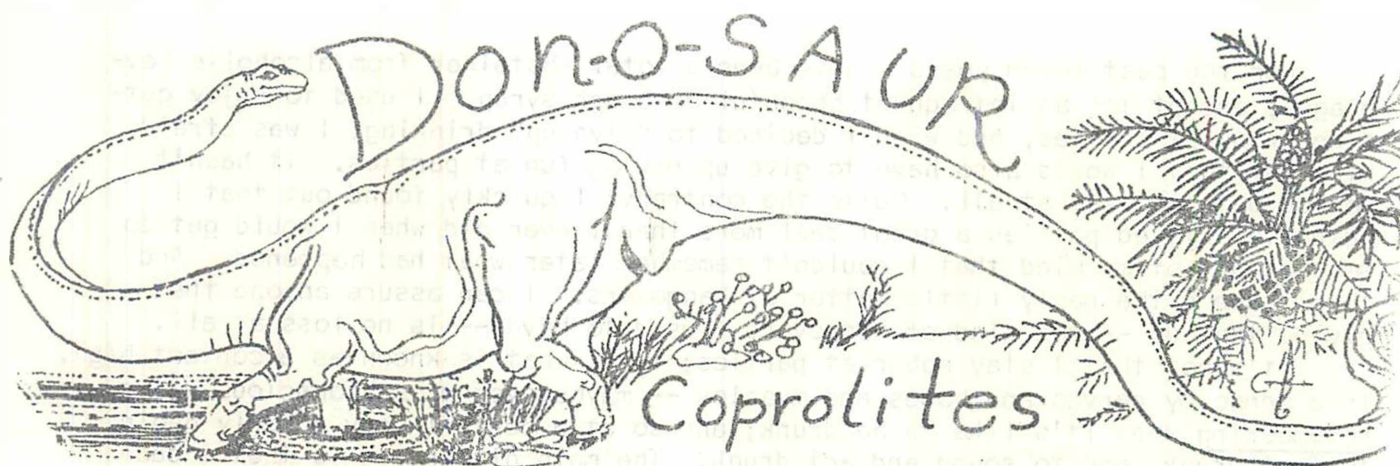


Vol. III

No. 2

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No. 26



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Available through D'APA, by purchase or subscription (25¢ per issue or one year-- 12 issues -- for \$2.50) or in exchange for other fanzines, letters of comment, or artwork. Copies are also sent to selected individuals each month on an almost random basis, but hoping, always, for some kind of response.

Milehicon V! Milehicon V! Milehicon V! Fantastic!!!

What more can be said about it?

Oh, quite a lot, actually, but I don't intend to give a full con report; if I did that I wouldn't have time for anything else, and I've already promised to do mailing comments and fanzine reviews.

But it's unthinkable that I should say nothing at all about Milehicon V, so here, briefly, are some wholly subjective and highly disorganized impressions of

* A MOST MEMORABLE WEEKEND *

One reason Milehicon V was more enjoyable for me than previous ones have been (please don't misunderstand me; they have all been enjoyable, but this one was even more so than others) was that my participation in it started earlier. I took the whole weekend off from my part time job at the Rocky Mountain News, and I had been damned careful in all my classes not to schedule assignments that would have to be corrected over the weekend. With comparable foresight, Carolyn had also arranged to have Saturday off from her part time job at the Westminster public library. As a decisive gesture of determination to live Milehicon V to the fullest, we had reserved a room at the Sheraton for both Friday and Saturday nights, and I had asked for a room as close to the con activities as possible.

Let me interject right here a warm word of appreciation for the motel management. Except for the fact of no restaurant/coffee shop service Saturday, I had virtually no complaints (and by Sunday morning the coffee shop was in operation again). In general, the service was splendid (and the brunch of course was again exquisite). And when I asked for a room close to con activities, the management took me literally and gave us the room directly adjoining the con committee room. The Friday night party slopped over -- by invitation, of course -- into our room.

I love parties.

For the past seven years I have been a total abstainer from alcoholic beverages, except for an infrequent spoonful of cough syrup. I used to enjoy getting drunk at parties, and when I decided to "give up" drinking, I was afraid at first that I would also have to give up having fun at parties. It hasn't worked out that way at all. Quite the contrary; I quickly found out that I actually enjoyed parties a great deal more than I ever did when I would get so smashed out of my mind that I couldn't remember later what had happened. And then there's the nasty little matter of hangovers. I can assure anyone that giving them up -- the kind of hangovers I used to have -- is no loss at all.

It's not that I stay sober at parties; I get what is known as a contact high. In a sense my nerves and bones and muscles -- maybe even my subconscious -- are remembering what it's like to be drunk; and so at a party I very quickly begin to feel drunk, and to sound and act drunk. The main difference is that I can attain instant sobriety if necessary, and another difference is that I wake up the next morning feeling magnificent.

Anyway, I really enjoyed the party Friday night.

I had thought I was tired right up until the party began. I had put in a really tough week -- getting ahead on my paper-grading, finding the ears for my costume, deciding what books and magazines to take to the huckster room, and pricing them. And above all, of course, getting Coprolites ready. I was working (or at least doing a lot of chasing around in circles) right up until Carolyn and I drove to the motel, and I was tired. My back ached, my legs hurt, I had stomach pains, I was groggy with fatigue. I felt like an old man.

