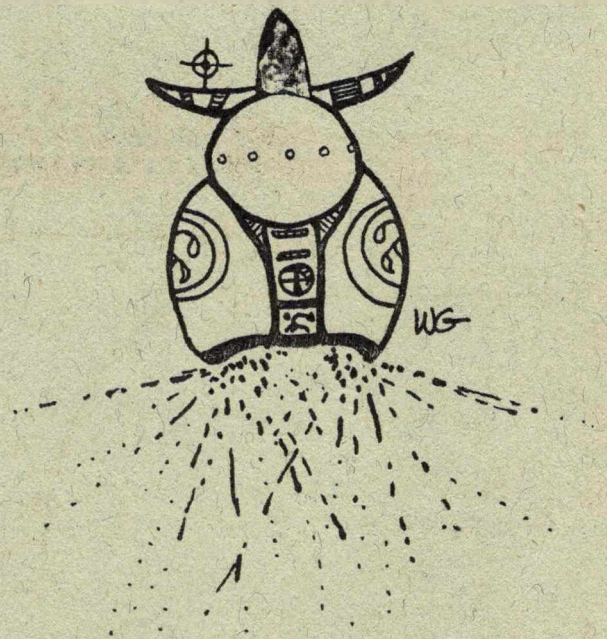
Michael Bledsoe, former chairman of Coastcon IV, has resigned his position with the Coastcon committee. The new Coastcon chairman's name has not been made available to us at present. Bledsoe resigned because of occupational changes that required him to move from Biloxi to Austin, TX on the spur of the moment. He is still active with the bid for the 1982 DSC in Jackson, MS, working with James Madden on that.

Chattacon has an opening on its board of directors following the resignation of Nicki Lynch from the committee recently. In addition, convention chairman David Tabor either has moved to Knoxville already or is moving very soon (my source was unclear on this), which might create an opening in the committee after this year's Chattacon.

In other fannish news, Dick Lynch has resigned as editor of SUNCATCHER, the ABC fanzine. His sudden resignation, for personal reasons, resulted in the appointment of Jim Gilpatrick as the third editor of the fanzine. The first issue is scheduled for release at Chattacon, will be 42 pages, including an interview with Joan Vinge, pieces by Grant Carrington and Frederik Pohl, commentary, articles, and whimsy by some of the best that Southern Fandom has to offer, and quality artwork. Copies may be purchased in advance for \$1 each, may be purchased at the upcoming Chattacon, or may be ordered later from editors Cliff Biggers, Wade Gilbreath, and Jim Gilpatrick.

Birmingham fan Valerie Proctor will be getting married to Tuscaloosa fan Jerry McKnight in April of 1981. Valerie and Jerry plan to make their home in Tuscaloosa.

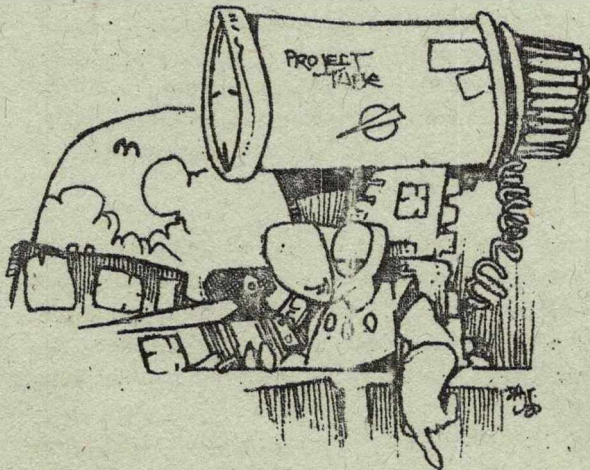
Susan Wood, well-known fan writer and essayist, died November 12th, at the age of 32, from an overdose of barbiturates. Mike Glyer, in FILE 770, says that there has been a proposal that some suitable memorial be created.



ATARANTES #42 (IV, vi) is edited and produced by Cliff Biggers, 6045 Summit Wood Drive, Kennesaw GA 30144, for the Atlanta Science Fiction Club (ASFIC). December, 1980 issue. Available free to ASFIC members, 12/\$4 to nonmembers, or for The Usual. All contents copyright (c) 1980 by Cliff Biggers; rights revert to original contributors. We can always use artwork and locs--please submit appropriately. (In other words, send it to us!) This is the special Christmas issue, which means it's small--I have to have time to shop, you know.

