

111

This is the 111th issue of Horizons, and it seems like a terribly long time since the 11th. It is also volume 28, number 4, FAPA number 105, and the season is spring but the magazine is meant for the summer FAPA mailing. Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, U.S.A., has written most of it. The Coulsons will be publishers if I stop fooling around and get some stencils to them in time.

### In the Beginning

New Cat Sand: The shortmemoried will have forgotten already that these are comments on the portion of the February mailing that got segregated in the last Horizons. Cal was quoting odd-sounding items he found while grading papers by college students. Some were amusing and I tried to be shocked that college people weren't writing better than this. But I couldn't overlook the fact that such samples of writing are no real guide to the creators' overall abilities. Some people can't put words down on paper despite great talent in most other respects, just as some perfectly wonderful typists have trouble changing ribbons. I'm not going to sneer until I get proof that these students are mediocre in other respects.

520 07 0328: It seems needlessly complicated to resort to electronic tactics for making a television set lefthanded. Wouldn't it be simpler to prop a mirror in front of it? Of course, this wouldn't alter colors, unless a batch of Kodacolor dyes were mixed with the silvering material when the mirror was manufactured. 'I've been trying since February to decide if I also think of the place I live as a sanctuary. I don't think so, mainly because I've never had the energy and daring to make the inside of this house just the way I'd prefer it to be. It would be much more convenient if I kept a projection screen set up all the time in the right place and piled a hundred pounds of music atop the piano, for instance. But the convenience would be negated by explanations to visitors and tampering by the cleaning woman. Asp: There's no need for Alva Rogers to explain that he really does avail himself of products of technology and industry. The kids who claim that they leave society alone and society should leave them alone are using technology and industry just like Alva. Their underground newspapers are dependent on papermills and the federal post office system and the taxes someone paid to teach them how to read. There's no difference between publishing an underground newspaper and owning three late model Detroit automobiles, except for Alva's awareness of what he's doing.

Habakkuk: Mercy, someone in FAPA admits that he watches the bowl games. I do too when work schedules permit. I'm not particularly fond of football and it's hard to be sure why I spend all that time at the start of a new year. Maybe it's the half-felt thought that something legendary will happen in one of these bowl games like the wrong-way run and it would be terrible to miss live-TV experience of it. I seem to be the only person in the nation who was not watching when Lee Harvey Oswald got shot. 'Bob Parkinson parrots an old fairy tale when he cites Johann Sebastian Bach as a sample of the genius who is ignored for generations. Bach never went out of favor and returned from limbo when Mendelssohn produced the St. Matthew Passion, as the books on music for popular audiences claim. He did not have much popularity among the university professors and the society patrons until Mendelssohn's time, but the real music lovers



knew all about him and so did the great composers. Sibelius and Richard Strauss are composers languishing today in just the same circumstances as Bach and I'm quite sure their Mendelssohn will come along, too. Null-F: I'm a mild-mannered person on most occasions but never more so than when at the wheel. If I get angry at the stupidity of another driver, I usually steer to the right, put on the brakes, stop at the first legal place, and sit there for three minutes or so to get over the emotion. I think I become a better driver when an emergency suddenly happens, but not when I get mad. BU8798b: Twice in the past two decades, the Hagerstown valley has gone through one of those smoggy spells, each time during a very dry autumn. The situation prevailed for days on both occasions and scared something in my subconscious. Tolkien is at liberty to be scared of the dark; I'll find my own fears in a world that is melting away before your eyes and seemingly stealing away the clean air needed to sustain life. Esdacyos: Ed Cox apparently thinks of the 4 Spring Street address as home. That got me to wondering if one house has that specific association for me. I can't honestly feel that way about either of the two addresses that are the most likely candidates: 390 North Prospect Street, where I lived most of the time from the age of four to thirteen, or 311 Bryan Place, the first place I lived where there were such good things as no common walls with other residences, a real yard, and an attic. If a good fairy offered me a trip in time homeward, I don't know where I'd go. Godot: Fans who become professional writers of science fiction usually either imitate a writer whose works they've studied with fannish avidity or create under the close watch of some professional friend. Either way, their first works are quite likely to be imitative and derivative. The non-fan who has read a dozen science fiction novels and then starts to write them himself is more liable to be himself. This could account for the disappointment Mike Deckinger feels about the professional output of some individuals who write so superbly for fanzines. Superscript: How long is this "surplus of unskilled workers" going to last? A quarter-century from now, if current trends continue, the guy who is custodian may make more money than the teacher in a high school, what with almost everyone going to college and then attending graduate school until too old to push a cleaning machine. ' ' Do record clubs impose an unfair drain on postal funds? Wouldn't records, and many other kinds of merchandise peddled directly to consumers, be shipped parcel post to the retailers, if they were sold exclusively in stores? The Fantasy Amateur: Anyone who is still awake should observe the fact that it is now the May mailing. I don't like the proposal to let each voter in future polls distribute a vast quantity of points as he pleases; too much temptation to blow the works on some particular person who likes egoboo. Why not try next year a poll without so confoundedly many divisions? Best publication, best writer, best artist, best humorist, with five of each named in order of preference. No time-wasting decisions over how to distribute a certain number of points, no hairsplitting about what constitutes an editor. Helen's Fantasia: And I wonder about the injury and death rate for accidents involving the small foreign-made autos. Most of them look as dangerous to the driver as a motorcycle and most of them are driven with much less care than a motorcycle. ' ' The tradition of paying calls on new neighbors has died in Hagerstown within my lifetime. I know a few elderly women who still do it. Most people seem to think that the welcome wagon has obviated the need. ' ' Mystery fandom



probably has failed to develop because it's so easy to find the fiction and because so many of your friends and acquaintances read the same type of fiction. Science fiction fandom must be partially derived at least from the fact that this type of fiction was so scarce until a few years ago and because it's still not easy to find in mundane channels others who can talk knowingly about it. The Devil's Work: Isn't the sudden improvement in the last Tarzan novel a good indication that it was ghosted? Horib: Wollheim's rejection of a Lupoff novel because of the colored characters brings up a fascinating dilemma. If my calculations are correct, some time in 1969 Ace will have completely exhausted all fiction in the public domain for reprinting except Uncle Tom's Cabin. Will Harriet Beecher Stowe suffer a rejection slip then, and will Ace be forced to begin issuing apa mailings instead? Horizons: Soon after I completed that spring issue, I found a copy of the complete poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow at the Union Rescue Mission store. Its contents appear harmless but I still don't trust that poet. Pantopon: The Marx brothers turn up in the oddest literary places, aside from books devoted to them. There's a wonderful page in Vera Newman's book about her famous critic-husband, Ernest. They came to the United States and one day when Ernest was out, one of the Marx brothers came calling, and Vera was so embarrassed about her ignorance of which brother was paying the visit that her pathetic situation jumps right out of the book at the reader. Maneki-Neko: This inspires me with a lusty desire: to learn the Japanese language. I imagine that it would be almost impossible to get a good reading knowledge of the language without a teacher and large amounts of time. But it's so much fun to be able to read non-English fanzines in the original. ' ' Coin collecting must be the fastest growing hobby of modern times. I know some Hagerstown stores where clerks who handle money are under orders not to look at dates on coins. The search for something rare had been delaying things too much. Avanc: It's hard for me to comment without fracturing my rule of keeping my big mouth shut about a war about which I know nothing. So I'll settle for the statement that I'm more inclined to believe what Eney says than what politicians and professional journalists say. Damballa: How can you justify the belief that FAPA would be healthier and better if elections were contested more? Isn't that just an echo of the get-out-the-vote campaigns that are so loud during every local, state, and federal election? How can fiercely contested elections benefit an organization which exists only as a mechanism to keep fanzines circulating among a specific group of fans? What can any candidate promise except to follow the rules and do whatever duties the office he seeks requires? Do you propose FAPA elections in which various candidates would campaign on platforms pledging them to introduce entirely new procedures in FAPA? Or promises to refuse to carry out duties? Or charges that someone forged the entire last mailing and isn't fit to hold office as a result? If we make FAPA elections into something major, we're losing touch with the reality that is FAPA, falling into the same error that has caused so much trouble in fandom's past, the lust for imaginary power, the determination of flies to conquer the flypaper. Those squabbles in FAPA's early years that came from overemphasis on administration were not at all juvenile or infantile. They were nasty, hatred-creating messes. One of them created a deliberate plot to destroy FAPA. Another almost resulted in a libel suit. Power