But then we checked in and found the party just starting right next door, and that was the last time the word 'tired' even entered my thoughts until very late Sunday night. I was buoyed by excitement and delight until then.

(On Monday morning, strangely enough, fatigue had still not caught up with me. I felt, if not really refreshed, at least no more exhausted than I do after any ordinary weekend of work at the News).

One of the major delights of the con for me -- all the more delightful for being totally unexpected -- was the presence of Frank and Anna Jo Denton, who had flown from Seattle to attend Milehicon VI! It blew my mind. I honestly think their presence, as much as anything else, gave this the feel of a much bigger con.

Did it have that feel to you, or is that just a subjective reaction on my part? I know that in actual numbers, this year's was not much bigger than Milehicon IV, but it seemed bigger. To me. There just seemed to be more people milling around in more different places and at whatever odd hour than there were last year.

Two other things -- or three, in fact, now that I think of it -- might have contributed to the feeling of size. One was the SCA (Society for Creative Anachronism, for any non-initiated readers I may have) events of Saturday afternoon. There may have been some participants in the fighting, and almost certainly some members of the audience, who were not members of the con itself. I hope, incidentally, that the combat events become a permanent part of Milehicon. If nothing else, they have a dramatic and visual appeal that the news media, particularly television, can comprehend. Newspaper city editors tend to equate science fiction with flying saucers, and they're disappointed when anyone tries to explain to them what it really is.

The computer games, I believe (this is what came to me as a sort of afterthought, so I haven't followed it out),



deserve some credit for giving the con that feeling of size. There were always people clustered around the terminal in the registration area, it seemed, no matter what was going on somewhere else, or if everything else was shut down for lunch. That's good. I didn't take advantage of the opportunity to get acquainted with the computers, and I feel no sense of loss in that fact (I refuse to get involved in a discussion of my emotional hangups as regards computers) but I definitely hope the computers, too, become a permanent fixture of future Milehicons.



Finally, I do believe, the huckster room made the con seem bigger than it might have, and the Kansas City contingent must be credited to some degree for that. Their tables had a splendid assortment of goodies, both new and used, including quite a number of items that are simply not (yet) on the market in Denver. Examples: I picked up the two issues of Eternity Science Fiction that have never been available here; I got the missing second number of Weird Tales; I bought an entire set of Ballantine's latest reprint of Burroughs' Mars series--not yet in the Denver stores. Then there were the other hucksters -- Fred Goldstein, Bob Nelson, me, Gail Barton, at least two that I'd never met before and didn't take the opportunity to get acquainted with; and not least, but last because I want to say a few special words about him, Bob Alvis from Boulder.

Bob is the one who had all the hardback books (rather expensive, for the most part) along with a scattering of British SF magazines. There was a young boy, his son, helping him.

Bob Alvis is a not-regularly-attending-member of the Colorado Fantasy Society. It was, in fact, through the CFS about eight years ago that I first met him. When I was book review editor of the RMN, I had Bob doing most of the SF books that came along. He occasionally likes to remind me that I used to be his "boss." He has a high-paying government job of some kind (I've never even asked exactly what). He was in Washington for a few years, disliked it, and managed to get himself transferred back here recently.

The important thing about Bob Alvis is that he is a book collector. One of his primary interests is science fiction and fantasy, but his passion ranges far afield, through detective and mystery (he is a devout Sherlockian) to pure adventure novels, some Westerns even, and an exceedingly broad spectrum of non-fiction, focusing, perhaps inevitably, on books about books and book-collecting. Bob is not a true completist, although he certainly has more complete sets of books (including all the Arkham House books) than anyone else I know of. But, unlike many collectors, he does not have the compulsion once he acquires one book by a given author to get everything that that author ever wrote. Bob has quite a number of books by Talbot Mundy and by Sax Rohmer, for instance, but Chuck Hansen comes much closer to having a complete collection of those two authors. Bob has a pretty impressive assortment of Edgar Rice Burroughs books, but he's nowhere close to Caz in that department. And I think I may have more books by James Branch Cabell than Bob does. Still, in total quantity (and certainly in quality), Bob has the largest book collection of anyone I have ever met. By his own estimate, he has about 10,000 books, most of them hardbacks, most of them with dust jackets, and most of them in near-mint condition. He is constantly upgrading the collection, replacing books of inferior condition

with the same titles in better shape. This results in a rapidly growing accumulation of duplicate titles -- and that's how come Bob had a table in the Huckster room at the con. He's gotten so many duplicates that he decided to go into the book business himself. He is now The Green Toad Bookstore Ltd. I don't think he issues a regular sales list, but if anyone would like to send him your want list, the address is 195 Seminole Drive, Boulder, CO 80303. He has a large number of very fine books at very realistic prices (no, they're not cheap; Bob knows what he paid for the books, and he's not selling them for much less, but he's not making exorbitant profits on them either), and he just may have what you've been looking for.

Anyway, I was glad to see Bob at the con, and I honestly believe he helped make the Huckster room a success.

I had one very minor complaint about the con, and I've already talked to the con chairman (both this year's and next year's) about it, and steps have already been taken to see that grounds for it won't exist next year.

The complaint was this:

I didn't much appreciate being put in charge of the Con Committee table in the Huckster room. That was where Gordon Dickson's books, Ed Bryant's books and Devra Langsam's fanzines were being sold, along with the special Gordon Dickson issue of OAFS. I was collecting money that had to be distributed in four different directions (plus watching my own table and trying to keep my money separate). I felt extremely uneasy about it, definitely believing that someone who was not himself a huckster should have been responsible for that table.