Choice Morsels

GALAXY and GALILEO magazines are, for all intents and purposes, defunct; the company was unable to distribute a single issue of GALAXY, although one was printed. // Chat, the Chattanooga clubzine, has dropped from monthly to bi-monthly status due to the expense, time, and trouble of getting a monthly zine out to the membership before each meeting. This leaves ATARANTES as the only Southern clubzine to have followed a strict monthly schedule all of its life--and I'm beginning to wonder if everyone else knows something I don't... // "Standing Buffalo" Gilpatrick (known as Jim by his friends) has made a serious proposal that a Southern fan fund be established to exchange visitors between Westercon and DeepSouthCon; anyone with input on this should send their comments, in loc form, to ATARANTES, where we will offer a discussion of the topic. // Janice Gelb, she of many addresses, is relocated in Los Angeles for the time being. She is with her brother, Jerry, after checking out the Houston area and finding it less than satisfactory. // According to Irvin Koch, Ken Cobb has been named as the new member of the Chattacon Board. Also, two more items from the same source: the 100th SFPA mailing will be collated at Satyricon (whose rates are still \$10, he says), and there will be a REHUPA banquet at the same con. // There are reports of an invitation-only convention being scheduled in Lexington, KY, to be run primarily by Midwestern fans. If the reports are verified, Jim Gilpatrick has expressed interest in organizing a "crash-the-South's-first-invitation-only-con" party. hkok // Wade Gilbreath will be releasing the first issue of a personalzine by Chattacon, he plans.



Meeting

DECEMBER MEETING--by Dann Littlejohn --December 20th

This Month Contains 1 SF Flavored AsfiChristmas Meeting Mix, Roundrobin style...

Your ingredient for our December meeting can be anything you wish to bring: food, drink, games, decorations, indoor swimming pools, records, Marta bus seats, whatever you think will add to a holiday activity dish. Come dressed as an alien or a Sagan if you want. Anything goes. Let's kick off the first Cosmic Christmas of the decade on an Orkian note! (What is the Orkian word for 'party'?)

Remember that you may bring a gift to exchange. Please keep it under the \$3 range, and specify whether it is for a male, a female, neither, an Orkian, or....

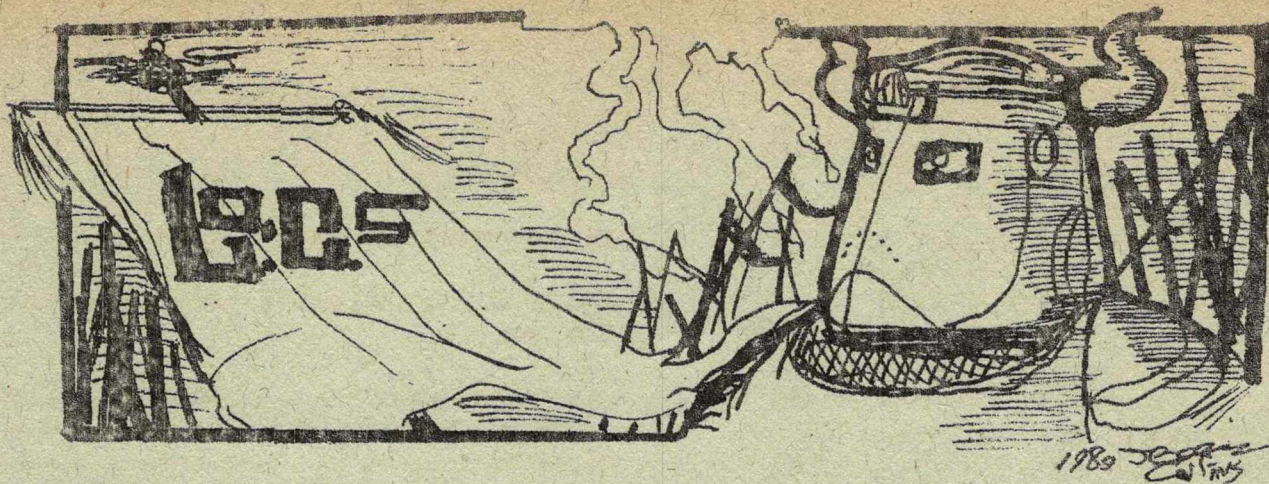
At some point in the madness, we will have a spinoff version of the previous roundrobin, only this time words are the tool. Party attendees will be divided into three or more teams. The goal of each team is to write an sf story. One small catch though: No Collaboration Is Allowed! The final creative efforts of each group might appear in a future issue of ATARANTES, wherein you will be able to read the possibly zany results of your team's "co-authorship"!

