

"Hain'tcha gonna fancy it up a bit?"

No. 4

September, 1961

If you're expecting maybe cover artwork, look inside.

G2, G-squared and G-2, too, is allee same fanzine (depending on your typer dexterity--and ours, too, sometimes) published monthly by Joe & Roberta Gibson at 5380 Sobrante Ave., El Sobrante, California ... and it's only to be had by subscribing. (Rates: 3/25¢ or 6/50¢ or \$1 a year.)

We don't trade zines, exactly--but even if you don't want G2, send us a sample copy of your zine. If we like it, you will definitely hear from us. We'll want a sub. We'll pay for it. But if you do want G2, say so when you send us your zine. If we like it, too, we'll make a deal--reciprocal subs on a cash value basis.

Fans who want G2 outside the \$\$ Area, please get us a sub to ANY fanzine in your vicinity--including an y English-language fmz on the Continent; or including your own zine, of course--and we'll reciprocate with a cash-equivalent sub to G2; just let us know you've done it.

We aren't asking for material or artwork. Matter of fact, we've received some anyway--so good that we want to use it.

And we aren't asking for letters of comment--unless you could enjoy writing us one. What we'd like to do is make it that way: enjoyable.

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No, we didn't make it to the Seacon. Nor did we attend the local fling (a "Nonvention Party", they called it) being flung by Joe & Felice Rolfe in Palo Alto ... in fact, we didn't even get Palo Alto onto that Bay Area map featured in G2#2! It's about a quarter-inch below the bottom margin on the San Francisco side. The fling was for Bayfans who couldn't make the Seacon, too, and there were quite a lot of us.

I worked a half-day that Saturday, too.

--Joe

TO PUBLISH A PROZINE

NOTE: I wouldn't write this article about publishing a s-f magazine at all, believe me, if I didn't have something original to say. As it is, I've several things to say -- things which need to be said now, which aren't being said, to my knowledge, anywhere. And it's hurting us.

JG, El Sobrante, 1961

Rule #1: To publish ANY magazine, you've got to have money.

The situation today is that book publishers are making money, magazines are not. This statement has to be qualified, however, else somebody can retort that magazines ARE making money. They make money just as well as they always have -- yes, indeed! And there's the rub.

Publishing costs have gone up so fast that virtually every magazine on the newsstands has hiked its advertising rates drastically, and still they've just barely stayed ahead of the game. In fact, some of them didn't.

Magazines depending almost entirely on circulation sales -- such as science-fiction magazines -- are having an even rougher time. What was once considered a top circulation figure just isn't enough, anymore. It barely pays expenses.

Book publishing is making money, however, despite rising costs. There are two good reasons. For the first time in American history, books are really being distributed to the public -- they're out where you can see 'em and buy what you want, now! Pocketbook publishers are to be thanked for that; but this statement has to be qualified, too. The pb outfits are cashing in on mass distribution while the hard-cover boys bewail the fact that you can't get hard-cover books onto a drugstore rack. They will admit that pb sales have got people reading, that hard-cover sales have subsequently increased -- but not enough, they say sadly, not anywhere near enough.

That's too bad. Because the second reason they're making money is simply this: more children! Our booming population has quite naturally created a booming market for hard-cover publishers in which the pb boys cannot compete.

Schoolbooks.