I saw Judith (this year's co-Con chairman) at the last Writers Workshop session, and I mentioned the matter to her. Ted Peak (next year's chairman) was also there and he grinned fiendishly and said, "Would you be willing to be in full charge of the Huckster room next year? Then you can designate someone else to watch the Committee table."

And believe me, I will designate someone else.

I almost felt, very a very brief time, like having another complaint or two, but the expected surges of resentment simply never materialized, and so the complaints died aborning. The closest I got to actually expressing one of them was a little while after the brunch when I was talking to Ed Bryant in the Huckster room, and I said, "I thought you might have mentioned, when you were introducing the science fiction teachers from Wyoming and Colorado Springs, that I teach a science fiction course, too." Ed got kind of flustered and confused and apologetic and started explaining why he'd happened to overlook me, and I recognized the validity of the explanation at the same instant that I realized the basic unimportance of the oversight.

I lied. Or, be charitable; just say I mis-spoke myself. But I did come even closer to expressing a resentful complaint when Ed handed me the letter from Hal Clement in which the writing award winners were announced. In making the presentations at the brunch, Ed had mentioned that Clement's letter included a comment on one of my stories. I took the letter from Ed with a sort of shudder and folded it and stuffed it into my coat pocket.

"What? Don't you want to see what a big-name professional has to say about your work?" Ed asked.

"Later," I said stiffly. "I'll get around to looking at it sometime later."

Ed seemed really puzzled at my reaction. "Would you rather he hadn't said anything at all?"

I hesitated, and with an elaborate shrug managed to avoid saying anything.

I did of course look at the letter soon afterward and found it to be neither helpful as far as the story was concerned nor damaging as far as my ego was concerned.

But the closest I can come to answering Ed's question, even now, is this:

I might have preferred it if Ed had made no comment, during the award presentation, about Clement's comment about my story. I've been closely examining my inner reasons for that feeling, and the deeper I dig, the less I find to my credit. What it amounts to, I'm afraid, is that I really was a little disappointed at not even placing in the contest. I didn't expect to win. We all knew--those of us in the workshop, anyway -- that Steve Barnes had first place clinched. (Though, significantly perhaps, the story that won was not the one I had assumed would win!) Still I thought there was an off-chance I might come in second or third. But since I didn't, I wanted to just ignore the fact that I had even entered the contest. Ed's remarks prevented me from doing that and set off a complex emotional reaction bordering on resentment.

In the unlikely event that you are dying of curiosity as to what Hal Clement did say about the story, here is the pertinent paragraph:

...I would also comment on a fourth story, without suggesting that it should receive an award--yet. LOOKING FOR HOLES has the makings, with one exception which I suspect the author knows as well as I do. I am not saying that I could do better than he/she has--I spent some time trying to think up an ending which was neither trite nor an anticlimax, and did not succeed. The author did avoid triteness, but the ending is rather a letdown. There must be something with a real surprise punch ... I hope ... The basic idea is well handled, but is old enough to need some final fillip.

So you see what I mean. Mildly flattering, but no help. What really discourages me most (as I examine still deeper) is that I don't even agree with Clement about the ending. The story ends the way it has to end to be the story I wanted to tell. To attach any kind of "real surprise punch" or some "final fillup" would be to make it an entirely different story with an entirely different purpose. Yes, it might be much better; it would almost certainly have a better chance of being sold; and if I can ever think of that kind of ending I may someday change it. But it would no longer be the story I originally had in mind. But that won't bother me much, will it? No. Here. This is what bothers me -- it's just that I like the story

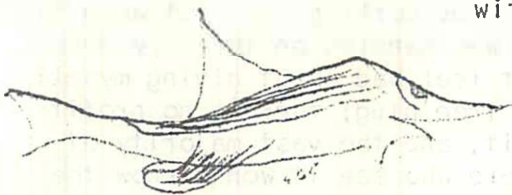
the way it is now, and it does distress me somewhat that so few other people seem to like it.

Where the hell was I? Talking about the con? Still? Aren't you glad I decided not to do any kind of con report?

Talking about writing, and talking about con reports brings me back to Frank Denton. Frank and I had a couple of good conversations about writing and the problems thereof, and somewhere along the way we began thinking and talking in terms of possible collaboration. We didn't definitely settle anything, but Sunday afternoon we got together in the Huckster room and I told Frank in some detail about a story I've been having a lot of trouble getting worked out, and Frank took notes and asked some very penetrating questions. During this session the story began to really crystalize for me (and I've since thought of what looks like it could be a good twist to the ending); and if I can find some time I'd like to try getting it all on paper. Whatever Frank's contributions to the story may ultimately be, he has already helped me enormously with it. So thanks for that, Frank.

And now, as to why I mentioned Frank in connection with con reports...

Well, I've mentioned previously that Frank publishes a personalzine called



By Owl Light. The latest issue of it arrived a couple of days ago, and I read it, as always, with total absorption -- or with perhaps just a trifle extra eagerness this time, knowing it had been written after Frank and Anna Jo had returned home from Milehicon, and suspecting that Frank might have something to say about it. And sure enough, on the last two pages, following a fascinating account of a weekend in the Washington mountains, there was an account of the weekend in Denver.