There will also be a party wide version for anyone to (verb) to. (Person) will then (verb) for a (noun) to (verb) in the (adjective) spaces. A (adverb) (Adjective) (noun) will (verb) when everybody's (anything)s are filled in and the finished story is (verb)ed to one and all.

With everyone contributing an ingredient, it will be a most interesting evening.

HOW TO FIND US: Take I-285 North of Atlanta to the Chamblee-Dunwoody Road exit (between I-85 and I-75). If you're coming from the west, heading east, turn left at the exit, proceed approximately a quarter of a mile, and you will find the Peachtree Bank on your right, 4525 Chamblee Dunwoody Road. If you're coming from the east, heading west, take the Chamblee Dunwoody Road exit. You'll have to proceed up an access road for a mile or so; when you come to Chamblee Dunwoody Road, turn right. The bank is approximately a quarter mile up the road, on your right. The community meeting room is in the back, where there is plentiful parking.

The club meeting will start at 8:00. There will be a meeting of the ASFiCon committee at 6:30 on Saturday, December 20th (that's an hour and a half before the regular meeting), and anyone interested in joining the committee should be there to present application.



Deb Hammer Johnson
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Chamblee, GA 30341

I'd like to say that I enjoyed the HPL panel that you, John Whatley, and Brad Linaweaver presented at the last meeting.

It was the equal of any such presentation I've seen at the numerous academic conventions I've attended, and I found myself compelled to take reams of notes, just like in the old days. "sigh" I do have a minor complaint about the noise coming from the break room. It seemed to get out of hand at times. I was sitting in the front of the room at the long table, and I could hardly hear the speakers at times. Some members sitting in the back of the room also commented on the shouting and loud voices. There is only one thin door and a little air separating the two areas. I wish restless members would remember this, and keep their voices to a reasonable level--especially when we're having some really interesting program that I wish to take part in.

((What you've mentioned is a problem that seems to have developed of late; I'm very disconcerted to see people leave en masse the moment a program begins--it shows a lot of discourtesy and disrespect for those who have prepared the program. It's particularly irritating when, as you say, they let their inconsiderate boisterousness get overbearing; some people honestly could not hear. I feel that, as a club, we are there primarily for the programming, not the socializing; while it's nice to socialize, it must be done on a very, very low volume level when other programming is going on. While the two room arrangement is nice, it may be too much of an excuse for some to yell instead of speaking, to make a point by using volume, to the discomfort of those who want to hear what else is being said. Perhaps we'll have to close off the refreshment room as a conversation pit and move it out into the parking lot instead...))

I echo your call for more Southern fanzines. I think that expenses have a lot to do with it. It is cheaper and easier to do a limited number of copies, send them to an OE, and let him worry about the Post Awful. Also, I have seen quality in some of the apas I'm in that matches the best of the fanzines I've received, allowing for the different nature of each. Still, I have work done on my per/genzine, and know of this eccentric longtime fan who wants to help with funding. I will grow an extra set of hands so I can type on two typers at once, and take speed

so I won't need to sleep for the next week or two. Then I can get caught up. My New Year's Resolution is to improve my overall writing quality and cut down on quantity, with an emphasis going to writing for zines. I usually take far more time for my columns and articles than I do for first draft apazines, and want to rework my writing before it sees the gooey surface of a stencil.

I knew Marty Cantor would bounce back in the loc section and touche the recent locs on the FAAn Awards. At any rate, regionalism aside, more should be done to publicize the nominations and the voting should be made available to all qualified zine fans. Simple as that. As the South gets more and more people who fit the mold, Southern zines will be more recognized. Following Dave Minch's comments about the Rebel Awards, and your assertion that there should be No Award in the future in some instances. Isn't that one of the neat things about a DSC committee, the fact that they get to select the Rebel and Phoenix Awards? Each committee, provided it is staffed with different fans, would have different standards. That, to me, is one of the interesting aspects about the history of the award and hearing tales of those who have given them out throughout the years.