lust caused the exodus from FAPA of the Futurians. The participants were among FAPA's oldest members, not juveniles. I hope this urge to build up the elections will be transferred into running for office in the neighborhood fire company or local Elks, where a good administration has the right to do more than obey the constitution. '' Detours will certainly be chosen, if I get around to a long-planned project: putting a lot of colorful fanzines onto 35 mm slides. Acquisition of a single lens reflex has made such copying much easier for me. '' Our Boarding House may have been the comic strip that specialized in the odd exclamations. But I never found in any comic strip the passion that emerged from a simple "Merciful heavens!" as uttered by W.C.Fields in The Man on the Flying Trapeze when he accidentally pulls a trigger in his cellar where the burglars and policemen have been singing and have caused him to put two socks on one foot. '' I don't think Jack Speer does any service when he catalogs spelling mistakes and expressions that conflict with his particular grammar rules. I think it's as rude as when someone interrupts you to tell you that you've just mispronounced a word. Here is another example of confusing reality with someone's private obsessions. FAPA is a group whose members publish informally in spare time. There is no reason why FAPA publications should be harassed in an effort to bring them to a meaningless typographical perfection. If Speer has inspired some members to be more careful about their typography, I would guess that he has discouraged out of the organization a greater number of individuals who thought they had won freedom from this sort of thing when they finished school. '' Two quotations from this issue of Damballa: "Harry, by damn, we have the logical and fair process for admissions." "...the replacement, statistically speaking, would probably be no better. A rather high percentage of the newcomers are dead wood and pass out in a year or less." Phantasy Press: Why not run now the material intended for Fan-Facts? I'll bet there are biographical details that haven't been published elsewhere, besides the natural interest inherent in the general impression created by the biographee in such a prehistoric time. Polhode: Wouldn't it be more sensible to talk about putting instinct into computers, rather than intelligence? If they can program a computer to play chess, and it suddenly starts to play checkers, I'll be willing to consider it intelligence. '' The bitching about the Pongs may claim to come from outrage that the Nycon committee has upset the Hugo rules. But I'll bet that the people got angry before they checked up to determine exactly what the rules say. The bitching actually comes from fandom's stupendous resistance to change. Once something is done this way, it won't get done that way unless a dozen or so tough fans are willing to lose most of their reputations and friends for arranging the change. Lenane: Pretty soon the argument about hotels vs. motels for cons will be obsolete. "Hotel" is becoming a dirty word in the trade because it has acquired associations in the public's mind with no place to park and the need for dressing carefully. Inn, motor inn, motor court, and so forth are all acceptable words. Hagerstown's biggest hostelry underwent a name change from Hotel Alexander to Hagerstown Motor Inn, without the slightest change in physical facilities or parking privileges, and it seems to be doing more business. '' Maybe the best solution to the simple camera at the costume ball would be: take the pictures where everything will be simpler and less trouble. Why not shoot the costumed people just



outside the site of the event, as they're entering or leaving? Lots of them show up at the parties later that night where they can be posed at leisure. But I still think that the con committee should reserve a 15-minute photography session while the judges are making their final decisions, with several floods trained on the stage and flash photography permitted elsewhere in the room. Sercon's Bane: We belong to different worlds. Twenty autos in nearly thirty years for Buz. Two cars in seventeen years for me, and I'm hopeful of using this second car for quite a few years longer unless I kill myself through its instrumentality first. I know a man in Hagerstown who claims he has owned fifty autos and fifty bicycles in fifty years, but he now collects old autos so maybe that doesn't count. Salud: My objection to the paperback price structure isn't so much against the higher prices themselves. Rather it's the stupendous decline in quality of contents in the selection of paperbacks you find in most stores today at the higher price. The first few years of Pocketbooks, Bantams, Avons, and the other early lines had medium high literary standards. Now the junk has almost smothered the readable minority of paperbacks. Spinnaker Reach: I thought that Russ Chauvenet was too much the man of the world to reveal his naive belief that those ostentatious big buildings erected by giant industries are actually used by workers. How else could a national corporation obey the laws of conspicuous consumption? "I ran across a line in a George Eliot essay that fits the Sidney Fairbanks item pretty well: "Correct English is the slang of prigs." If people use "however" in places where Sidney would rather see "but", what are they doing except continuing the process of developing a living language, the procedure that created everything in the language that the grammarians would like to freeze? Is the substitution of however for but as illogical and confusing as the editorial first person plural which is used throughout this article? "If we were...one having authority," Sidney Fairbanks declares in his plea for good English! "The fanzine that I could have sold for .25 was an issue of Ted Dikty's Fantasy Digest, forgotten today by all except one fan in search of a bit of Bradburyana. I did not sell. "What kind of snobbism impels the Cumulative Book Index to include expensive paperbacks representing Asimov revisions and not the cheaper softcovers that differ from hardcovers? "I wish I could take a vacation where I could go for walks like those described by Alvin Tuck. My experience in this respect has been unhappy. Either the walk is prematurely aborted by several large dogs or I tumble repeatedly into the shelter of an adjoining swamp to escape from horseback riders or drivers of automobiles keep stopping and insisting on giving me a lift to wherever I'm going. Synapse: Charles Nutt was the fan who left fandom in a hurry after an imposing drawing on which he'd supposedly collaborated with someone else turned out to be a copy of the famous main set for Griffith's "Intolerance". I think they signed Beaumont to the drawing but I never did find out if that was the other person's name or an invented name which he used for professional purposes later. "If we freeze the waiting list how in the world will we unfreeze it? The stampede would be murderous to be the first on when applications were again accepted. "I've never heard this part of Maryland called a panhandle, but the term does apply to the easternmost part of West Virginia. "Why does the human brain reverse and turn up-right the image conveyed by the eyes' lenses? It seems useless. Acapulco Gold: There must be some more fundamental reason for the



acknowledgment of the golden rule principle than the concept of fairness. It must be tied in somehow within the mind to the phase of the subconscious that Freud singled out as the superego, and to the physical effects that make it possible to detect a falsehood through a lie detection device. I don't know if it's something we acquired from superhuman intervention, or an inheritance from some long-vanished ancestors who deliberately bred it into the race, but I refuse to believe that it results from anything as recent and as hypocritical as the human civilizations that we can trace. Tukat: I can't comprehend the logic that requires us to vote a Hugo for one specific episode of a regular dramatic series on television, yet allows us to vote for a regular continuing prozine on the basis of its collective issues during the year. '' Every time I see one of these new enormous housing developments, where a square mile or more is completely filled with new homes built within the past two years, I wonder what the future world will do about it. In a half-century, every house within walking distance in that development will be fifty years old, the people who bought them when new will be dead or in rest homes, the younger generation will prefer to go to more modern housing accommodations, and the structures aren't big enough to turn into apartments, so they would be difficult to peddle to the lowest income group. Inscient: Miles Kimball advertises slip covers designed to hold six copies or so of your favorite newsstand magazine. You can order them stamped with the titles of the big circulation magazines, or blank with goldleaf and instructions for affixing the name of a specialized journal. I suspect that these might be the most handsome and sturdy, as well as the most expensive, way of filing TAPA mailings if you don't want to put all the separate publications irrevocably bound together within book covers. '' The Hagerstown public library is toying with the idea of not permitting the public within its doors, much less in the stacks. The fine new building that opened two years ago has been bedeviled by vandalism and dishonesty of the most extreme sort, problems that never existed in the miserable old little building. It has become necessary to keep one staff member on duty at each door leading from the building and check every book to make sure it has been checked out, to keep an off-hours policeman in the lobby every evening, and to prohibit people from using the lounge area during peak periods. Even so, the loss has been enormous. Austria sounds much better than this, to me. Binx: The little theater group in Hagerstown had an ingenious way to handle the frequent scene changes in The Captain's Paradise. A little ship went chugging its way across the edge of the stage, on the audience's side of the footlights, each time the curtain dropped. It faltered and stalled and threatened to tumble over completely, fascinating people so much that it got applause on the successful completion of its last few laborious odysseys. '' Old book sales for charity are much better sources nowadays than the regular stores. The trouble is to hear about them in time in cities within driving distance. I can't even make my vacation plans because I don't know which week in September will contain the biannual AAUW event, which I dassn't miss. Biggest bargain in 1965 was not a book but a mint set of the Schnabel Trout Quintet on 78's for a dime. Ankus: Full agreement on the good things said about Harold Piser. Here's another example of fandom's conservatism: because he's older than most of us and doesn't run around to conventions, he's been ignored by some and laughed at by others. Conform, conform, conform, neofan!