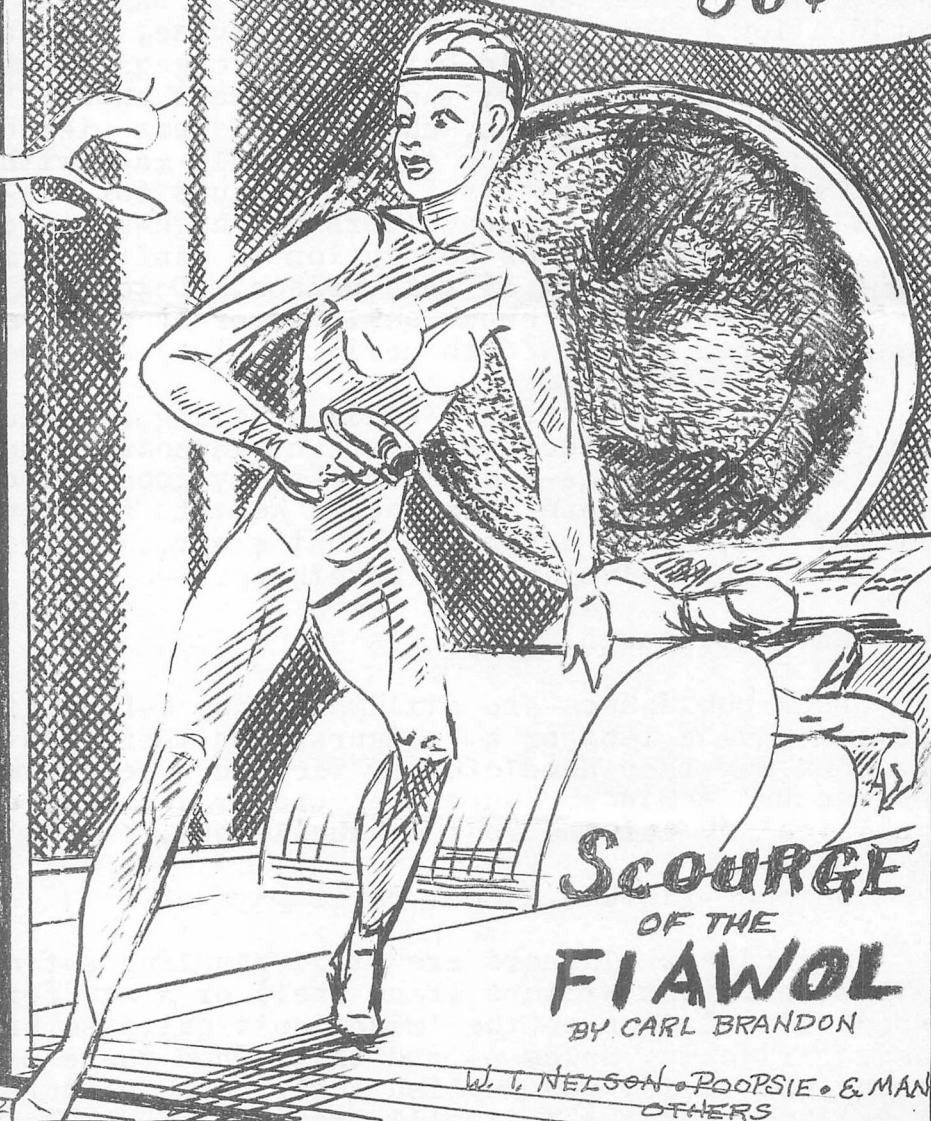
And you do see hard-cover juvenile books on drugstore racks.

EXPLORE

WORLDS OF SPACE &
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OCT. 10

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SCOURGE
OF THE
FIAWOL

BY CARL BRANDON

W. T. NELSON • POOPSIE • & MANY
OTHERS

(COMMERCIAL VERSION)

All right, there's one whole page of this article written and I haven't yet said a thing that's original. Now I've got to dig up some past history of the science-fiction magazines -- I'm giving you the pieces, first; then I'll fit them together, so perhaps you'll get the same picture I do.

There's ample evidence that s-f has suffered from mismanagement by various publishers in the past. Furthermore, it still is -- tho not by the same publishers.

Previously, it was the chain publishers who handled s-f in the same cut-and-dried manner they handled western, detective, love story and adventure fiction -- that these were pulp magazines isn't important. A magazine cover had a foul villain and enraged hero with guns, and a terrified heroine as nearly naked as the Post Office would allow. The actual theme, of course, was Naked Girl In Trouble. Magazines with that sold better than magazines without it. (We're more sophisticated, now; the girlie mags show Naked Girl Looking For Trouble.) In most cases, chain publishers picked their editors and kept hack-writers filling those monthly mags with stories in the same way. This created s-f with zapguns for six-shooters and rocket ships for horses -- or revolvers and high-speed cars. And by the way, it was no Glorious Revolution we can thank ourselves for when s-f finally broke out of this prison. Detective fiction escaped first, and proved it could sell better by doing so; westerns and s-f were then permitted to deviate. They sold better, too.

Today, publishers are still handling science-fiction the same way they handle detective, western, adventure and if-you-please sex fiction. Oh, sure -- we get perfectly good s-f covers on most s-f books, paperbacks and magazines. Western fiction gets good western covers, too; so do adventure (that's War, mostly, now) and detective fiction. Oh, we've learned something.

But not enough.

Book publishers are still handling s-f as if, maybe this year, they'll have a 1984 or a Valigursky on their list! In short, exactly the same way they handle other fiction -- each year, they publish their usual quota and hope that one or two will sell at least well enough to pay for the rest of the lemons.

Science-fiction almost never pays off.

