SPECIAL NEWARKON II ISSUE!

FANTASY TIMES

The National Fantasy Review

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THE UNPRODIGAL PUBLISHER RETURNS

-an editorial-

by Sam Moskowitz

It is perhaps almost as fantastic as super-science that a fan of my degree of activity these past ten years has hitherto never cranked a mimeograph handle. The many mimeographed publications bearing my name in editorial inscription always had the menial administrations performed by another. But due to a strange series of circumstances (being offered two mimeographs in one day, finding it possible to purchase unlimited supplies of 20 lb. mimeograph paper at $.85 a ream, and the presence of Alex Osheroff who culpably agreed to type stencils) I find myself in the position of Lord High Handle Turner. The rest lies in the hands of fate.

I am glad to say that it is with a distinct feeling of pleasure that I return to the roles of FAPA, with a much clearer conception of the spirit of such an organization and a willingness to continue as an active member.

I carry on the old title of "Fantasy Times" because I am, in principle against the ever-changing maze of titles prevelant in fandom, and because I wish to continue fulfilling old obligations.

This issue is devoted in the main to material concerning the very successful Newarkon II. In the future history of fandom that event will not be without its importance and general significance. Even if it does not, I present it.

In a more serious sense this issue is also dedicated to Walter Sullivan, whose memory we honored March 1st, 1946 in Newark.

The last issue of Fantasy Times was misnumbered No. 10 (The December, 1945 issue), it was actually number 11.

The last issue of Fantasy Times received much favorable comment on the quality of its material. We completely sold out of old extras and segments of incomplete issues containing specifically desired articles. We will continue to try to present an entertaining publication.

TRIBUTE TO WALTER SULLIVAN
By
SAM MOSKOWITZ

(Delivered at the First Post War Stf. Convention)

The boys are back. That is, most of them are back. But for many who lie in a geography book of lands whose pages they have turned, there is no returning.

Among those boys were science-fiction fans. With the same sincere enthusiasm for a better visioned world of tomorrow as you and I. Among these were our friends.

In paying tribute to them, I chose as a symbol Walter Sullivan. Not only because I knew him personally, but because he was typical of the average science-fiction fan.

Coaxed into activity after vigorous protestations Walter soon established a reputation for himself as a reporter (of science-fiction events) of unusual clarity. Much of the charm of his work lay in the fact that as he wrote, his words seemed to caress the incidents written as though they meant much to him. For at heart, Walter Sullivan had been a lonely person with his one companion his powerful short-wave set which he now beamed to the stations of the world and with scholarly zeal soon became the worlds greatest expert on the fantastic in radio.

Walter Sullivan didn't have to die! At the time of his death he had done his share of air-missions as a radio operator and had been assigned to duty as head instructor in the radio school at the field feeding the Burma theatre of war. But they were so short of men that only a week before his death Walter Sullivan refused transfer to another base in India, and instead volunteered to resume his work in the air. Somewhere, near the notorious "hump" he lost his life.

Because Walter Sullivan loved the science-fiction world.

because in the company of people like us he found his greatest joy, and because I believe Walter Sullivan to be typical of every boy who gave his all in this past war, I ask the assembly to rise and stand a moment in his memory.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIRST POST WAR SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION

By Sam Moskowitz

Sometimes even a science-fiction convention can be like "Topsy" and "just grow". That may be said of Newarkon II. Though it had its genesis in late 1944 when the abandonment of a New York Science Fiction Banquet brought up the subject of a science-fiction conference as compensation it was not brought to fruition until after the organization of the A Men (Null A) Men, in early December, 1945.

At first, the intention was to merely have a large organizational meeting of 20-25 fans. But as nearby dogfen discarded their uniforms in droves and letters by the dozens began to arrive from old friends it became obvious that a general convention would not only be desirable, but imperative. For the vets wanted to see their friends now! They didn't want to see them six months from now, or leave it to chance, they wanted an organized affair at which they could really get together. The First Science-Fiction Convention in the East since the end of the war fulfilled that need.

Then, too, interest had awakened in science-fiction as never before. What with atom bombs, rocket planes, radar, the reconversion of energy into matter it seemed that science was pell mell overtaking the most fantastic concoctions of fiction. After all, there wasn't much point in being a science-fiction fan if science was to render impotent essential tenets of fiction faster than the imagination could create new ones. That point was a valid and important one that shouted for debate.

So with these things in mind speed was vital. Past large scale conventions had taken two years, a year, six months at the least for essential preparation. Could one be conceived in a month!