## In the Middle

Although my memory does not reach back to the first FAPA mailings, I suspect that this is the first Horizons with its contents undivided into formally titled articles and departments. To make certain that the most congealed FAPA members will survive the unexpected, I have retained the separate division for mailing comments. For the rest of the issue, I plan a modest rambling through whatever bypaths may exist in the vast wilderness, so sparsely cultivated, that occupies the more central portions of my head.

There are several reasons for the change, enough reasons to create a strong possibility that one good one may be among them. A big cause for this way of writing Horizons is time. The mailing didn't come until May 29, after the completion of 80% of the three-day weekend in which I'd hoped to get most of it read. There has been precious little time to complete the reading since the start of June, since school-closing rites and government budget hearings have kept me on the job longer and have caused me to leave the job tireder than usual. The few spare moments that might have been consecrated to stencil-cutting have been diverted to mailing-reading. I dassn't dawdle much longer, lest the Coulsons find themselves too deep in novel-writing just before the August deadline. Then there is the simple fact that I'm tired of creating this type of formality in a publication for an apa where most magazines emphasize informality; I feel a trifle as if I'd been wearing a tux on a picket line. Related to this factor is my dissatisfaction with the amount of comment that most of the things in Horizons have inspired in recent mailings. A long article or a piece of fiction is lucky if it gets specific mention in two publications covering a total of five lines. If the current mailing comment preference is to extract a brief remark here and an isolated adjective there for extended remarks, I might as well send the stories, essays and columns to subscription-type fanzines where I'm almost sure of discovering next issue what a half-dozen readers thought about them, at paragraph-length.

But perhaps the biggest cause of all is my mental state this year. It's an awful combination of elements that should be mutually exclusive. But instead of fighting one another, these contradictory impulses are ganging up on a harmless little thing like FAPA publishing, getting together just often enough to stop me from thinking out the things that should go into Horizons before I start to stencil. As I've repeatedly explained, everything in Horizons is typed directly to stencil without a preliminary written draft, except for obvious direct quotations; but I've never been able to cut stencils this way without giving the projected contents a good think the previous morning or during supper. Let's see if I can sort out some of the distractions to concentration.

The most obvious one is the embarrassing fact that I haven't yet quit my regular job as I told everyone in Hagerstown and in fandom that I would do this spring. Spring still has a few days to run in the astronomical sense, so I might redeem my word after all. But several things have come up to cause me to renege on intentions, and this has occupied the thinking processes a great deal. Partly I'm very disappointed that I can't do as I please as I thought I would be doing by now, partly I'm relieved that I haven't taken a step which could turn out to be an entirely wrong one, partly I'm wondering if I'll finally carry out the original quitting plan tomorrow or next week. One reason for the inaction has been a slight improve-



ment in working conditions and a somewhat greater improvement in salary. Then there's the fact that I didn't get done over the winter a lot of major dental renovations, without which I hesitate to suffer a major income cut, just in case the procedure later should involve expensive complications. I have also been suspicious that the management at the newspaper might change, because of certain ways in which things are being done, and I'd hate to find a more congenial ownership arriving shortly after my departure. Later I hope to say more about a minor matter, the sudden urge to buy something too expensive to risk on an economy-type budget.

So the continued employment has been a mental surprise which is jostling up against another intellectual novelty. This consists of the way 1967 has been a fine year for me, so far, just as gratifying as 1966 was an exasperating, chronically unsatisfying year. Several nice things have happened that are too personal for me to risk future embarrassment by spreading on the FAPA dissection table and showing you all about them. Then I got a long distance call from someone in fandom that touched and encouraged me more than I thought any fannish happening could do. Since the start of the year I've managed to prod myself into some professional literary work that has been successful in a modest way, the first time in years that I've really spent long hours over a typewriter at home for a paying goal. I hesitate to add mention of another momentous event because readers who have met me won't believe it. I've gained several pounds. These happenings have provided enough egoboo and have created a sense of accomplishment frequently enough to counteract some severe blows that staggered my self-confidence on several occasions last year.

Then there's the oddity that I'm attaining new interests at an age when any sensible person has discovered what he likes and what he enjoys doing, once and for all. This is not a case of revulsion against some longtime favorite pastime and picking up another on the rebound. The new interests are battling like mad to squeeze in among the old ones, which stubbornly refuse to yield in the least their rocksolid position in my affections. Professional movies, to which I'd been indifferent for a couple of decades, have suddenly become almost as engrossing as a new issue of Lighthouse. I've discovered the second-rate 19th century English novelists and feel a constant urge to read the dozen most recently acquired volumes. These are the most impelling of the new interests, but a couple of others are acquiring such vigor that I refuse to describe them here lest that very process should suddenly fix them in mind as the ultimate way to spend the rest of my life's leisure time.

Finally, I imagine that my dissatisfaction with the world and its people will be more comprehensible than the other distractions to FAPA members, if the members will remember that this is being typed in the middle of the Mid-East crisis. I suppose the United States is no worse than the other major powers today, so maybe it is not entirely lack of patriotism that has renewed in me the desire to spend the rest of my life in some minor power that lacks the power to do some of the things which I find equally repulsive whether they're done by the United States or Russia. It would be a gamble, of course, to hope that some small town in Austria would remain free from such things as an active, dynamic chamber of commerce and a local Coca-Cola bottling plant during the twenty years or so I might survive there. But I don't like the way the world in general



is going, I think most of its inhabitants are bastards, myself undoubtedly included in that generalization, and I haven't found as yet any good reason why I shouldn't remove myself from the neighborhood where the population density of ignorant bigots is growing so fast. Or maybe I've been watching too many Charlie Chaplin movies; the world in which Charlie moves is increasingly evident around me today and I don't think I have the strength of character to fight it in Charlie's way. I'm coward enough to want to run.

It's always disgusting to find a fanzine article so poorly organized that the writer doesn't follow up in the later stages something introduced near the start. So before I forget about the investment mentioned a while ago, and while it seems desirable to remove some of the pessimism from the atmosphere, let me explain that I'm growing anxious to own some day soon a video tape recorder. It is not yet the time to buy one, obviously. The commercial models on the market today obviously have about the same ability and price value in relation to those which will be on sale in a couple of years as the old wire recorders bore to the first good inexpensive tape recorders for sound. But it shouldn't be long before things will improve. The Olson flyer now offers the Concord video recorder for \$1,050 and a seven-inch reel of tape for it at \$42.50. A year or two from now, a machine that will work twice as well should sell for several hundred dollars less and the price of the tape ought to undergo a much bigger price break. This itch ties into my late-blooming movie interest. It's obvious that television as we know it today can't equal the quality and compactness provided by 8 mm editions of the old silent films. But it's just as plain that I'll never be able to see as often as I wish, when I please, sound movies, unless I can get them on video tape; the sound movies cost too much and don't sound good enough unless you're willing to go even higher and get 16 mm versions. There would also be the thrill of the chase and the prospect of something yet to come, if I built a sound film library with the video tape recorder: movies on television are almost invariably cut to fit time slots, different stations chop at different places, and there would always be the hope of taping the three minutes that were omitted from all previous appearances on the late show.