((I fervently disagree on that last point--I think that there have been Rebel and Phoenix recipients who did not deserve the Awards, under any circumstances, but they got the awards because no one has even roughed out a set of criteria for giving such an award. This is a real problem with the Rebel and Phoenix as they stand now, and I think that, unless some real criteria are at least roughed out, the Awards are going to become meaningless cronyism in the next few years.))

The current line in Brad's column is a departure from his usual approach, and makes me curious to see what he will do with the HPL roundrobin that is alledged to be brewing in the minds of certain Atlanta area fans. Will it be run through here? ((Doubtful--I just don't like running fiction.))

In closing, I'd like to express my satisfaction in the good turnout of nominations for ASFiC elections this year. I've enjoyed my two years in office, and have learned a lot about myself and the angst of running a group. Best of all, it's helped me get my feet wet with the variety and craziness of fandom. It's been frustrating at times, but always a helluva time.

Randy Satterfield
505 Holt Road
Marietta, GA 30067

I'd like to add my voice to the multitude in decrying the effects of television viewing on the human (or canine or feline or avian for all

I know) mind. Among its many effects may well be the decline of America's reading public below its present ridiculously low (2%) percentage. And SF and fantasy may be more affected than other genres. Read Ellison's intro to STRANGE WINE for some of its more frightening effects. What I'm concerned with is the ability to use the imagination creatively.

In my store I frequently have opportunities (sometimes voluntarily) to talk with people about their reading preferences. One pattern I've noticed (it's particularly true of teenagers) is trouble fulfilling the framework the author has created for them. Fiction is participatory between the author and reader. It's merely words until the reader brings his/her own personality and imagination to it. This reader participation is more important to sf and fantasy than to other types of fiction. As an example, I was talking to a teenager a short time ago about his reading preferences. His favorite authors were all known mainly for writing hard sf, such as Niven and Hogan. When I mentioned fantasy or other types of sf written by the same authors, he said

he didn't like any of it because he couldn't get into it or couldn't believe it. Now this guy is head and shoulders above most people, at least in imagination, because he does read (sf and such at that). This isn't an isolated case. And, generally speaking, it's the more imaginative and literate people who come into a bookstore (I did have one sixteen year old girl ask me what a novel was.).

What does this have to do with television? Television has a dulling, leeching effect on the imagination. It's not participatory like reading is. It requires a near-comatose, receptive state. I won't go into the values and perceptions of reality it projects on all those receptive minds--that's a whole nother bag of snakes. Since television is becoming more and more pervasive each new generation is becoming more influenced by it. Just thing, someday SF may be referred to as "that BATTLESTAR GALACTICA stuff".

((I can agree with your perceptions of problems with those who don't read often, but I can't agree with your near total condemnation of tv. I, for one, watch a good deal of tv, never in a "near-comatose, receptive state", and I know of few who do. While tv is entertaining, it also allows me to read, write, talk to others, etc.--I rarely watch tv solely. I do see your point, however.))

Fay B. White
2601 W. 42nd St.
Gary IN 46408

You see, I just can't resist that little check mark next to "we hope you'll contribute." ATAR #41 immediately inspired a comment on a LoC written

by Avery Davis; I agree completely in his criticism of IASFM and Cliff's succinct condemnation of it in an editor's note says it all even better. I hope George Scithers received a

copy of said letter, starred, arrowed, and framed in red. I was tempted to send my copy to him, but don't have the right to put Avery on the spot without his express permission. How carefully do professional editors read the zines they receive and with what sensitivity factor is criticism weighted? I wonder---maybe sagging sales figures are the only barometer, but then, they could be due to inflation.

SF is difficult to write if you don't have a Ph.D. in math or physics, so how many writers can keep up with Jerry Pournelle? ((Here we don't seem to agree--I find Pournelle satisfying scientifically, but lacking any real literary style that makes for interesting reading.)) On the other hand, the same story writing techniques of danger, fear, conflict, resolution apply, just as to mainstream. Then it becomes a problem of luring good writers to the "few cents a word" market. You don't find George R.R. Martin in IASFM because he gets better money at OMNI. (Remember "Sand Kings"?) Who can live on short story money? Writers go to novels, if they're good enough. There is always the other side of the coin. Too many sf readers are would-be writers and look at selling writers with jaundiced eye. That's good if it can help to keep the house in order.