The pattern of the other conventions was clear. The crying need lay in streamlining. There was no time for professional advertising. There was no time for elaborate preparations. A hall was rented. The Slovak Sokol Hall where The First National Science Fiction Convention had been held in Newark in 1938. No other hall was even examined. The aims, date, time and place of the convention were set first, then the convention committee composed of Sam Moskowitz, Joe Kennedy and Geo. R. Fox met at the home of Kennedy and incorporating all the information they had turned out the first circular. One hundred and seventy-five copies were mimeographed and mailed out to a selected list of fans within a several hundred mile radius of Newark. Publicity notices were sent to Fanews, Stfnews,

Eganscorp and PSFS News, all the known newsies of the time. All managed to print notices prior to the convention date.

Then one day was set aside to visit editors in New York. In a single magnificent day F. Orlin Tremaine, Mrs. Mary Gnaedinger, Chet Peacock and Sam Merwin, Jr. promised to attend and originals or promises of originals were obtained from Street & Smith, Popular Publications, Standard Publications and Fiction House Publications. All promises of originals were kept (subject to the proviso that first choice be sent the Pacificon), but Mrs. Mary Gnaedinger and Chet Whitehorn were unable to attend.

Every member of the I Men was assessed two items (or more) to be contributed to the auction. Julius Unger came through with about 50 items, Thomas Hadley with over 200, and many other fans contributed items, notably A. Langley Searles.

It was decided that the sole source of income for the convention would be the auction. The lucrative convention booklet ads, bids for convention booklets, et al being waived in consideration to time or other things. The total expenses up to the date of the convention were borne by the chairman Sam Moskowitz who was also prepared to take the complete loss in the event of failure, the club being unable to finance the event or absorb possible losses. Profit if any was to provide the base of a club treasury.

Now before the second (follow-up) circular could be prepared or mailed out feature speakers had to be obtained for publicity purposes and a tentative program outlined. To present the talk on whether "Science is overtaking Science-Fiction" a fan was preferential. Dr. A. Langley Searles, was asked to speak because his experience in speaking in front of classes in his capacity as Instructor of Chemistry at New York University made him a good bet for proper delivery of a talk. He accepted. The feature pro was another matter. John W. Campbell, Jr., editor of "Astounding Science-Fiction" was reading proofs on a new book on atomic energy to be published by Henry Holt and would not be able to attend the convention, let alone talk. Groff Conklin, editor of the remarkable anthology "The Best of Science Fiction" was down in Washington, D.C. tied up with Claude Peppers "Senate Subcommittee on Health and Education" and could not make it. Then Julius Unger reported back from a visit to the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society and informed that L. Sprague de Camp was no longer with the armed services and what was more he had delivered an address on "Lost Continents" to the PSFS which was one of the best things of its type he had ever heard. We hastily contacted L. Sprague de Camp, and he graciously consented to speak for any length of time required. We asked him for 45 minutes.

With speakers secured we quickly turned out 200 copies of the second circular which were immediately mailed. Copies of the circulars were sent to the two leading Newark newspapers, "The Newark Evening News" and "The Newark Star-Ledger". The "News" printed an advance notice of the convention, but gave the date a week early. Many Newark scientifictionists spotted the notice and went to the trouble to ascertain the actual date and time. David M. Speaker, old time science-fiction author and expert on Radar who resides in the Newark suburb of East Orange spent four hours telephoning until he finally located Sam Moskowitz, chairman of the convention.

"The Newark Star-Ledger" printed no advance notice and it was thought that they had no interest in the affair.

At this time a troubled editorial in "Stefnews" inspired by overenthusiastic and misquoted statements of young Brooklyn fan Ron Christianson, questioned whether or not the Newark affair was intending to compete with the Pacificon. Recalling the trouble raised over the proposed Newarkon of 1941 clarification of the convention, its aims, purposes and limited extent were rushed to concerned parties and misunderstandings cleared up.

While fans had been fed at past Eastern events it was decided that in view of the high price and scarcity of various foods, the trouble neccessary, and the expected large audience no refreshments would be offered. There was a bar downstairs in the hall building which eventually did prove satisfactory to most. All frills were discarded. There would be no motion pictures, no banquets, no masquerade balls, no ball games, just straight stuff. A fast, short snappy, scheduled three hour program, then dismissal for the auction.

Messages regarding the convention began to roll in. From Chicago, one of the furthest points any of the circulars were sent Norman L. Knight well known science-fiction author and fan conscientiously wrote to tell us he wasn't coming. But the tone of the majority were otherwise and when messages arrived from The Philadelphia Science Fiction Society, The New England group and the Brooklyn Utopians announcing that they were sending delegations, we knew the success of the convention from the standpoint of attendance was assured.