Besides, the video recorder would be nice to have for some other purposes. If I'm satisfied with price and quality in two or three years, I'd probably have a chance to catch some of the desirable programs now appearing on networks, because it seems to take that long for them to fade away from syndication outside prime time after they are dropped from the networks. If I'm glad to own today an episode of the Jack Armstrong that delighted me in youth, there should come the time in my old age when I'll feel similar emotions toward a Man from UNCLE episode that excited my middle age. For preserving live events which I attend. I imagine I'll continue to be satisfied with my little 8 mm movie camera, for synchronized sound doesn't mean that much to me in non-professional screenings. But I suspect that we'll see a fan with his own video tape recording camera and microphone for the first time at a worldcon either this year or next year. And one inconsequential but perplexing question: I wonder if the disinclination to answer a tape that ruins so much tape correspondence so rapidly would vanish, if the correspondent's face looked accusingly at you while you were playing his latest message to you?



If this issue of Horizons were appearing in the normal manner, there would be a Hagerstown Journal. In this, I had intended to write on only one topic. This is the grim struggle that I have fought all spring with inappreciable success. In a sense, this is not too discouraging because this is the first spring in many when I have bestirred myself sufficiently to offer even token resistance. While I don't feel that I've attained heroic stature in defeat, I've gained a masochistic interest in watching myself get clobbered, and TAPA might have cheered nature along if I'd told the story in full. The cheers would have been superfluous, because the energies unleashed by spring in all animated creatures around Summit Avenue except this one were more than ample. I decided that it was time to do something about the weeds, small trees, and other superfluities in the more remote areas of the back yard. (Last year, I'd felt a similar urge but had restrained it when a neighbor passed along the rumor that the Daktari producers were interested in doing some location shooting there.) Unexpectedly, I found my labors frowned upon by one man in the block. He remembered a rosebush that used to be visible down there and he just as much as warned me that something terrible would happen if I damaged it and deprived southern Hagerstown of one of nature's glories. There is nothing so difficult as to hack, pull, saw, and flatten vegetation while attempting to keep in mind that a valuable plant may be hiding somewhere in the lower reaches of this brawling sea of flora. I got about one-third of the yard cleared, in the process finding the incinerator which had been swallowed up four years ago, when I stuck my left thumb. It felt and looked at first like poison, but developed splinter symptoms after several days. Various colors came and went around the lump that formed, then it gradually returned to normal after undergoing a procedure which is known in the local patois as festering out. But lately it has been growing sore again and I suspect that I'll have to ask a physician to give me permanent relief. The other thumb or any finger afflicted in this way would have given me a fine stretch of sick leave, but this is the one digit where an injury does not prevent touch typing.

I had no sooner surrendered from this attempt to demonstrate irreverence for life than a neighbor told me it certainly was too bad about the bank. I agreed that a four per cent interest rate was destined to bring ruin, then discovered that he meant the point in the yard where the ground slopes sharply. It took strong self-control to force myself to see what might have happened, but I finally snuck up on the bank and found it almost unrecognizable. Where dandelion, chickweed, and some islands of grass had smiled greenly up at the heaven's blue the day before, now there was an ugly subdivision under construction, stretching six feet or so along the slope. Just as humans will chop down the trees that would shade the homes that rise in the latest housing development, the ants had leveled all growing things to permit more direct courses for the superhighways that were already complete in this tremendous anthill. I thought of kicking down the superficial portions of the insects' structure, then remembered several vivid stories of heroes who had been eaten up by angry ants. Instead, I began daily applications of insecticide which has had some gratifying effect: i.e., the anthill is no larger to the naked eye and the ants now run down the holes every time they see me coming with the sprayer, instead of charging.



Every spring, just when the baseball teams are engaged in spring training, I find it necessary to get my own pitching arm back into good form, because the approach of warm weather invariably inspires the pigeons to start nesting at an inconvenient point. Just above the three steps which lead from the back porch to the side porch (remember, nothing in Western Maryland is on the level, so you must expect banks and steps where you wouldn't find them in the flatlands) a rain gutter, the eave of the house's roof, and the framework of the upstairs back porch form a sheltered area that is the answer to every pigeon's dream. The rain can't get in, visibility is unlimited on clear days, it is away from the noise of traffic and in every other way the proper place to raise a new generation of pigeons without distractions. Over the years, I've learned that the only way to provide safe use of these three steps during the summer is to throw pebbles at the pigeons seven times daily as soon as they begin congregating up there. Pigeons are hard to discourage and their memories are not of the best. But fortunately, a pebble that is thrown with precisely the correct arc ricochets within that confine interminably. As soon as I've reacquired the knack of this particular slider, I've won the battle because not even the local pigeons have nerves strong enough to live around this sort of nuisance erupting in their midst every few hours. I got so engrossed in this annual ritual that I didn't notice at first how the slats in the ceiling of the downstairs back porch had suffered over the past winter's freezes and thaws. A couple of them had warped far enough at one end to allow an enterprising bird to squeeze through. Immediately I called the man who does odd carpentry jobs around the house and asked him to come quick. If I climbed onto a chair and tried to nail the slats back into place, I would inevitably fall over the rail and bust something even more intimate than my acetabulum. But I was too late. By the next day, robins were whizzing in and out of there, making threatening gestures at me every time I went onto the back porch because the slats are spaced far enough apart for them to see me. Only one egg fell through. Now there is such a commotion up there all the time that I'm sure some sort of day nursery has been set up, instead of just one nest. I've not heard from the carpenter, so I suppose he came and got chased away.

Just yesterday, the man nextdoor put white stuff on part of my sidewalk and the grass alongside it. Nothing looks abnormal to the eye. I'm not going to ask what he's protecting me from.

If anyone doubts me when I insist that I really do have plans to quit the job and semi-plans to become an expatriate, I can point to a different accomplishment which seemed even more remote to those who know me best. I've begun to do something about the attic. For three consecutive Sundays, I've been carrying armsful of stuff down and disposing of it by equal division among the tin can basket, the garbage pail, the office wastebasket, and places regarding which I do not intend to incriminate myself. Already there are two spots on the attic where I can take three steps in the same direction without knocking over a pile. This cleanup procedure is unsettling, of course. After reading so many accounts of the remarkable things which fans have thought under various drugs but can't quite put into words, I have come to the conclusion that I'm just as talented as they. Obviously I had some moments of insight into the real nature of things without the aid of drugs, and these sudden comprehensions of true reality caused me to preserve on the attic floor the paper



wrappings which once protected the mimeobond on which I ran off the 68th issue of Horizons and the metallic ribbon that held together the carton for the knocked down set of steel shelves which I bought from Montgomery Ward in 1963. But in this dreary normal mental state, I find myself just as unable to verbalize the importance of such treasures as the lsd users can communicate the answers they found to the riddles of the universe. So out these things have gone, in the full knowledge that I've never yet thrown away anything without wishing desperately I had it back, sometime within the succeeding three months. If I don't break my neck on those steep attic stairs, I think I should have all the apparently useless stuff cleaned out before warm weather ends, and maybe it will be possible to make a tentative effort toward getting the loose valuables stuffed into cartons and the cartons stacked neatly. I can't conceive of ever finding anything I want up there, but I'd feel better if I knew there was some protection for correspondence and fanzines if the rain ever stops seeping through the roof and begins to pour through.

But meanwhile, a portion of my bedroom has begun to show an alarming resemblance to most of the attic. All the distractions and difficulties of recent months have caused me to fall dreadfully behind on fanzine comment duties. A few people who read this won't believe that I'm just as interested in fandom as ever, because of silence from Hagerstown on recent issues of their non-FAPA publications. If there were a fanzine editor named Mabel, I would take the opportunity to say that I would if I could but I am not able. I got out of a loc bind just as bad as this after the first busted hip, so nobody should give up on me yet. But it's going to take months even if things begin to go better. Not too long ago, I was forced to take the sheaf of fanzines awaiting comment from the desk drawer traditionally sacred to this type of contents, because they had grown too numerous to permit easy opening and closing of the drawer. They reposed instead on a record cabinet, except when the cleaning woman came, at which times they went into brief seclusion. After a while this pile toppled over and I realized it should be divided into two smaller piles because of its height. When the weight became a burden on cleaning days, I took the piles permanently to the bedroom and put them onto shelves I'd purchased for books. Somehow, there are now three piles and one of these piles might topple before dawn. But I suppose that nature's set of checks and balances will come to my rescue before things get totally out of hand and editors will start cutting me off their mailing lists before I fall much further back, thereby giving me a chance to get the locs written and myself back in the good graces of the publishers again.