Another problem I find with IASFM is that once an author is accepted on talent or pure luck, they continue to buy on his name rather than his product. Witness Barry Longyear. Someone quotes Scithers as saying how glad they were to have found him. He has written good stuff; you can't deny the Campbell Award and other mentions. But I can remember some of the junk of his in the past. Orson Scott Card is a writer who received criticism for the quality of his work from THRUST, Budrys, and others, but continued to sell unbelievably poor stories. I still shudder when I think of his "Quietus" in OMNI.

Quality becomes an issue when the slicks are lined up against the pulps. "You can't buy champagne on a beer budget." With chiche to spare, how about this modification. "Is SF prostituting itself?" If IASFM becomes the standard, they'll lose SF magazine readers faster than they gain them. Time to start worrying about F&SF!

((An interesting look at the state of the magazine field at present--a state I judge as virtually moribund. I was an avid sf magazine reader for quite a while, collected them avidly, and still pick them up more often than I should, based on the enjoyment I get--or don't get--from them. But IASFM, no matter what its sales figures show, has been one of the most dismal disappointments in the history of the field, considering the name of the man who lends himself to its title. ANALOG has lost its verve in the past decade, GALAXY is gone, and F&SF plugs along with good fiction, no graphics, and modest sales. I'll confess I find it disappointing in the extreme, and I don't expect anything but OMNI to survive a great deal longer.))

EDITORIAL

BY CLIFF
BIGGERS



Seeing that it's election time in ASFiC once again, I decided to at least deal with that in part in this clubzine. After quite a few years of observation of elections in this club and in other organizations, I've noted a few patterns here and there that at least deserve comment.

EGOBOO: There is a myth that being a club officer is a great source of egoboo. That's perfectly true, if your idea of egoboo is people complaining about the club's not having a particular type of specialty programming every month, or about refreshments, or about their name being wrong in the minutes, or something similar.

Let's face it, science fiction fans are far more likely to complain about things than the average non-fan would be; perhaps it's their opinionated nature, perhaps it's their tendency to become outspoken in a group, and perhaps it's the fact that for some, complaining is a pleasure in and of itself.

Invariably, anyone who goes into an office searching just for egoboo will come away disappointed and probably angry; there's all too little real ego boosting going on in a club officership, and the people who run for that reason rarely, if ever, intend to do the actual work that the office carries with it. They come away frustrated, the club comes away somewhat cheated.

The office that suffers the most from this is the Presidency; everyone holds the President of ASFiC directly responsible for everything, whether it's his duty or not. Jobs the President seems to have inherited over the years include: reserving the pizza place for the club, delivering flyers and such to the members, getting foodstuffs out of the sweaty palms of a few who would hog it and then giving it to the membership as a whole, arranging chairs and then putting up said chairs (a job that has been dually shared with the site-selection chairman as well), printing all the club miscellany, going to conventions so that other fans will not say "look, ASFiC's boycotting our con," and so forth. This is all in addition to secondary duties--like conducting the meeting, working with the other officers, and representing the club to newcomers.

I don't deny being prejudiced on the matter, but I often think clubs expect too much of their officers. After all, the officer is merely a member who decided to volunteer to keep the club going. He is not the club personified, nor is he responsible for making the club enjoyable to all who attend. The members are responsible for that--that is where, all too often, we forget that the officers are not paid tremendous sums to do their duties. When members refuse to help put up chairs, or pick up their soggy cookies and their plastic cups, it does that much more to wear down an otherwise-eager officer. We've lost more than one to that "you're-supposed-to-do-it" attitude, alas; furthermore, I suspect we'll continue to lose officers once they face the tedious realities of the job.

As a President who is stepping out after this month, I must say that it's been fun. I must also say, however, that I have had times when I was ready to form a new club, and make a certain time-commitment of each member a prerequisite for membership. I hope everyone will consider an officer's duties carefully the next time they rush from a meeting place, leaving it in shambles, under the assumption that "it's the officers' job to do all that."