The date of the convention was March 1, 1946. The first fans arrived the evening of Feb. 28, 1946. They were the New England group who had toured for eight hours in a sadly used 1937 Lincoln-Zephyr. Included were Tom Hadley, owner of the Buffalo Book Company Doris A. Currier, Bill Patterson and Donald K. Grant. Little time was spent in gabbing for hotel rooms had to be located. After hours of search the group was housed in the Hotel Lucerne. Joseph Solinger of Philadelphia also arrived a day ahead of schedule and was housed at the home of Geo. Fox, Secretary of the convention. Ron Haddox pulled in early as well and was put up by Joe Kennedy of Dover, N.J., a correspondent of the West-Virginian.

The next morning, all the above mentioned plus Richard Witter and Anthony Ceaser assembled at the home of Sam Moskowitz to take care of last minute details. They were shortly joined by Abraham Oshinsky, old time fan who now carries the distinction of being the first fan ever to fly to a convention. He traveled to and from Newark, N.J. from Hartford, Conn. by plane!

Arrival at the convention hall found dozens of fans, including a large portion of the Philadelphia delegation had been there since the morning hours and had imbibed in a liberal quantity of malt and hops in the interim.

Swiftly the numbers began to build up. Pictures were taken by Oswald Train, Abe Oshinsky, Ron Christenson and several others. A telephone call came through from "The Newark Star-Ledger". Miss Ann Smith, reporter wanted to know what the affair was all about and "could she come up." Of course she could.

At approximately 3:31 P. M. the convention was called to order by Chairman Sam Moskowitz. In his brief welcome address he covered the purposes of the convention, extended acknowledgements for help received and contrasted the methods of the present convention with the first in Newark in 1938. "Then", he said, "We had to promise you free eats, free moving pictures and a good time. But this time your motive had to be love of science fiction free and simple and we got about the same attendance."

Secondly he gave his tribute to Walter Sullivan as a symbol of all the science-fiction fans who gave their all in the past war, and the assembly rose and stood a moment in their memory.

Dr. A. Langley Searles was the first speaker and he spoke on the controversial subject of "Is Science Overtaking Science-Fiction?" Dr. Searles appeared superficially to believe it was, but a careful reading of the actual context of his speech in this booklet will show that he actually weighed both sides of the question and stated that he believed that new inventions were a springboard to more not less ideas.

David H. Speaker, B.S.B. & E.E., rose to say that ideas in science-fiction stories had avanced even faster then science. In 1932 a story about a television set was considered science-fiction. By 1942 it had become a minor detail in the framework of any story of the future. So, to, was atomic energy regarded, with atomic engines, ships and machines simply background material for much advanced ideas.

The convention was in full stride. The formulations had merited success. And the rest of the program, as accounts will verify followed in precise order.

Only once did the slightest possibility for trouble present itself. But so smoothly was it handled that the largest percentage of the audience remained blissfully unaware of untoward possibilities. During the introduction of fans in groups of local clubs and cliques, Elsie Balter wife of Donald A. Wolheim took the floor and said; "There is one large group that hasn't been mentioned--The New York Futurians!" That innocent sounding correction was poignant with undertones however, for the "Official Organ of the Futurian Society of New York" titled "X" had announced the expulsion of Donald A. Wolheim, Elsie Balter and John B. Michel from their group (the statement that later resulted in a suit). The chairman knew this but to question it would mean a verbal battle not to question it might incur an immediate protest from the "official" Futurian Society.

"Oh, I didn't realize the Futurians were here as a group (which he certainly didn't)", was the reply from the chair and introductions were made all around.

The tenor of the convention was a remarkably amiable one, which fact was noted in the newspaper writeup.

No booster ads were accepted, nor contributions in the form of cash. The sole method of paying expenses was the auction. Remarkably enough the majority of the items auctioned were contributed by the fans. The fans had paid for their own convention!

So successful was the auction that it more than covered all conceivable expenses, including car fare and telephone calls of all concerned parties. As was stated: "If we had to buy an author's baby an ice cream cone as a good-will gesture to get said author to attend the convention, that, too, would have been deducted." The result was a surplus above all expenses of 50 dollars. The A Men were not officially organized and had actually contributed very little to the convention with the important exceptions of George Fox and Joe Kennedy who were eager beavers whenever called upon. Still, it was felt that the profits did not rightly belong to any one individual or any small group of individuals since the source of the income had been contributed by fandom at large. Therefore it was decided to turn the 50 dollars over to the "A Men" upon formal organization of that group as the "Eastern Science Fiction Association" at the meeting of April 28, 1946. Upon election of a treasurer, Gerry de la Ree, Jr., Sam Moskowitz turned over the money to him and received a signed receipt. A general Eastern science-fiction club had been successfully launched. Already part of the money was being channelled to proper ends as it was voted to purchase a full page ad in the Pacificon program at the meeting of May 12, 1946.