Besides, if any proof should be needed about my interest, you might find it in the fact that I've been reading more science fiction in recent weeks than I had gone through in a long while. It's encouraging to discover myself turning to both old, long-loved stories and to newly published works: this seems to point to neither an obsession with nostalgia nor dissatisfaction with past delights. I wish that the new works I've gone through had been more rewarding. Possibly I'm an old fogey, but more probably the standard of writing is continuing to decline, a much more comforting belief than the other possibility, the possibility which says that I'm increasingly less competent to recognize good writing. I hardly think my own capabilities would disintegrate fast enough to be responsible for



me to imagine the shocking deterioration that has afflicted John Brunner, for instance, between his last two novels. Both are born with a handicap built-in, from my standpoint, because each features bureaucrats as the principal characters. The Squares of the City impressed me as a potentially fine novel that was botched in the writing: fresh scenery and some vivid events were to its credit but I'm not a chess fan, so the basic premise didn't enthrall me, and I remain unconvinced that there was any possibility that the players of the superchess could have taken credit for some of their moves, which were accomplished by spontaneous actions of independent characters which couldn't possibly have been foreseen at the proper time. On the other hand, The Long Result has almost nothing to its credit except Brunner's unobtrusive competence as a creator of prose. The reliance on video telephones for most of the communicating among characters lessens the urgency of the course of events, to me, as if these things were not important enough to justify in-person communications. The unbureaucratic manner in which these bureaucrats behave is preposterous. Nothing ever is delayed by going through channels, the big shot who is the hero does menial, routine work that would be disdained by a stenographer with more than three years' seniority in a real government office, and experts in their fields hold long conversations that summarize the current state of basic knowledge on this or that subject, an approximate equivalent to a conversation between Hitler and Mussolini involving the fact that Germany and Italy are now sovereign nations.

Among older publications, I have read novels by Andre Norton for the first time. They frighten me, not so much because of what they say, but because they have been appearing without arousing hostility on the part of mature critics of science fiction and fandom in general. There is something inhuman, something of the grim leveling process of basic training, in these novels. It consists of the fact that every element in them has been used in scores of science fiction stories in the past. Never the meekest attempt at originality, no effort to make any character more than one-dimensional, not even a gesture toward violating the rules of how to write for juveniles. I can imagine adults reading these stories out of curiosity, but I can't imagine this reading process failing to engender loud howls of protest against such a dreary, conforming case of monkey see, monkey doism on the part of the writer. Ray Cummings was a brilliant stylist and a word magician in comparison with this rap.

Current reading is The Tolkien Reader. Not much has appeared in fanzines about this paperback, possibly because fans are resentful that Tolkien has become readily obtainable and familiar to a larger audience, thus removing the aura of something known only to ourselves. I'm finding more pleasure in this volume than I did in the famous novels. Tolkien's peculiar knockkneed style of English is much better fitted to the long essay that occupies a good proportion of this volume, and his bigotry and obsession with dark equals bad are not nearly as apparent in the stories published here. But I would like to know what mental processes resulted in the peculiar things that went into the makeup of this volume. A neofan would be roundly scolded in a dozen loc's, if he allowed in his magazine the weird paginating, variety of typefaces, and useless apologies for things that shouldn't have happened. Some sections of the Reader appear to be reproduced directly from the original editions,



and if this was done for reasons of economy it's hard to justify the 95¢ asked for the volume. If the photographic form of retaining the original typeface derives from sentimental reasons, there was no reason why the page numbers should not have been altered, at least, to simplify the task of finding some particular item. Why were the two pages of pictures just before Leaf by Niggle eliminated in the paperback incarnation, while all the elaborate decorations for Tom Bombadil were retained? If the artist got too hungry for big royalties or some other good reason caused this omission, where is the usefulness to be found in announcing to the readers that the illustrations have been deleted? However, all these matters reflect on the publisher, not the writer, who emerges from this volume a more human sort of person than I would have imagined the writer of the Ring books to be, additionally possessed of a good sense of humor that should have made itself felt more consistently in the long novels but vanishes there for ten thousand words or more at a time.

As for the question of whether I shall eventually burden a few hundred library shelves with a book of my own, that remains to be seen, but at least the prospects are brighter now than they were in late 1966. I've finally found my contact in the Advent publishing firm, who frequently has been as difficult to locate as the only other espionage agent on your side in some alien land. He informs me that now Advent plans to get the book out some time in 1968, even unto the early part of 1968. I'm taking his word for this, and I haven't the time and energy just now to make other arrangements for the time being, in any event. If nothing has happened by this time next year, I suppose I'll consider the contract broken by Advent's failure to carry out the terms of it, and publish this volume myself. Nothing is done on the actual writing of the second volume, but the notes are all there, except for the added notes that I haven't made in spite of new nuggets of information turning up here and there since I stopped active work. There are two unfortunate things about this delay in publication. One is that it takes some of my spare time to answer queries from people who want to know when I'm going to have that history on sale. The other is the gradual change in my way of looking at things. Three years have passed since parts of that first volume were finished, and by now I would write them quite differently. Just before I finally heard from Advent again, I even had the unbearable thought that maybe I should write another history of the decade covered by the first volume, using exactly the same basic information, but putting it into different words from my altered outlook. The contract doesn't say that I can write fan history only for Advent, so I suppose there would be no legal obstacle to my producing a new manuscript on the same subject and doing what I pleased about publishing it.

In any event, I'm hardly anxious to make crucial decisions on this matter, after having just faced several lightning-fast decisive moments in other regards. The most important of these came not many days ago at the office when I was asked unexpectedly if I wanted to become assistant managing editor of the newspaper. I gave myself a double surprise: first by saying that I didn't want to, and then by having no regrets about my reply. The job would have paid a trifle more, it would have given me slightly more prestige, it would mean an average of two more hours of work per day and would have caused me to feel that I couldn't conscientiously quit newspaper work for at least a couple of years, after acceptance. Worst of all, it would have



destroyed totally all opportunity to listen to baseball games, except on days off; my present work gets me home in time to hear the final innings of the games three or four nights weekly. The only useful advantage that I can find in the position is that it would permit me to get rid of the car, since all the labor would be at a desk. The extra money wouldn't mean much, if anything, because the extra hours would eliminate the time I can now use for free lancing income.

Then there was the morning when the lady nextdoor told me she was going to burn a lot of old music unless I wanted it. This decision was particularly tough because the music in question filled to overflowing a wooden cabinet about five feet tall and three feet wide. I've had experience in the past with offers of free music that proved on investigation to be vast quantities of hymnals or piano instruction books. But the lady told me that it had belonged to a famous Baltimore musician and that the manuscript for his unfinished opera was among the things in the box. So I obtained a stay of execution and the right to look through the accumulation. It took the better part of the morning, but the time invested paid dividends. The opera manuscript turned out to be the orchestral parts for someone's arrangement of salon pieces. But elsewhere in the cabinet were vast quantities of good music arranged for three-piano teams, a lot of good instructional material for the violin, some extremely old church music, and best of all, a sizable quantity of first-rate items like vocal scores of operas and piano solo works. Fortunately, the decision of whether to burden the already groaning attic with two tons of unwanted music for the sake of a good-sized pile of wanted music didn't need to be made. The neighbor, who is a human rather than a computer, agreed to accept an alternative to the either-or proposition and offer what I didn't want to the Union Rescue Mission which has been known to put old music on the shelves of its used books section.

So few people learn to play keyboard instruments nowadays and the recording has assumed so much importance in music propagation that I may not be able to describe convincingly the heady delights that can come from a successful quest for old music by the person who can make use of it. One trouble with brand new music is the frighteningly high cost of most of it; another is the fact that so many fine things are not in print in this country and can be imported only after heroic surmounting of obstacles. Then there is the ever-present possibility that another edition of music you already own may contain some variant or additional materials, authentic or spurious. You may encounter in a coverless, crumbling album of old music some fine compositions by a forgotten person who has never been recorded and has only six lines in the latest edition of Grove's. I used to do a great deal of music-hunting at public sales, but now I go to work too early in the afternoons and sleep too late on Saturdays to permit much of this searching nowadays. So this windfall was doubly fine. Among the best things are an ancient edition of Beethoven's violin-piano sonatas with editing attributed to Franz Liszt, vocal scores of a couple of the more obscure Donizetti operas, a half-dozen issues of The Etude missing from my collection, the one Mendelssohn Song Without Words that was missing from the collection that I'd found elsewhere long ago, and a great deal of Czerny that should ward off for a little longer the stiffening tendency that senility has imparted to my fingers. And while I'm at it, I should say that I would be most happy to hear from any fans who may have noticed stacks of old music in second-hand book stores. I'm not interested in the few places



that specialize in secondhand music, because their prices are even more incredible than the cost of new music. But I would like to have addresses of establishments that I might be able to visit during travels.