ART CREDITS

Cover, Page Eight: Bill Brown
Page Two: Wade Gilbreath
Page Three: David Heath
Page Four, Page Six: Jerry Collins
Page Nine: Charlie Williams

November 1980

ATLANTA SINUS FRICTION SOCIETY

Mayhem and Moolah

The Biz Meeting opened promptly at 8:04:12. Folks politely quit meandering around the room, perusing the pictures Damon Hill had provided from his sojourn to SCI-CON in Hampton, Va., ceased their smoffing, flirting, and TAB drinking, stopped their huckstering, blustering and goodtimes--all to turn their attention to the aggregation of the Finagling Four, assembled on one side of the table for the first time since Dann Littlejohn's ascension to the heights of officerhood.

First item up for discourse was the December Christmas Party. Cliff asked if the club was interesting in continuing the tradition of giving presents, since this didn't seem to go too well last year. The members decided to keep the idea, and were urged to bring an inexpensive present to be given away on a one-to-one basis. Dann Littlejohn was declared Santa Claus by acclimation, and is the Lucky Soul who will be giving out presents. The Plastic Tree in the corner will be the official decoration. Snack food, rather than meal food, will be provided, and members can anticipate a first rate gorging. A price of \$2 will be charged attendees of the event who aren't dues paid members, and everyone was urged to bring family and friends. Deb added members who joined at the November meeting would also be eligible to vote in December, casting her eye on several promising Newcomers.

The point was raised that the January meeting would coincide with CHATTACON, which a number of ASFICans were attending. Cliff mentioned that the M & M fund could support renting a facility in that month if we moved it from the pre-scheduled Peachtree Bank Date. January 24th, the fourth Saturday, was decided upon. Several members gave a pitch for the Birmingham Club's Christmas Party, held the second weekend in December, at Jim Gilpatrick's residence. Folks were urged to contact him for directions, but were warned that he had been appointed Cartographer to Lemmings by a Special Appointment of Her Majesty.

Next item was the December elections. Cliff urged that all candidates announce to him before the evening's end; otherwise only write-in votes would be accepted for an elected officer. So far, Angela Howell has declared for President, followed by Cliff Biggers, Sue Phillips, Dave Minch, and Bill Ritch declaring for Vee Pee, and Ron Zukowski and Iris Brown vying for the secretary-treasurer's difficult job (self plug, but I deserve it after two years). Dann Littlejohn will also seek re-election for the position of Program Co-Ordinator, and continue his impressive start in the job.

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The ASFICon II committee then offered an update (predate) on the con planned for Halloween of '81. The committee had decided to keep the tri-part chairmanship. Iris Brown, continuing in her capacity as Registration Head, was ready to take memberships, which are \$8 and \$10 later. Room rates were already set, up 8% over this year, which was deemed to be reasonable, at \$38 for a single/double and \$43 for a triple/quad. Silverberg has confirmed his role as Pro GOH, and Joe Siclari of Florida as Fan GOH.

Announcements then followed. Bill Ritch mentioned that there was a Charter Bus headed to Denvention from Florida that would be passing through Atlanta, and to see him for further details. Bill was joined by Mary Aileen Buss in announcing the South's contribution to crudzines, which would be published by the Druid Hills Science Fiction Club. Bill said they were soliciting contributions, especially fiction. Avery said that he needed somesort of screen to show his Worldcon slides, and that we should get hopping. Which we did, closing the meeting at 8:19:10.

Avery, Ace Photographer of ASFIC, started off Programming that evening by a slideshow of choice photos from ASFICon and NOREAScon. The wall made a tolerable screen. The emphasis of most of the slides was on the famous and beautiful MAS-QUERADE of the Worldcon; true to form, Avery's best shots were of scantily clad nubile females. Creative commentary was provided by Jerry Collins (doing a good Carl Sagan imitation during the more cosmic moments), Rich Howell, Dann Littlejohn, and other crackedwitz.

After a suitable interval to rearrange the room, the H. P. Lovecraft panel members--John Whatley, Cliff Biggers, and Brad Linaweaver assembled in the front of the room. Members were invited to peruse the display items of Lovecraftiana, which varied from a copy of the NECRONOMICON, to collected letters, to copies of rare fictional works. Each member took a special emphasis on HPL. Cliff lead the force with a look at the influence on other authors that Lovecraft had created with the Cthulu Mythos. Brad dealt with the philosophical and theological implications of HPL's work and outlook on life. John, drawing on his unique knowledge derived from Cousin Wilbur Whatley, drew in more emphasis on Lovecraft's life and times from a literary and historical perspective. Each panelist cross referenced and co-ordinated commentary with the others, and all in all, it was one of the finest panels ASFIC has ever hosted. I took three good pages of notes, feeling those old Grad School vibes. A quick student could have gotten enough material to do a good research paper--thus proving that ASFIC is not only fun, but e*d*u*c*a*t*i*o*n*a*l*.