Frank's con report (in total length only about a page and a half, actually) is more accurate, more comprehensive, certainly more informative, undoubtedly more objective and quite probably more interesting than my five pages of meandering about it.

So if you missed the con, and if you're not already on Frank's mailing list, and if you'd like to read a really good, unbiased account of Milehicon V, I strongly suggest that you write to Frank Denton for a copy of By Owl Light 5. The address is 14654 - 8th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98166.

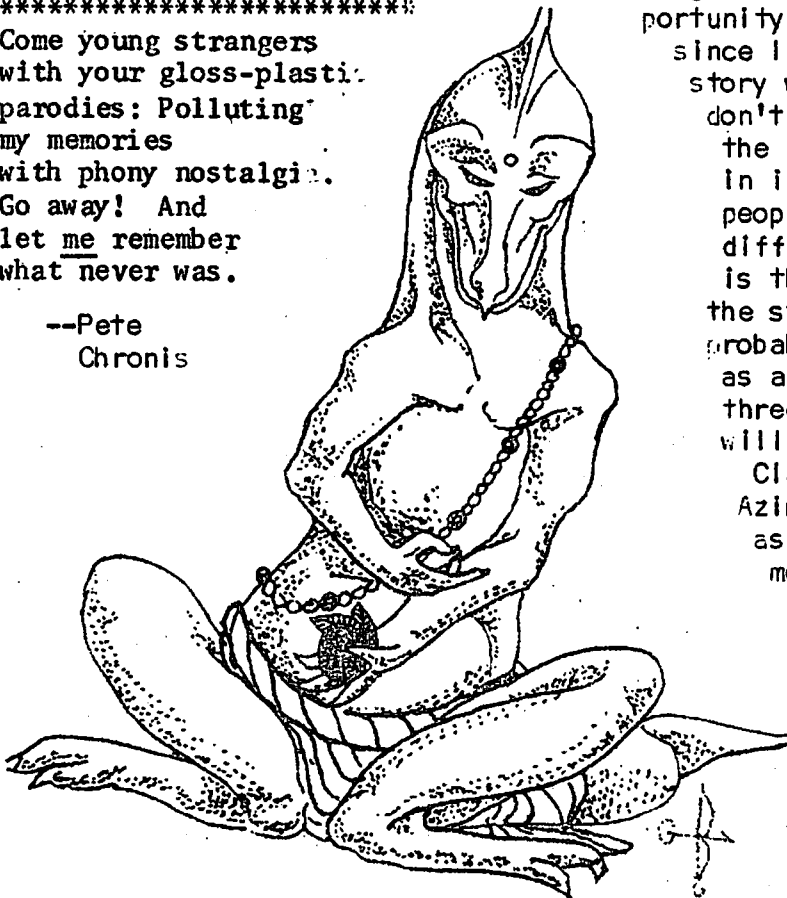
(One of the things that particularly struck me about Frank's report: He makes at least a couple of references to the small size of it. Whereas I was impressed by how big it seemed).

I really do intend to do some fanzine reviews -- I promised, didn't I? Have I ever lied to you?

But first I want to mention an article that was in the Monday morning, Nov. 12 issue of the Rocky Mountain News. It will probably be showing up, in much the same form, in hundreds of other papers throughout the country, because it's an AP story. If anybody who read the story in the News wondered how come Don-o-Saur Coprolites happened to rate a mention in a national wire story, I can explain: It's

Come young strangers
with your gloss-plastic
parodies: Polluting
my memories
with phony nostalgia.
Go away! And
let me remember
what never was.

--Pete
Chronis



because I took advantage of the opportunity to do a little creative editing, since I was working the slot when the story was handled on the copy desk. I don't feel bad about giving myself the free plug; there's no profit in it, and the vast majority of people who see it won't know the difference. What I do feel bad about is that on most of the papers in which the story will appear, a fan will probably not be doing the editing, and as a result in the third paragraph, three notable science fiction writers will be identified as "Arthur C. Clark," "Robert Block," and "Isaac Azimov," who is further identified as "a biochemist who has written more than 100 science fiction novels." I was able to correct the spellings of the names and to make Asimov the author of "more than 140 science and science fiction books," but there was nothing much I or anyone could have done to correct the total impression of the article. After reading it over carefully, I was

tempted to toss the whole thing into the wastebasket. But there is a definite limit to how much the slot man can get away with, and throwing away a story that has been dummied is well beyond that limit. And I've become accustomed to that extra income from the Rocky Mountain News.

The story, if you haven't seen it or haven't guessed its nature, is about that long-dreaded book by Dr. Fredric Wertham, Fanzines--a Special Form of Communication (Southern Illinois University Press). Wertham, as you surely must know, is the New York psychiatrist who almost single-handedly killed off the comic books in the 1950s by showing how much sex and violence they contained (he's the one who 'proved' that Batman and Robin were gay).

Wertham's new book may manage to kill off fanzines by proving how fine and clean and wholesome they are.

Now, I haven't read or even seen Wertham's book; I may have more to say about it after I find a copy. For now, all I have to go on is the AP story. But here's some of what the story has to say:

Fanzines...are 'an essentially positive contribution to American culture,' Wertham said. 'They represent spontaneous creativeness, self-reliance and personal contacts with peers that are freer and more naturel than those available through any other media, including the underground press.'

Although they are free to do so, fanzine publishers don't promote pornography, drugs and violence, said the psychiatrist. [Fred Wertham, meet Fred Goldstein].