Travels is a word that implies another decision. Almost half of the year is gone and I haven't managed to get even as far as Washington. This could be an excellent example of nature imitating art, because I really wasn't quite as much a hermit as the name implies in the days when I had this reputation, and now that my attendance at a few cons has caused the hermit label to be half-forgotten, I have shown an increasing tendency to stay home. Three weeks of vacation are due me, if I stay on the job for the remainder of the year. I've reserved for myself the week which climaxes in the Nycon, and if I don't get another bellyache, I hope to get to it. This year, for the first time in recorded history, I paid all three bucks of my worldcon membership fee in advance, and this may be a symbol of how determined I am to attend. There could be serious complications toward the end of the con, since I must be bright and fresh in body and intellect on the Tuesday morning after Labor Day for journalistic reasons and dare not delay my departure from the con so late that an all-night bus ride will be in order. I'll probably try to pull out right after the banquet, schedules permitting, but I suspect that quite a few persons with school or job obligations that Tuesday will skip a banquet they would have attended if staged earlier in the weekend. There remain two other weeks to try to get out of town in. I bought a guidebook to Austria this year, another unprecedented action, and it would still be possible to wangle my way into a week's leave of absence to combine with these two weeks of vacation and see the land of my dreams. There isn't too much choice about the timing of such a trip, if I should take it: anything after mid-November would be too risky because of possible slippery ice over there and a possible furnace failure over here, and a trip before the second week in October would be equally unthinkable, in view of the awful consequences that earlier travel would entail: missing a FAPA deadline or the World Series.

Meanwhile, there is really very little reason to become homesick for Hagerstown, just in case I do succeed in impelling myself to run the peril of that emotion by spending a day in another town. Hagerstown is gradually finding itself in approximately the same condition as those mundane apas that have no activity requirements and contain members who have been totally deadwood for several decades. One by one, the downtown buildings are becoming uninhabited or uninhabitable, and the natives have the sneaking suspicion that this could become the first ghost town at the intersection of two interstate dual highways. Several years ago, a big furniture store burned out completely, the owner had the top two stories knocked off for safety purposes, left the other two stories standing there, and hasn't done anything else about the property. Just a little later, a hotel was gutted by fire. The owner of that structure had the ruins razed to ground level and hasn't cut since then the weeds clustering through the remaining rubble. Just yesterday one of the biggest downtown apartment buildings had a fire that destroyed the upper floor and left the rest of the floors unsafe for occupancy, so it has been roped off and probably will stand like that until disturbed by the vibrations of the last trump. The city's biggest real estate operator was forced to vacate his offices because the owner of the adjoining property had razed it, sapping a party wall suffi-



ciently to inspire the city building inspector to post it as unfit for human occupancy. There is a tangle of suits and countersuits in the courts about it, and the pedestrian walkway constructed to prevent concussions if the whole shebang lets go has been given a sloped roof, obviously pointing to its continued use through snowy seasons. Everyone realizes that if this building got torn down, the next one in line would disintegrate, and so on down the entire block and quite probably, the buildings on the other side would be shaken beyond repair by the shock of falling timbers. This is along the lines of a passing mention several stencils ago, because this downtown block appears to have been covered with buildings at about the same time around the turn of the century, and now like the wonderful one-hoss shay, it may someday soon become a sort of instart parking lot.

There have been some tentative gestures toward doing something about the miserable housing described several Horizonses ago. The owner of the two most disintegrated structures in the Negro section has offered to give them to the Historical Society, apparently convinced that the first overweight wren that lands on the chimney will be the end of his property. One of the first places where I held steady employment, the Pennsylvania Railroad station, has been torn down to make way for low-rent housing for elderly persons. Some sort of prosaic justice would result if I ended my local adulthood living on the same site where I worked at the beginning of adult life. The mayor even promised to tear down Potliquor Flat, a particularly celebrated group of houses in one of the older parts of town, but nobody really expects him to keep his word.

And meanwhile, Hagerstown life has become even more unsavoury because of the increase in taxes. Maryland has replaced its former flat three per cent income tax with a graduated tax with a five per cent top level. Simultaneously it gave the county the option of levying an income tax of its own, all calculating and collecting to be done by the state authorities. Now that the budget hearings have subsided, we find the property tax rates for the city, county and state unchanged, but this higher state income tax for everyone except those who are really to blame, the big families with lots of children who get the exemptions and require the teachers, and the entirely new county income tax, set this year at 35% of the state rate. I know it is fashionable for extremely rich and very poor people to sneer at those who complain about the rising tax burden, since so far no wage earner has been forced to give up his entire pay check to withholding taxes. But there is a lot of justification for the lament. For one thing, the tax burden is a good reason for the failure of landlords to do something about low-grade housing, even assuming good intentions on the part of those property owners.

Consider for a moment the local situation, for instance. Let us simplify it by imagining just one man with just one sum of money to invest, 10,000. He can put it into one of the savings and loan associations, where it will be federally insured against loss and will pay him  $4\frac{1}{2}\%$  interest, compounded semiannually, a trifle more than 450. Or he can invest it in a residential property: a fairly sound one-family building in a non-snooty section of town or a more rundown double house or two-family apartment building in a less desirable section. In this county, real estate is assessed at about 60% of market value, and the ratio of assessment to true worth is maintained more conscientiously than in most areas. The combined state, county, and city real estate tax rate is .3.70, so the in-



vestor will face for the sake of his 10,000 an annual tax bill of 222. If he sets aside another 100 annually for repairs and maintenance, an unrealistically low figure for older buildings, and another 25 per year for less than adequate insurance coverage of the property, we find that he must obtain more than 800 per year in rent from the property, if rented to one family that heats it and pays for utilities; well over 1,000 if it's divided among two families who get heat, light and water as part of the leasing arrangement; otherwise, he will have less income from his 10,000 than would have come to him with none of the worry of home ownership through investment in the savings and loan institution. If a tenant cheats him out of rent or the house sits vacant for a month, he's investing at a loss. The low-income people in this area can't afford to pay rents of this size, as a rule, and so the owner of less than fine residences simply does not do the bulk of the necessary maintenance and never does the sort of work that costs big sums, like putting on a new roof.

I escaped the city tax hearings, but I sat through almost all of the county discussions. It would be nice to tell how the authorities sought every way to avoid increasing the burden on the public. But they didn't. Only twice did really long, violent controversy flare up. Once it involved the best way to solve the noise problem in the smaller circuit courtroom: by putting wheels on the chairs of the attorneys who disturb the rest of the drowsy people when they rise or sit down, or buying a piece of carpet to place under their chairs. The other discussion was over a girl in the county commissioners' office and what to do about her. She cannot be fired because of the dilapidated and antiquated condition of her mother, whom she supports, but she spends most of her working day filing and nobody has yet succeeded in finding again anything she has filed away.

Since the city and county have not yet formed a standing army, education takes the bulk of the taxes around here. I'm convinced that the school teachers are pricing themselves out of the market and will eventually commit occupational suicide by forcing their replacement by some mechanical substitute. They fought for and got raises this year averaging 1,000 per year per teacher; the authorities and the public howled in protest but couldn't avoid the action, because of the way salaries for teachers are rising elsewhere in Maryland. Teacher salaries alone are now equivalent to the amount spent for every other purpose by the city and county governments, and nobody pretends that the amount spent on teachers is going to stop here. My own belief is that somewhere in the nation, a school system is going to find itself faced with bankruptcy if it continues to keep up with the Joneses in other school systems, and will try out a year of education with a 90% reduction in the teaching force, converting the educational day to huge classes supervised by aides paid moderate salaries, and taught by television or teaching machines. Obviously you're still going to need a few teachers for physical education, counselling, and special purposes; but conformity has taken such firm hold on the nation's school systems, and moronic intelligences are being forced to go so far in their studies, that I imagine little or no bad effect from genuine mass production in the schools. It sounds mean and pennypinching to begrudge the teachers the seven million dollars in county money that will go to them in the coming school year. But some remarkable things could be done if that money were freed for other purposes. It could cor-



rect most of the physical defects in the children whose parents can't or won't have it done. Or it could finance the razing of one or two blocks in the Negro section and the replacement of the horrible old structures with decent living quarters. Or it could build overpasses at the four or five dangerous railroad grade crossings in the Hagerstown area, where regular as clockwork, one or more fatal crashes occur every year.