Specific results of the convention: The launching and financing of the first major science-fiction club in the East since the outbreak of hostilities.

The decision of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society to continue their Conferences in the Fall using the success of the Newark affair as an indicator.

The decision of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society to bid for the next World Science Fiction Convention.

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Is Science Overtaking Science-Fiction?

By

A. Langley Searles, Ph.D.

I wonder how many fans have looked at science-fiction, as I often do, as a sort of game. It's good entertainment, true---but in a way it is also a kind of contest between man's imagination and his powers of invention. And so, if we examine a cross-section of science-fiction from its earliest days up until the present, we are examining a record of this contest. It is interesting to see how much wishful thinking has become reality.

Most of us are familiar with many instances of theoretical speculations in stories coming to life. We think first of all, probably, of Jules Verne. Today a journey around the world that required eighty days would seem a very leisurely trip indeed, and the exploits related in Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea also smack very much of the commonplace now.

Until recently, however, this transformation was a rather slow process. Many years were usually required to bring it about. And thus man's imagination had no difficulty in keeping ahead of the world of reality. But in the past decade---and more especially in the past few months---we have noticed a change. The process of

factualizing fiction has become so rapid that there are cases on record where an invention mentioned in a story as something yet to be produced has already come into existence before the story was printed.

One of the earliest indications of this trend, coincidentally enough, occurred exactly twelve years ago today. The March 3rd, 1934 issue of Argosy magazine printed "The War of the Purple Gas" by Murray Leinster. In this tale the author described a "new" spectroscope which was supposedly a product of research of the year 1952 But a few weeks later a reader corrected Mr. Leinster. The spectroscope in question had actually been invented two years before "The War of the Purple Gas" appeared.

In 1945 and 1946 examples are encountered even more frequently. The most common of them deal with atomic explosives---and the atomic bomb is a deadly reality that is familiar to everyone.

We might, of course, lay the blame for such happenings on the science-fiction authors themselves, maintaining that they are failing to keep up with current trends. I rather think, however, that they are not wholly at fault; that science has simply been advancing too quickly for the average writer to keep track of it accurately. Moreover, he always runs the risk of seeing actuality intervene between an acceptance check and the story's breaking into print.

So far, I have emphasized the negative side of the matter. Naturally there exist many who, although the race is a close one, yet feel that fiction can pull ahead of science and stay ahead. They point out that every discovery is a springboard for launching new and greater ones; that if man has already reached the limit of his imagination he is indeed through.

But whether or not we agree that science-fiction has reached an end, I am sure that most of us feel that science-fiction as we have known it is reaching an end. Many stories remembered from the 1930's are no longer science-fiction; they are now to be classified rather as detective stories, adventure stories, stories of romance. The next time you stop at your newsstand for a daily paper look about you: you will see that the covers on mundane magazines of 1946 all too often resemble those illustrating fantastic adventures of 1926 and 1936.

Is science overtaking science-fiction? I must answer the topic question by an emphatic "yes." Obviously the two are no longer widely separated, but are well-nigh abreast of one another. This we know from observing all that goes on about us.

Such a reply prompts yet another query: "Is science-fiction playing a losing game?" That is what we are most interested in, and is what I shall attempt very briefly to answer.

First of all, whatever occurs, we can be sure that science-fiction is not doomed to extinction. No matter how rapidly science advances, there would still be some fiction stemming from it to be found. Very few literary forms die out completely. But we want more than mere existence; what we desire is progress. And progress requires effort. It is the story of Alice in the Looking-Glass land all over again: there, as you will recall, Alice found that it was

necessary to run very hard just to stay in one place. To get anywhere one had to run twice as fast at least.

And to continue its progress, science-fiction must run about twice as fast as it has been wont to do, if it is to depend on extrapolated science alone. To achieve a status equal to other forms of literature, however, it requires something else, an ingredient which many of its stories have all too often lacked. That ingredient is permanence.