'I was attracted to something in them that was so positive and has not been acknowledged as such,' he said. 'I feel they are essentially unpolluted by the greed, the arrogance and hypocrisy that has invaded so much of our intellectual life.'

Nothing there to object to, you say? All essentially true, or if a trifle exaggerated, at least exaggerated in our favor? Well, maybe so, but there's more to the story. There's this:

Mark Evanier, 19, of Los Angeles, produced one typical fanzine story in a recent issue of his publication, Freon I.

'It was about narcotics addiction in schools, written in the form of a script, describing realistically the contagiousness of narcotics and the difficulty of doing something about it through ordinary channels,' Wertham said. 'In his story, a young girl in school takes up with a boy who is known as a drug addict. The hero of the story, a schoolmate, against great odds saves the girl from getting involved with drugs.'

That, friends, is a TYPICAL fanzine story! Fredric Wertham says so. With friends like that . . .

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FANZINE * Obviously I'll have to limit this project somehow, hav-
* ing put it off so long that I'm again (as always) running
REVIEWS * into time problems. So here's what I'm going to do: I shall
* exclude (from this issue, anyway) fanzines that I paid for
AT LAST! * --the ones to which I have subscriptions. That's fair, if
***** only because they tend to be the least recent of all the
zines I now have on hand, but also because they are the biggies, the ones that
come closest to being professional productions and which therefore have been

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widely reviewed and praised (or in some cases damned) elsewhere .

Anyway, the zines I am not reviewing are as follows:

The Alien Critic; Algol; Franfallon; Outworlds. Well, I'm also not reviewing Kalki (that's the journal of the James Branch Cabell Society) or Riverside Quarterly (another scholarly journal) or ERB-dom, because it actually comes closer to being a prozine than a fanzine nowadays.

As for the fanzines that I am reviewing, my comments about them will have to be fairly brief (and briefer still if I don't get at them!)

I'll take them in alphabetical order:

ASH-WING

Frank Denton

14654 - 8th Ave. S.W.

Seattle, WA 98166

The issue I have is No. 12, dated June 1973, so I would assume a new issue of it may be expected soon, though Frank makes it clear that there is no regular publication schedule; it depends on variable factors, such as the material on hand and the free time of the editor. I haven't seen previous issues of ASH-WING, but I understand from other sources (including Frank) that they were heavy on fiction. No. 12 is fictionless, a fact that bothers me not at all. In fact a good portion of the zine is just Frank talking about people, places and things of interest to him, and that doesn't bother me either, because Frank does write entertainingly. But ASH-WING is not a personalzine. There are other things in it. There's a sort of an article (?) by Clifford R. Wind called "Letters From A Red Balloon," which you might enjoy if you enjoy that sort of thing. Also there are book reviews, letters, and a listing of Tolkein fanzines. Art work is excellent and used effectively, with both front and back cover illustrations. Available for the usual; no price listed. 31 pp.

THE ANYTHING THING 6

Frank Balazs & Matthew

Schneck

19 High Street

Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y.

10520

This is a colorful and free-wheeling zine put out by a couple of college kids with an abundance of enthusiasm and talent and imagination to match. By "colorful" I mean the pages -- pink, white, blue and gold. For some reason the Rotsler cover illustration was done on white; and since the drawing is gray, the reader's first visual impression of the zine is one of drabness. The attractiveness of the interior easily makes up for it. The editors know how to use both art and typography to create a lively effect; and there's a good variety of reading material, ranging from editorials and articles (concern over the proposed increase in postage rates in expressed in two or three different places) to locs and fanzine reviews. There is also one really bad attempt at a filk song -- "On Top of Old Fandom" -- about which the less said the better. Other than that, a very pleasing issue, available for the usual or for 40¢ if you must pay. 38 pages, not counting front and back cover.

Frank Balazs, one of the editors of TAT, also produces a personalzine called () but pronounced Parenthesis. I seem to have only one issue of it -- No. 5, of which a large portion seems to deal with reactions to No. 4, leaving me little to comment upon. Oh, there's a brief discussion of God and religion that provides some insight into the author's outlook, but there was nothing there for me to argue with. I'm looking forward to future issues.

BREAKTHROUGH

Henry Bitman

P. O. Box 968

Azusa, CA 91702

Here's a new zine that has broken through two issues now. The first issue is dated August, the second is December '73. The first issue seems to exist primarily as a vehicle for an article entitled "...EXACTLY!" (by Henry Bitman). It is yet another attempt to define and explain science fiction.

I found the article overly ponderous, with too earnest an attempt to sound

scholarly and erudite. That sort of thing threatens to take the fun out of science fiction, and I do believe, deeply and firmly, that science fiction should be, above all else, FUN. Sure it's important, but that aspect of it can take care of itself. The first issue of Breakthrough was only 10 pages, with no attempt to use art except for a sketch (by Bitman) on the front cover. The title was done with letter-guide stencil. The second issue is more ambitious -- 20 pages, with several decorative (?) sketches throughout, all by the editor, whose artistic abilities are ... well, who am I to judge? All I'll say is that Bitman is not a professional. The backcover illustration by Wayne MacDonald is nice. The reading material includes an article, a story, a poem, book reviews and a brief editorial -- all (seemingly) by Bitman. Quarterly publishing schedule hoped for; available upon request.