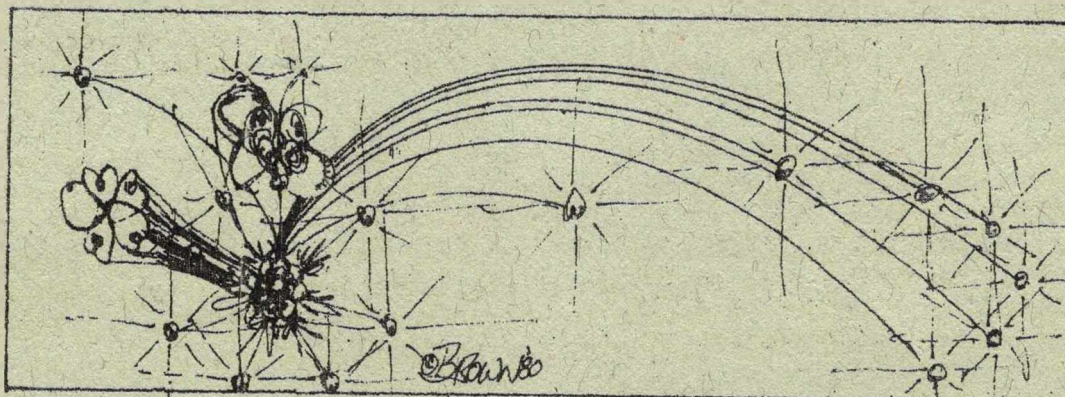
Salutations to our fine new folk!!:

David Carter
380 Briarwood Ct.
Marietta, Ga. 30067

Ward Batty
944 Austin Ave. NE
Atlanta, Ga. 30307

And to the familiar faces of: Steve and Binker Hughes
5831 Hillside Dr.
Doraville, Ga. 30340

Dahlias and Scents: Our balance from October was, in reality, \$168.44. Those of you who got it before I did deserve a commendation. From this sum, I subtracted \$40.00 to cover the cost of the December ATARANTES and some printing for the club elections and wound up with \$128.44, which should help give us a nice, fattening, and fun Christmas Event. Next month, check this space for a listing of the entire ASFIC budget for 1980. Ho-ho. Happy to you, too!



DER KRAPP brad linaweaver



When I was six years old my father took me to my first monster movie. It was the Ray Harryhausen classic, THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD, the picture that demonstrated how stop motion animation techniques could be successfully applied to a vivid, color format (Dynamation). Of course I knew nothing of this at the time. Nor was I aware the PARENT'S MAGAZINE had just given the film an endorsement. This latter detail may have had something to do with Mom and Dad arranging the outing.

So there I was, suffering through the mushy part (which they had the good sense to get out of the way in the early portions of the movie), waiting for the excitement to begin. And before I could say "Abracadabra", Kerwin Mathews, as the intrepid Sinbad, was following cloven hoof prints of unusual size to the mouth of a cave forming part of a grimacing stone god's mouth. A frantic sorcerer was running out of that cave, clutching a magic lamp and screaming for help. A few tense seconds passed ... and then I saw what was following him.

As the giant cyclops strode out into the daylight, roaring its defiance at the pitifully small humans, its great eye glaring below the horn on his head, and its shaggy, satyr limbs stamping the ground like some sort of piston machine gone berserk, I had my first experience with the Sense of Wonder in the arts. I knew this thing up on the screen could not be real, even though it had human flesh color and a caricature of a human face ... and was moving. I'd seen cartoons before. I knew it wasn't that. How were they performing this miracle? Was it a freakish man in a suit? Was it a robot? I had suspended disbelief and was totally absorbed in a vision of something that couldn't possibly be happening, and yet somehow appeared authentic.

The rest of the movie held the same fascination: the snake-woman, the two-headed roc, the dragon and the incredible sword-play with the skeleton! But nothing compared with that impression when I beheld the cyclops for the first time. (The first one seemed meaner to me than the second one who fought the dragon.)