Magazine publishers are still handling s-f mags as if, maybe with some better writers (find one!) or a new format, they can build enough circulation so the 'zine isn't quite so hard to pay off with their girlie mag sales -- and thank Ghod there's plenty of women around who'll let you publish their naked picture for a few bucks! No telling when the bottom'll drop out of How-To magazine sales, but men (and bhoys) will always buy that female bottom.

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EXPLORER
MAGAZINE
SPRING

INCIDENT
ON
FIJAGH

by Nelson Rodel

('PRESTIGE' VERSION)

Actually, it hasn't been quite that bad for most publishers in years. Most s-f mags today (count 'em) DO operate in the black -- if sometimes by a damned narrow margin. There was really a time, tho, when the chain publishers were putting out s-f mags which never paid off. Some of those publishers never thought it would! Yet they published the magazines, every issue costing them money.

It was a peculiar situation. They needed magazines then, ANY kind of magazines; the chain publisher who didn't have a long list of magazine titles was dead! If you didn't have that long list, you couldn't sell the detective or western magazines that really paid your bills. You'd go down to the distributor and say "Whyinell aren't you distributing my detective magazine to more newsstands, anymore? My sales are dropping! I know damn' well you got that other outfit's magazines distributed -- why not mine?" The guy shrugs and says, "Look, that other outfit pays me to distribute fifteen different rags each month. You come around bellyaching about one cheap rag. I give you the best I can for the business you bring me; you want more, start publishing some other rags, too."

D'you realize how much this may be true, today, among the pocketbook publishers??? Chew on that a moment, and recall some of the utterly weird things that come out in pb's occasionally.

Now, there's one other little complicating factor that we've got to consider before we'll have all the pieces: s-f reprints do make money.

When writers like Poul Anderson and James Blish say they've made more on the Serial Rights for a novel than they did on the original magazine sale, that gives you a fair idea of how much more the reprint publisher made before he scraped off a miserly percentage to the author.

Now, that's revealing -- that's VERY revealing. Because the prime source of s-f reprint material is, of course, the magazines; and right now, we've come through 10 years of pretty lousy magazine s-f. Consequently, the book publishers are in somewhat of a dither; they've already reprinted most of the Golden Age s-f, even including some rather best-forgotten stuff -- but you can't have 10 years of lousy magazines and end up with any good reprint stuff. So what are they doing? Why, they're reissuing Golden Age reprints, that's what they're doing. And the stuff is selling again, too, tho perhaps not as well as if they'd held off another 5 years -- new generations of s-f readers must have time to develop -- and of course, some of the stuff is naturally beginning to sound a little outdated, while it hasn't yet had time to become Classic. Still, dammit, that's all there is!

So there's the background -- briefly, that is, without cost and circulation figures, source-quotes and names named. And it's

certainly high time I said something original.

But I'm going to cheat. I'm going to ring in one more piece of stuff for you to consider. It's you.

Look around your home. How many books have you got? All right, how many shelves of books have you got?

How many would you like to have?

Now tell me, if you can -- oh, hazard a guess, anyway -- how many different kinds of books do you read?

It's one thing for someone like Anthony Boucher to stand before a Westercon audience and boast that fandom includes persons who can discourse intelligently and informedly upon any subject the human mind can or has ever been able to conceive. It's another to find someone who'll admit that, yes, they have read a little science-fiction now and then; consider that admission and you've got the clue. Anyone who reads science-fiction at all is an omnivorous reader! They'll read something of almost everything. In fact, you could almost say they'll read anything.

Suppose, then, that a science-fiction magazine should print a questionnaire for its readers to fill out. How many books do they have? How many do they read? How many kinds of books? And will the reader please fill this out and mail it in to our advertising department, so we can show it to the book publishers and get them to buy ad-space in our magazine?

Ideally, book publishers should subsidize the s-f magazines -- but not, say, as GALAXY advertises Galaxy Novels or The Science-Fiction Book Club. That's not enough; that's nothing. A successful science-fiction magazine should have a format comparable to TRUE or ARGOSY, slick paper and color illos (and comparable word-rates, too) and with as much space devoted to advertising. Books, not men's clothing.

Book publishers are making money, and one reason is better distribution. The hard-cover publishers aren't getting all that distribution, tho, and they're complaining. But distribution's only part of the game; advertising sells, too.

The only fanzine I ever heard of that not only broke even, but made a profit, was Gus Willmorth's FANTASY ADVERTISER. All it had was ads. Book ads. And only s-f/fantasy books, at that.