CTHULHU CALLS This is sort of a curiosity among fanzines, and I'm R.J. Barthell having trouble trying to decide just how seriously to Northwest Community take it. It may well be the most expensively produced College fanzine in existence. It is printed, on slick paper, Powell, Wyo. 82435 and bound in heavy (and costly!) cover stock. In format it is much more like one of the traditional college literary magazines than like any traditional fanzine; not surprising since it is produced as the result of a college science fiction program. Still . . . Well, I'll tell you what it reminds me of. There's a comic strip with a rich kid in it -- is it Rollo in the "Nancy" strip? It's like when Rollo sees the poor kids playing sandlot baseball and it looks like fun -- so Rollo has his dad buy him a major league ball park for his very own. That's what Cthulhu Calls is -- an enormous ball park fully equipped with lights and cushioned seats and press boxes; a limitless supply of bats and balls and resin bags and shiny new uniforms -- even a crew of professionally trained umpires and officials -- all this for a few kids to play around in with no understanding of what it's all for.

The material in the first issue of Cthulhu Calls was almost entirely crud. It was student writing at its worst. The second issue, which reached me just a couple of days ago, seems to be of higher quality. There are, for instance, some book reviews, an article by Clay Balch about his science fiction course at El Paso Community College in Colorado Springs, a column by Ed Bryant, a mention that Rose Hogue is to be a reviewer (though I can't find anything that she actually reviewed in this issue). There is also an assortment of student writing, which I haven't read yet.

There's a good chance, I should think, that if CC manages to keep going it may eventually grow up to its appearance, and to its impressive sounding subtitle--A Quarterly Review Devoted to Horror, Science Fiction & Fantasy Literature. In fact it could easily inspire a whole new trend of





college-based fanzines, and I'm not certain that that will be a bad thing. Still, I think it's very sad for the students of Northwest Community College in Powell that they couldn't have started with a hektograph and progressed to ditto and then to mimeo before being thrust so ruthlessly into that big-league park.

Poor little rich kids! Available for the asking.

Next on the stack is an undisguised crudzine about which I have no ambivalence of emotional response at all -- I LIKE the cruddy thing; I really do!

Actually, only the first issue of it

qualifies as crud. It was a five-page, sloppily typed and reproed thingee without even a title of its own. It was called This Is a ?, and basically what it amounted to was an announcement that Tony Cvetko intended to publish a fanzine.

DIEHARD

Tony Cvetko

29415 Parkwood

Drive

Wickliffe,

Ohio 44092

One of the admirable things about Tony and his zine is that he knew who to send the first issue to, so that by the time he was ready to publish a second issue, he had received lots of good things to put in it, including locs from such fans as Doug Lein-

gang, John Robinson, Bruce Arthurs and Mike Glicksohn. Still, the most enjoyable thing about both issues is the editor's own bubbling enthusiasm for science fiction, for pubbing, and for life in general. Incidentally, Tony is, I believe, the only faned of any of the zines I've examined who gives any indication that he reads the prozines! (Is that the mark of neo, I wonder? Well, if Tony Cvetko is a neo, then I will say only that fandom needs more neos). Diehard is available for the usual, or for 25¢ cash.

Oh, hell, I'm getting tired of reviewing fanzines; it's harder work than I thought it would be -- requires thought. So you know what I'm going to do now? I'm going to indulge my vanity by printing a few locs, thereby serving several purposes-- it will give you a brief respite from my views; it'll give me a brief respite from thinking. Also it will fill space.

Well, let's see what I've got here ... humm, a stack of letters almost as thick as the stack of fanzines -- it absolutely amazes me, the response I get from sending out Coprolites. (Actually, the response isn't that overwhelming, but it has reached the point where if I don't get at least one letter and/or zine each day I'm disappointed. This sort of mail is addicting).

Anyway, here we are: A letter from ... well, of all people! Tony Cvetko. Address as above.

Dear Don,

Thanks for the Don-o-Saur. It's a pretty good zine, probably because you write for a newspaper and write well (or is that "write good"? I always get that type of thing mixed up).

[Pardon me for butting in so soon, Tony, but maybe I should correct one slight misconception (don't worry about well or good; either is fine when you're intending it as a compliment -- for which I thank you). But I don't actually write for the newspaper. That is, I write headlines. I used to write book reviews, and long ago in the dim, distant past, I used to be a reporter, though not in Denver. Still, as a copy editor, I have to correct any mistakes the reporters make in their use of English, and so I'm supposed to be able to write better than they do!]

Lessee now. IBM Selectric! My mouth drools at the very mention of the name! I've got a manual Olympia model SGI that's in excellent shape, but it's surely no match for a Selectric! . . .

I don't know nothin about cats. I've got a dog. There's a guy named Don Thompson who occasionally reviews sf books for the Cleveland Press. Any relation?

[Strange coincidence, but the answer is no -- not that I know of.]

A monthly schedule for 25 months! I shrink in terror and amazement at the very thought! I'm lucky if I can get mine out 4 times per year. . . .

Ackshully, I think the cover is pretty good, but to keep it as a permanent cover? It's your zine, of course, and you can do what you want with it, but I would think that it would get pretty monotonous after awhile. A change of covers would be good . . .