It is no exaggeration to say that the cyclops changed my life. The next day I had a pad of legal paper in my hand, and was sketching out a comic strip sequel to the movie. I thought they had pretty well exhausted the possibilities of the movie

island so I set my sequel on a flying island (long before I ever heard of Gulliver) that I conveniently placed over the sun! I used a fairytale cosmology of successive suns in the sky--the flying island was obscured from us by our sun, but it had its own sun ... and so on to infinity, in perfect alignment. These imaginary lands were overflowing with giant monsters, and little people doing their best to keep from being stepped on.

I was hooked. I had discovered the universe of imaginative fiction where science fiction, fantasy and the macabre hold dominion in books, comics, magazines, movies, TV, radio.... I was a multi-media freak from the start in that I didn't care what form the fantastic came in, just so that it was fantastic. Nor did I care if the hero used flying carpet or rocket. Transportation was only the means.

In a sense that is when I became a fan. It takes a long time to go from the first stage to the discovery of fandom. Soon I would visit the Mars and Pellucidar of Burroughs, and the morbid settings of Poe. Those strange countries would inspire me to travel to other exotic climes by the printed word. But I first started imagining Other Worlds after seeing THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD in 1958.

So what does all this have to do with those bad Japanese monster movies from Toho that I promised to talk about this month? Only this: By the time I saw my first rubber suit giant monster movie, I was already a jaded connoisseur of stop motion animation--even if I didn't know what to call it.

The first Toho films I saw were among the studio's best endeavors in science fiction. RODAN, THE FLYING MONSTER (also 1958) was playing the Saturday Matinee circuit when I encountered it. The color was certainly nice enough. Something about the rubber suits didn't convince me, however. My friend was more impressed than I. It was difficult to explain to him what I thought was missing from those monsters. Perhaps it was the rarity of seeing people in the same frame as the giants. A few establishing shots of the relative size of everyone would be quickly followed by long stretches of man-in-rubber-suit vs. erector set city with nary a human in sight. (In retrospect, this is Toho's most effective monster film in color.)

TV brought me GODZILLA (1956) about a year later. This was the black and white film that started it all for the Niponese Nightmares born of those troublesome atomic blasts. (Godzilla's invasion of our theatres is a belated revenge for Truman's decision.) American scenes had been added with Raymond Burr as a reporter--the result was surprisingly effective. But it didn't do that much for me. I had seen KING KONG a few months earlier on TV ... and Godzilla just wasn't in the same league. Black and white or color, Toho just wasn't doing something correctly. When I started reading monster magazines, I learned about the different approaches. "So that's why Japanese monsters wobble so much!"

Toho's best fantastic film just might be the colorful invasion from space epic, THE MYSTERIANS (1957). As luck would have it, I managed to see George Pal's WAR OF THE WORLDS at a Saturday matinee first. What Harryhausen did for monsters, Pal did for space-ships and aliens. Once again Toho proved to be the inferior model.

Toho films from the early period managed to achieve a tolerable mediocrity. The middle period began in 1963 with KING KONG VS. GODZILLA, which I saw at the appropriate place: a drive-in. By that time I

was conscious of more than the "look" of a film. I also wanted plot. I wanted acting. I wanted a serious attitude in science fiction films. You remember how it is at that age.

Choking on my popcorn, I suffered through that "epic." The thing was loaded with slap-stick. They were sending up the genre by playing it for laughs.

By the time of GHIDRAH, THE THREE HEADED MONSTER (1965) the tone was set for the future--the later period of complete tongue-in-cheek decadence. Someday soon I expect to see GODZILLA GOES HAWAIIAN.

There was a period when if I couldn't get quality, I would settle for mediocrity that tried ... and avoid the trash. That was before I learned the lesson that enables me to write this column today. If you can't get the best, why settle for the mediocre when you can enjoy the unintentional comedy of mind-boggling failure?

Nowadays I prefer Toho films from the most recent period over the early ones. Because where Toho is concerned, the dumber the better! You'll see what I mean a month from now when we take a close look at Championship Wrestling from Mount Fuji. It's got the "Sense of Blunder."

NEXT: Godzilla Times Four

ATARANTES #42
December, 1980
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NEXT MEETING OF ASFiC
Saturday, December 20th
8:00 PM (regular time)
Peachtree Bank Meeting Room
4525 Chamblee Dunwoody Rd.
ASFiCon Committee Meeting 6:30
All Committee members are urged to attend