Maybe I'm overly suspicious, but other things in Maryland being as they are, I'm not at all happy about the fact that the state will soon have a new constitution. Maryland has had a variety of constitutions during its long, wretched history, but the one under which it now functions is just a century old this year. The University of Maryland talked the state legislators into setting up a rewrite job. Elections have just been held for delegates to a constitutional convention. Apparently the educators were afraid that free schools would get left out of the new document, because they talked a just-retired feminine school official into running, and she flabbergasted the politicians by getting far more votes than anyone else. Females traditionally get clobbered whenever they run for any kind of public office around here, so apparently the teachers were out in full force. It's a weird combination that Washington County will send to the constitutional convention: this elderly professional educator, an elderly lawyer who has always liked to keep things the way they are, a young attorney whose father was disbarred a few years ago in scandals over State Roads Commission payments for land, and the former head of Hagerstown's largest department store who either quit his job or got fired from it a year ago, outspoken and progress-minded. If the other counties produced equally incompatible delegates in their elections, I'm sure the convention will be forced to rubberstamp whatever constitutional draft the University of Maryland fixes up, because they could never agree on anything else. Even if the present state constitution has some negligible contradictions to the federal constitution, such as its ban on voting by women, I'd just as soon see it retained. The attorney general's office is still making rulings on what the old constitution means in this or that section, and it's tedious to think that all the inconsistencies and ambiguities will need to be figured out in thousands of court cases when the new one takes effect.

I have been doing some writing myself, as mentioned previously, without the advantage of action of the state legislature and a special election to impel me into the creative act. Some of the writing has been only semi-creative. Last year, I translated a couple of short stories for an Austrian correspondent, just for the sake of experiencing yet another exciting new experience. Several months ago, I was surprised to receive a substantial check from an American agent as my share of the profits from their sale to an American market. In the weeks that followed, I put into English eight or ten more stories by various German-language writers for a literary agency in Vienna and have tried my hand at French-into-English for a member of French fandom. Even if the sales of these recent translations don't produce as much cash, I've found it an interesting thing to do, and I think it's caused me to want to write some fiction of my own again. Translating science fiction presents some special problems and I feel that I've not only translated but also solved a problem when I emerge from one of the knotty passages. A few paragraphs of technical explanation can be a translator's nightmare because he can never be certain that the author is indulging in



valid exposition of science; the sentence that seems so hard to get right may be a deliberate bit of doubletalk to make the fiction seem as if it could really happen. There is also the danger that I might search dictionaries and reason out possible derivations over a mysterious word, only to find later that it is an invention of the author, allegedly a term from some alien language or a piece of future vernacular that hasn't come into use in time for dictionaries. I'm not sufficiently aware of German stylistic matters to be able to detect the subtler distinctions that an author might introduce to show that a character is not wholly accustomed to the language or to depict slight changes in syntax in a future century. All I can do is hope that this particular story isn't written that subtly. I'm not going to risk essays of German-language science fiction on the basis of the stories that have come for translation, because they may be totally unrepresentative of today's trends, for all I know. If they do by some coincidence give a good picture of the situation over there, professional science fiction prefers a simpler sort of plotting and relies less heavily on the gimmick or trick ending to sustain an entire story. In case no more issues of Horizons appear, one of two things will undoubtedly have occurred: I'll be dead or I'll have signed a contract to translate the complete works of Perry Rhodan into English.

There is no knowing where the time will come from, to accomplish some original fiction. But I have a powerful yen to get down onto paper at least two or three novels. When Larry Shaw's prozines folded, he was holding a short novel which I'd like to try to turn into a normal length novel, transmuted from the simple adventure story in its original form into something more serious. I don't know where I put it after Larry gave it back to me at a Phillycon, so I'd probably have to work from the memory of its framework. It's about one man and one woman on a sparsely populated Mars that just manages to be habitable. I'd like to turn it into the story of how a man comes to realize that there are some things you can't run away from, even though you've run as far as Mars. It might not be well written and it might not sell but I guarantee that it wouldn't be the 568th variation on a stock plot. I'd also like to try a mundane novel, starting heaven help us from the basic material which I used for the chapter published in Horizons from the novel that I'll never write about fandom. The famous author in this aborted novel would become a celebrated newspaper editor, the fans would turn into newspaper workers, and the basic theme would be the slow unmasking of the editor for the pretentious and cowardly person whom some newspaper editors have tended to be in real life. If this novel sold, I probably could forget once and for all the dilemma of whether to resign my job; I'd almost be sure to be canned. Some ideas for mystery fiction have been flitting across my mind, but it would be foolish to risk a lot of time on those, I suppose; I'm simply not sufficiently versed in the mystery story as a genre, because I've read in this field so spasmodically and superficially. I'd probably end up with characters and narrative techniques that went out of fashion before William Powell was picked to star in The Thin Man. And ever lurking deep in the collection of permanent repressions is my longing to write a book about Meyerbeer. He's a natural for a volume that would fill a gap in the English language biographical shelf and could simultaneously have some appeal to the person who is not too interested in music as such. Meyerbeer was the most influential musician for one-third of an entire century in Europe, in certain



technical respects, and from the non-musical standpoint, his life is significant and symbolic right now for various things concerned with prejudice and show business. Woe multiplied beyond all imagination: there is no way to gather the materials for a good new book about Meyerbeer without spending six months or so at uninterrupted pawing through old newspaper files, manuscripts, opera house archives, and rare scores that exist nowhere but in Europe. With a college degree or one non-fiction hardback to my credit, I believe I could get the financial backing for the project from a foundation or a university press. But I'll be blessed if I want to delay further the day I attain the savings total I want for retirement, by paying my own way through such a strange project which I might botch completely in the writing, or might find interrupted permanently by the outbreak of war over there before I had finished the hunting for facts. A small and indignant voice tells me that someone else is going to write that book pretty soon and his book will inspire a fairly elaborate resurgence of interest in Meyerbeer that will put some of his operas back onto opera stages year after year in North America, and I'll be even more disgusted with myself because I wasn't the one who helped to bring out of oblivion a composer who had too many good points to be kept in outer darkness for the vulgarities and banalities that alternate with them.

One peculiar factor working against free lancing is a change in neighbors. The people who occupied the second floor apartment in the house immediately north of 423 Summit Avenue have retreated to Texas, from where they came many years ago, and before they left, they sold their air conditioner. Please don't cluck your tongue and feel sorry for an individual who has become so crochety that a simple little thing like a neighbor's air conditioner puts out of sorts. This was an air conditioner such as no other man in Hagerstown owned or had ever known. It sounded precisely like an outboard motorboat's sound after amplification through a good high fidelity music system. A few persons insisted that it really did run off gasoline power. It became audible half a block away, and during warm summer days, you could figure out which pedestrians in this block were strangers: they were the ones who gaped up toward the source of the racket like small town residents at New York City's skyscrapers. There is nothing like this type of air conditioner to make the person next door want to stay up late every night and write fiction or do anything in preference to going to bed and listening to the interminable popping eight feet from his ear. In time, I grew accustomed enough to the steady operation of the air conditioner to sleep while it was running on the really hot nights. The worst trouble came on merely warm nights when the thing was working on its thermostat, cutting off and on to keep the indoors temperature to some predetermined point. Each time its on cycle was activated, I emerged from a nightmare in which I was being machinegunned down or pursued down a gutter by a motored water rat or attempting to repair my amplifier whose motorboating spells had grown unstoppable. I couldn't try to stop the nuisance, because the occupants of that apartment were such nice folks in every other respect and were particularly to be cherished for little eccentricities like digging up the grass in their front lawn and planting tomatoes instead. Switching my bed to the other side of the house was out of the question, because the old ladies in the house to the south get up very early and talk very loudly on the screened-in porch until very late at night, quite as unnerving as the air conditioner. I invested