All right. You see how agreeable I am. Ask and ye shall receive. Suggest and I'll try to oblige. Two or three readers said they didn't think it would be such a neat idea for me to use the same cover all the time. One reader did something about it -- and I love Sheryl Birkhead forever. Here's part of the letter she sent along with the cover for this month's zine:

Sheryl Birkhead
23629 Woodfield Road
Gaithersburg, Md. 20760

Dear Don

...Russell is a fine artist -- I hope you really take advantage of his talents and get a few more covers from him. I'm enclosing a doodle [she means that cover illo -- a DOODLE!!!] --if you don't like/want/can't use -- please return it-- I'll gladly pay postage.

[Incredible! How can people with such talent BE so modest?]

Heh, heh, I assume you explained Coprolites in the first issue. It amazed me to see the stuff for sale in some gem and lapidary supply catalogues -- now a zine's got that as a monicker! A zine by any other name would smell as sweet?

Your zine is doggoned well written -- but considering what I gleaned of your journalistic background, I'd assume you have a firm grasp on the basics. Howcum you haven't spread your sphere of influence and written for other zines far & wide?

[Strangely, this same point has been raised in a couple of other letters, which I'd like to print, in part, before I attempt to respond. Most of the rest of Sheryl's letter concerns her kitten, Putt (I'd like very much to print that portion of her loc, but as Rose Hogue commented in a recent loc which I'm not going to have time to print even excerpts from, "if you don't watch out, cathood will take over your zine!" But maybe I could have a special feline issue, or supplement, sometime?]

Douglas Leingang
P.O. Box 21328 LSU
Baton Rouge LA 70803

Dear Don

Thank you for your fanzine Coprolites; it has a very good layout and good artwork, not to mention your own writing. However, I shall mention it: you should get rid of your fanzine kick

and write seriously; for professional outlets. One can go only so far with zines, and there's never a point of no return.

I have quit reading, locating, and contributing to zines, and many of the faneds have realized this -- my mailbox is very empty. However, you have caught me at a free time (between novels) and I read and enjoyed your zine. Nothing else needs to be said about it . . .

Brett Cox
Box 542
Tabor City, N.C.
28463

Don,

...tell me all about yourself. As Ted Sturgeon said in a review of ORBIT 9, I feel as if I've come in in the middle of an engrossing conversation. You are the same Don Thompson who co-edited All in Color for a Dime, which I didn't buy until it came out in a cheapo Ace pb, God forgive me? Who are you? What are you? When are you? Tell me. I wish to learn. ...

One suggestion: you might, in the future, make it a point to respond a little more fully to your locs. I'm interested in what you have to say, too.

...what are your tastes in sf? We can scarcely have decent arguments if I don't know that.

I have mercilessly edited out some of the most interesting stuff in these letters, not just about cats but about Nixon and other pornographic matters, and I really regret it now. For I find myself at a loss to explain the things that the letters I've quoted demand explanations for.

Brett's letter, particularly, has intensified my identity crisis. Who am I? Well ... not only am I not the Don Thompson, I am not even (as Harry Warner pointed out lastish) the other Don Thompson! Can anyone imagine what it feels like to be "just another Don Thompson"? Probably not unless you are "just another Bob Stewart."

And then Brett wants to know: "What are you? When are you?" and I am even more perplexed. I could answer, quite accurately, too, that I am a college professor five days of the week and a newspaperman three days of the week, and the rest of the time I divide between being a businessman (S*C*O*R*P*I*O*N lives!), a fan editor/writer, an aspirant pro writer, a collector of old magazines and books, and ... oh, yes, I am also at odd moments a husband and a father-- all of which implies (with less than total accuracy) that I exist in some timeless continuum. But how informative is all that? Not very.

The answers to Sheryl's query as to why I haven't written for other fanzines and become better known, and to Doug Leingang's advice that I quit writing fan stuff and turn to the professional outlets are, I trust, implicit in what I've said above?

Perhaps Doug's advice does deserve a somewhat clearer response, which I'm going to provide partly because Doug makes the same point my wife, Carolyn does when she occasionally thumbs through Coprolites. She puts it down with a slight shake of her head (or is it a shudder?) and she says something like: "Well, I know this is fun and games for you, and it's kind of fun to read [I don't remember that she ever actually said that, but maybe she will someday] but...why??? What's it all for? It takes so much time. Wouldn't you do better to spend all that time doing some real writing? You could be selling if you'd spend as much time writing stories as you do writing this."

The answer of course is, yes; it's true. And we could wipe out poverty at

home with the money that's spent on space research. But the point is that the money not spent on space research isn't spent to eliminate poverty; and the time not spent on Coprolites isn't spent on serious writing. With Coprolites I at least have something to show for the time spent, some evidence that for the period of time involved I did exist. And anyway there are spinoff benefits from Coprolites, just as there are spinoff technological benefits from the space program. For one thing, I have learned quite a bit about print duplicating techniques -- about Heklograph and Ditto and Xerox and mimeographing -- things that I did not learn, and would never have learned, in all my years as a professional newspaperman. Vastly more important, to me, are all the people I am meeting (so to speak) with Coprolites, and the new friends I'm acquiring. This is something so surprising, and so warmly gratifying, and so profoundly satisfying that I could not even have imagined how much it would mean before it happened, and it's something that is probably impossible to explain.

What else in the locs should I try to respond to? My tastes in sf? Hell, who has time to read sf?

I cannot quite bring myself to just ignore the rest of these fanzines, but I also don't have time or space to review them. I'll compromise by simply listing them, with editor, address, etc., and perhaps a very brief comment on each.