The usual method of an author of science-fiction, as we encounter the latter in magazines, is to try for permanence by casting his story on such an advanced imaginative plane as to make its realization in actuality something very remote. But this, as we might well guess, is a risky course at best. The atomic bomb has outmoded more tales than I care to think about. And atomic power itself, harnessed to everyday use, will appear just as inevitably, and will outmode even more of them. Indeed, when we think of newspaper reports of uranium-powered engines we can readily believe that this may be a matter of but a few years at most.

The author who relies on such devices alone is bound, sooner or later, to witness his fiction being thrown into the literary ash-can as science catches up to it.

What, then, can he rely on? How can he add this elusive ingredient of permanence to his work? Logically enough, he must depend for its attainment on something which does not change. Or, to be a bit more precise, on something which in all of our experience we have never known to change. That something is human nature. The actions of human beings form patterns which have not altered, to the best of our knowledge, throughout all recorded history. And the use of these patterns will give science-fiction the permanence it must have to survive.

Now, I do not mean to infer that all science-fiction up until now has lacked this element. Naturally, it has not. But too frequently there has been little of it present, usually diluted by innumerable gadgets and trick inventions. A good test would be to take the "science" out of a story, and see what we have left. If there is a sensible groundwork remaining, the author has employed his knowledge of human psychology to good effect.

This is by no means an original point of view. In essence, I suppose, it is but another perspective of H.G. Wells' theory that one should found a tale on a single unusual device, and, once the reader has been lulled into suspending his disbelief, base everything on human nature from then on.

The criterion of such a theory is, of course, whether it will work. This one does. Today, despite the fact that their science is long since outmoded, 20,000 Leagues under the Sea and Around the World in 80 Days are still read. Why? Because, quite obviously, there is more to their fiction than the bits of science which Jules Verne extrapolated from. They possess that fundamental character of permanence. Similarly, I venture to predict that when travel beyond the stratosphere is effected---and I believe that most of us gathered here today will see that accomplished---then Wells' First Men on the Moon and The War of the Worlds will still be read also. They too have that all-important ingredient of permanence.

From these examples we can see that if science-fiction is founded as firmly on human psychology as it is on some imaginary invention, no one need worry about how fast science progresses. An imaginary invention may be outmoded---but human nature cannot be.

In a way, science's wholesale catching up with science-fiction is probably a good thing. Inevitably, I feel, it will weed out much inferior material that clutters up the field today. The result is bound to be enjoyable.

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BOOK REVIEW

WITCH HOUSE by Evangaline Walton, Published by Arkham House, Sauk City, Wisconsin, 1945, $2.50, Cover jacket by Ronald Clyne, 200 Pages.

Arkham House, that fabled cornicopia of fantastic literature has produced another hit. This time its a full-length novel, the first for them. Although it would not be my choice for the #1 spot ("The Outsider" was #1 for short-story collections) it still is a tale of high calibre and certainly belongs in the realm of weird fiction. The story revolves around an inheritance, divided three ways, among decendents of an old New England family. The first ancestor, leaving Europe under a cloud, settles down, marries a neighbors daughter and builds up a nice fortune. He is tainted with satanism and practices it in his weaker moments. This trait comes down to one or other of the children and through the two hundred years the family is looked upon by the neighbors. The family mansion exudes an aura of evil and all who enter, sooner or later fall prey to it. As the tale opens, a psychiatrist is sent for, to try to cure the small daughter of one of the three heirs, of spells and fits. The Doctor notices a spirit of antagonism from the other two heirs. Both these, brothers, are descendents of a Chinese mother and a sea faring Captain, of seventy years back. Both are adepts at telekinesis, the art of being able to make objects move at a distance by power of the will. The brothers, both somewhat demented, try to eliminate the other two heirs, the third being an heiress. The young daughter through the Doctors aid, is able to withstand her frantic spells and the story moves rapidly moving climax. One of the brothers trying to trap the Doctor under a rockslide is himself killed along with his wife, who at the last moment refuses to abet him in his schemes. The other brother, in a mad lust for his cousin, traps her in a garret but is burned to death when the mansion burns to the ground. The heiress in the meantime is handily rescued by the M.D. and with the daughter leaves the burning pyre, washed of its evilness.

-JOHN NITKA.

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BACK ISSUES OF "FANTASY TIMES" still available:
NOS# 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 (Fantasy REPORTER), 10 cents apiece.
SCIENTIFICTION SCOUT (official organ of the old Newark SFL) Nos. 1,2 at 5 cents apiece.
HELIOS: Original publication of Sam Moskowitz
No. 1. June, 1937, No. 2, July, 1937, 10cents a copy. Printed.
PLANETEER: Last issue under Taurasi. 15 cents.