a quarter in a pair of earplugs and then chickened out from wearing them at night. It occurred to me that something I wouldn't want to miss might pass unnoticed because of the self-inflicted silence, like the house burning down or judgment day. In the end, I bought a bedroom-size air conditioner of my own, so I could close the windows in hot weather. The puttputt continued to plow through the closed windows and the gentle rushing noise produced by my own air conditioner, but not unbearably so. Then came the wonderful day in April when a truck stopped in front of the house, noises resounded, and I beheld the noisy air conditioning being ripped from its moorings. It didn't want to go, and created many grunts and blasphemies from the lips of the men who were trying to get it loose. This reluctance to leave home gave me time to get a camera and record for my twilight years a photograph of the diabolical device as it vanished through the window into the apartment. I don't know who bought it, but pretty obviously it wasn't anyone in Hagerstown. I've been within a quarter-mile of every street in town in recent weeks, and I'm sure I would have heard it by now. In every apple there is a worm if you wait long enough, and so it is in this situation: sleep is easier but there is no longer the thought that I might as well sit at this typewriter and pound away even though it is 2 a.m., because that dratted racket is continuing.

There is not a great deal of moving in and out in this block, even though most of the houses have been chopped into apartments. I think they took away by force the old lady who used to live up the street on the other side. She was the one who claimed that she used to be a nurse and mistook the urinal for the water bottle when visiting me in the hospital. Now that she's gone, I won't get a card on Father's Day. I hope she didn't know something that I don't. Without intending it that way, I almost created mayhem in the block in the spring. The fellow at the top of the hill who used to cut my grass had trouble with both his power mower and his sister. The former wouldn't operate and the latter was reluctant to have him use it, anyway, because he is a trifle eccentric and given to playing his trumpet at 3 a.m. in the back yard. A relative of another neighbor offered to take over, and I agreed, only to learn a few days later that the deposed lawnsman had gone storming into the home of this particular neighbor, demanding to know the relative's name and address so something could be done about unfair labor practices. I think I have it smoothed over now. In any event, the change was fortunate in one sense. The new mowerman noticed a hole in the ground, the last time he cut the lawn, stuck in his hand to investigate, and pulled out the turtle that had vanished from the neighbor's care two summers ago. He recognized it instantly, something that the other fellow couldn't possibly have been expected to do. Maybe someone will eventually claim the ants, the four cats who are living in the storage area under the garages, the groundhog who has extensive duplex apartments under half of the lawn, the back porch birds, and whatever makes periodic thumping noises in the walls of the house.

This rambling summary of what has been happening to me and what I have been happening to would not be complete without emphasis on the fact that I'm still eternally and completely fascinated by baseball. So far I haven't seen any real live baseball this summer, but I hope to get soon to a couple of big league parks that will be replaced soon by new stadia. I am quite unhappy with the kind of sta-



dium they now build for major league teams. Cantilever roofs, for instance, take some of the poetry and uncertainty out of attending a ball game. No longer can you exercise your wariness to avoid being sold a seat behind a post, and now it's not necessary to stay alert when a foul ball heads for a point in the stands a hundred feet away because there is no post for it to strike and ricochet in your direction. I'm also unhappy about the lack of high walls in the outfield in most new ball parks. Except perhaps in center field, there is no longer a wall from which a vicious hit can bounce unpredictably, and what walls remain are not large enough to be sold for advertising purposes, thus making it impossible to say with specific accuracy that the third baseman hit the wall just about the second o on the Coca-Cola ad. I don't dare get upset by detailing my opinions of the fencing that is placed in some parks to create more home runs. With all its faults, Griffith Stadium was my ideal of a major league stadium, until they built the fence in front of the left field bleachers.

However, some nice things have happened during this baseball season. For instance, there was the 22-inning game between the Senators and White Sox, the first baseball game too long for my radio. This radio suffered total electronic collapse during the 21st inning, barely six hours after the game started, and I had to pay 4.98 to get it repaired. It is much too early to gloat, but I am immensely encouraged with the poor play the Baltimore Orioles are exhibiting, through the first two-fifths of the season. It was bitter medicine to see my most hated city represented in the World Series. Maybe it is prejudice acting up, but I still go around telling people that a day will come when the real story about that World Series will be known. I can't believe that nature unaided by connivance resulted in the four-game sweep and events since the World Series have helped to increase my suspicions: Koufax quits for a shaky reason, Wills rebels and gets traded with no better impelling cause, the Dodgers almost have a losing series in Japan, and the sports columnists are strangely silent about the possibility that a lot of money may have been won and lost on those four games. I've found a gratifying increase in the number of Phillies fans in Hagerstown, even though the team has been going poorly this season. Perhaps the growing number of supporters has occurred because of the opportunity for unleashing blind, red-hot hatred against Gene Mauch, the Phils' manager. If anyone has had anything good to say or to think about him this year, it has escaped my notice, and there is nothing like a common emotion to bring people together.

It's been amusing to watch the progress of another sport, soccer. Nothing in a long time has shown me more clearly the gap between the public and sports writers. Soccer, you see, has long been a favorite sport in several rural high schools of Washington County. Nobody is interested in the Hagerstown schools, but it's a bigger thing than basketball and they haven't even tried to field football teams at the two schools where it's most popular. After the kids leave school, they play in a semi-pro league of town teams. The local sports writers have always almost totally ignored the soccer games in high school coverage, on the theory that it isn't featured in big city newspapers' sports pages so it must not be real news. Now soccer has hit network television and all of a sudden, the press services are emitting all sorts of feature stories about the sport, and the local newspapers are continuing to ignore the local games while running scores, standings, and other news about the games a couple of thousand miles away. We even ran a five-part series designed to in-



struct the public on the fundamentals of soccer. I'd wager that the guy who wrote it knows less about the sport and has seen fewer soccer games than more than half of the people who read the series in the local press. My own reaction to the television soccer games is that it's terribly out of place. It is essentially a cold weather sport, and the portions of games I've watched have been filled with players who appeared on the verge of heat exhaustion. From the financial standpoint, I can't imagine why the promoters are trying to make it a warm weather sport. They must fight for the admission dollar with major league baseball teams that play 81 home games, compared with the seven or eight home games they would encounter if they had a season running through the same part of the calendar as football; moreover, there is little else to do outdoors on Sundays in the fall and winter and soccer wouldn't compete then with the lure of the beach and the golf course. At this point, I feel a slight sense of guilt, because one of the few redeeming things about my hated city of Baltimore is that the newspapers there used to give proper play to soccer. It was quite popular in Baltimore some years back, and may be still, for all I know; I haven't looked at the sports pages of the Baltimore newspapers for a decade or longer.

Now, cricket is the sport I'd really like to see played in the summertime around here. I still haven't figured out completely what was going on during the hourlong match I watched on television a few years ago, when a couple of British teams played an exhibition on The Mall in Washington. But it looked like fun. I wonder, what would the chances be of cricket becoming the national sport of Austria?

At this point, I'll bet everyone has been gloating over the fond but fruitless hope that this new method of creating an issue of Horizons has caused me to forget to include

### The Worst of Martin

From the December, 1938, issue of The Contributor, "my first attempt at printing," by Edgar Allan Martin, and kindly made available by Helen Wesson.

#### FOG

Seeping, leaping, rarely sleeping,  
Malign elemental creeping  
With a dark ungodly spasm,  
All unhuman ectoplasm.

Abaddon's pits are loose I say.  
The spawn of Hell in darkened day--  
His ghosts and ghouls roam hand in hand,  
What chance has man with either band?

Slimy ooze in ship at sea--  
All life is gone, O where is He?  
A rasping horn--a jangling bell--  
Loud crash of wood--die screams in hell?

Must this go on? Where is the sun?  
For life or death I cannot run...  
A thousand eyes in torment hope--  
The Black Gods' kiss--end of life's grope.