Of course, book publishers aren't too happy with the s-f mags right now. It might even be, y'know, that they'd hardly consider the present s-f mags worthy of handling any really serious (and expensive) book advertising. Well, they aren't much good for s-f, either.

It dassn't behoove me one bit to join the many other voices, at this point, all bewailing as how science-fiction is becoming more outmoded every day as scientific progress catches up with all our cherished predictions. I call this hogwash and I blame the magazines.

Sure, we had viziphones before anybody ever heard of television. We knew how rockets push and could rattle off the nine planets in proper sequence and maybe, with a moment's thought, we could tell how many moons Jupiter and Saturn have and name at least one of the bigger rocks in the Asteroid Belt. Okay, that's old stuff now. It was the frontier, and we were frontiersmen.

In fact, it's too damned common stuff now! When the newspapers start carrying headlines that we never used to see outside of AMAZING STORIES, there's just one answer: this frontier's getting too damned crowded. It's time we moved on.

And don't ask me, Where? You should know.

Nat Sachner called it "The Ridge" twenty years ago, in his Space Lawyer series in the old ASTOUNDING. It includes eleven 1st-magnitude stars that I know of, and four of those are double stars. Maybe it includes a dozen Big Blazers, maybe less; I don't know which ones are so far off "The Ridge" it would take a big jump to reach 'em. But the whole blamed Ridge covers maybe 100 light-years, with jumps star-to-star being considerably less. Worst of all, tho, I don't know how many stars of ANY magnitude are here; but the Sun's one of 'em.

Possibly Andy Young could chart the thing. Anyway, that's a start.

There's other things, too. I'll get around to mentioning 'em -- you can bet on that, long as I continue publishing this fanzine. But anything like this will come up only if you or I dig it up; we won't find much of it in the present s-f magazines.

This goes for artwork, too. Really good s-f artwork. And this has already begun to hurt our fan conventions; there's very little prozine art that's worth auctioning, any more, and auctions have been a chief source of income for our cons. The only answer is for fan artists to get busy. Morrie Dollens showed the way; that guy made money and still could if he could produce. Any fan artist who donates some really good color originals to a con auction (for a small, but not too small, percentage of the proceeds) is going to be very welcome.

And we'll continue to have lean pickin's, I'm afraid, until somebody in the pro field gets off the dime.

POSTERUM LOCUS

I'm sitting here on an inflated rubber doughnut (which is the only damned way I can sit, right now) to type this apology. No, we do not have a letter column this issue. We've a good stack of letters for one, Robbie was well-primed to handle it this time, and I'd already finished the preceding article & artwork so there was nothing else to be done. And this is where it was supposed to be.

But Robbie's had other things to contend with (me, mostly) and now it's too late.

I was in hospital 3 days last week; if local infection had broken out and become general infection, I'd have been there yet. Seems I'd got this abcess on my goddam arse, a rapidly swelling lump right next my rectum where a local anesthetic wouldn't do; they put me under with sodium pentathol. After surgery, there was nothing more than an infected wound to be dealt with, of course. But in two days I was off penicillin and antibiotics, in 3 I was out, the infection's about gone and the thing's healing.

Robbie's somewhat better, too, now. So she'll just have to do up a big, fat lettercol for this spot, next issue.

There now, I've told you about my operation.

- - - - -

"THIS HURTS ME MORE THAN IT DOES YOU, WALT WILLIS!"

To Larry Shaw:

...And no, fella, you'll not be getting our usual stipend for TAWF this month. Medical expenses have cut us a bit short.

We're glad to see the Fund has reached just over \$1,200, of course, but we'll be much gladder when it gets over \$1,500. For Walt and Madeleine to do a transatlantic round-trip, plus the trip to the Chicago convention, plus any kind of a Stateside tour (or don't we want an account of all this anywhere near as comprehensive as Willis Discovers America was?) is gonna cost. And I'd rather we did more than have them over via cattleboat steerage, kept in cokes & hotdogs while thumbing their way to Chicago and living in sleeping bags the whole time. If it comes to that, I'd rather we just left Walt home and bring Madeleine, BOAC & all the best. In fact, something might happen to Walt before next Labor Day ... no, let's not say it, she might not think of it at all. Walt is a nice chap.

(If this is utter nonsense to anyone, just send off a couple bucks to Larry T. Shaw, 16 Grant Place, Staten Island 6, N.Y., and he'll explain everything.)

((But you want to trade fanzines, do you?!))

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