DYNATRON, Roy Tackett (or Roytac) 915 Green Valley Road NW, Albuquerque, N.M. 87107. Personalzine with accounts of the Albuquerque group's activities. Roy wants to hear from other Denver area faneds.

GAVORTENPLATZ #1 William Fesselmeyer; The Journal of Kansas City Fandom; Kansas City SF & Fantasy Society, P.O. Box 6934, Kansas City Mo. 64130. Offset, heavy on graphics and comics; includes poetry and fiction along with reviews; lovely cover by David Wilson. All in all, very nice.

MAYBE, Irvin Koch c/o 835 Chatt.

Bk. Bldg. Chattanooga TN 37402

Kind of a crudzine, I guess; it has a certain "thrown together" appearance, but in spite of its general sloppiness, I'm grateful to it for its fanzine reviews. That's where I got the names of most of the people I'm sending Coprolites to.

THE POINTED STAKE

Ed Connor

1805 N. Gale

Peoria, Ill. 61604

"Like coming in on the middle of an engrossing conversation," as someone said recently.

POWERMAD

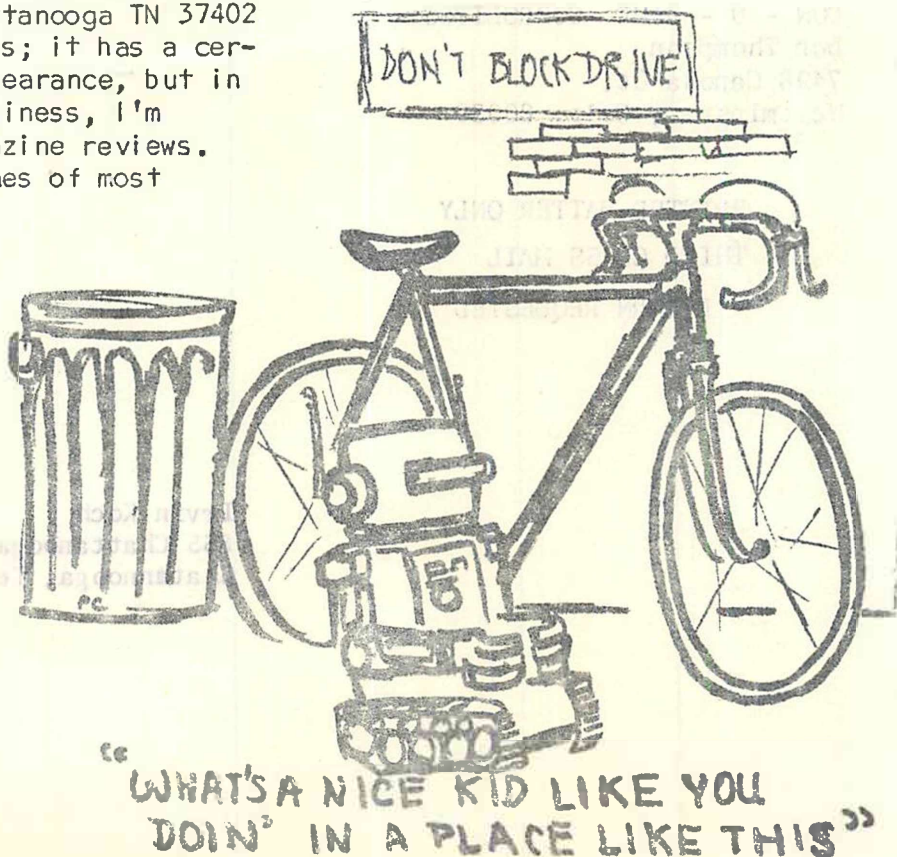
SP4 Bruce D. Arthurs

527-98-3103

57th Trans Co.

Ft. Lee VA 23801

Wish I did have time to discuss this one. It is good in a subtle, quiet, unpretentious



sort of way. Bruce is a thoughtful, serious and highly intelligent young man who writes the same way about a lot of interesting things. Powermad is a personalzine; he also publishes an extremely attractive genzine, GODLESS. Both highly recommended.

SOITGOZE 3 Tim C. Marion, 614 72nd St. Newport News, VA 23605 (dittoed, 34 pages). Sample copies given away at the editor's discretion. Some interesting stuff here, including personal narratives, zine reviews, locs, etc. My only complaint is that Tim tries perhaps a little too hard to be clever, especially with such matters as phonetic spelling (thaut for thought, etc.) which becomes distracting and irritating. Otherwise OK...

D'APA COMMENTS:

Obviously I've put this off too long to be able to say much about individual zines, but I must at least comment on the totality. It's an amazine compilation, and I congratulate everyone (of course me too) who was a part of it. And I particularly want to commend Gordon Garb, who outdid everybody else, both in ambition and performance. Four Color APA zine is a joy to behold and a delight to read; Gordon is a born fane, and the sooner his zine achieves a broader circulation, the better off fandom will be. Unfortunately on this issue he ran off only enough copies for D'APA, so non-members must rely on their imaginations. Fred's zine, also, helped to swell the volume of D'APA 25 with some lively and readable material.

Oh, what the hell! Here's what I really want to say about D'APA: I am truly proud to be its OE. Thank you. And good night.

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ART CREDITS: Sheryl Birkhead, front cover; Gail Barton, P. 1 logo; pp. 3 & 6; Al Ellis, pp. 2 & 5; Russell Parkhurst pp. 9 & 10; Pete Chronis p.13.

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