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If I've told you once, I've told you 112 times that this is Horizons. It is volume 29, number 1, FAPA number 106, and not only that, but it's also the fall, 1967 issue. It's mostly written and completely stenciled by Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, U.S.A. If the wish is father to the deed, the Coulsons have published another issue.

### In the Beginning

Fantasy Amateur: It's gratifying to find such immediate response to my desire to see FAPA elections de-emphasized. But I didn't intend to be so persuasive that we have no presidential candidate. My ballot was marked beside the no one for president, on the theory that there is no constitutional authority for electing anyone by write-in votes and Chuck Hansen can't be re-elected president for another four years. However, it has just occurred to me that 7.4 of the constitution is highly ambiguous and could be thrown out by the Supreme Court. The terminology sounds as if it means we aren't supposed to elect anyone to the presidency or vice-presidency, except every fifth year. ' Just in case everyone assumes someone else will mention it, I'd better cite for the record the omission of an issue of Esdacyos from the mailing contents listing. Exile: I found myself briefly among the mad characters of this story for several hectic minutes last spring. Walking through the park on a beautiful morning, I was hailed by a college teacher. It was just like a scene from an avant garde Italian movie: he was sitting crosslegged in shorts with books and papers covering a violently blue and orange park table while behind him files of people solemnly crisscrossed along the walks and the poisonous vernal green clashed frightfully with the color scheme from the background's turf. He wanted to know if I would help him compose a speech he was supposed to give to some kind of historians' con on nationalism in 19th century Europe. I heard no prompter, saw no idiot card, then just as if I'd learned my line the night before, I said politely: "Manzoni!" He glowed in gratitude, shook my hand, rattled off a lengthy dissertation on how this suggestion caused his whole speech to fall nicely into order, and I tipped my hat and walked soberly away, desperately wishing I knew what Manzoni had done and why he'd popped into my mind. Snickersnee: Until I did some calculating, I had hoped to dispute Bob's claim to the status of the world's most prolific writer. But no matter how I juggle the estimates, I can't find a recent year in which the local newspapers published more than 1,500,000 words of my stuff. The output is somewhat smaller now, because I'm on a five-day week and one of those days is largely devoted to head-writing and makeup. In any event, one consideration that has restrained me from quitting the job is similar to a problem Bob mentions: the fear that when I try to supplement investment income by freelancing, I'll fall into a compulsive writing routine that will cause me to spend as much time trying to make money at the typewriter at home as I now do at the office. Sambo: The information on information retrieval was fascinating. There are only two more things I find myself wishing I knew about it. Who is the villain who first started to refer to "information retrieval techniques" and caused the simpler, equally accurate "looking things up" to fall into disgrace? And how hard will it be to make unretrievable all the information that becomes obsolete with the passing of years? When we've used up all the oil reserves, for instance, how will they ever clear out the clutter of



references to articles and papers that will never again interest anyone except perhaps historians? ' ' The social security statistics look convincing. Of course, the entire old age pension system is nothing but a legalized form of gambling. The worker involuntarily places a weekly bet on the possibility that he will live long enough to begin to get paid off, and might even suffer early disability that would permit him to make a big cleanup. If he dies before he's in his sixties, or circumstances force him to continue to hold a job into his seventies, he must try to be a good loser. Kim Chi: The enlightening article on the business side of a symphony orchestra causes me to wonder all over again why government and the public are so obstinate in their refusal to subsidize good music in this nation. Nobody thinks it strange that a museum should be open without admission fee or that kids should get free instruction in school on how to sing folk songs or that a city should pay most of the expenses for a municipal band's production of Sousa music. But it's a rare city that pays a substantial amount from tax money to its symphony orchestra, and I know of nowhere you might find a professional opera company in the United States that can get government money for deficit prevention. ' ' Stabat Mater and Oedipus Rex in one concert is a staggerer. Did they call the concert "Motherhood Through the Ages" or something similar? ' ' Three series you cite as producing really fine episodes on television have a tremendous advantage in common. Route 66, Naked City, and East Side-West Side could use sets that cost several billion dollars and had a lived-in look. This is where Star Trek or any other television fantasy encounters a staggering problem: finding sets that look real with only a few thousand dollars to spend for them. The producers seem to try to get along by installing more multi-color flashing lights when in doubt and buying scripts as frequently as possible that call for a distant planet which is identical with the appearance of earth. Salud: James Fenimore Cooper, Sax Rohmer, and Mark Twain did just fine with non-white protagonists. Why should the non-whites' feelings and motivations be different from those of whites? The problems they encounter may be different because of prejudice, but the Negro or Chinese isn't as inscrutable as a Vegan. ' ' I assume that radiation from a television set falls off according to the square of the distance, like the intensity of light. So if I sat further as the screen got bigger, I'd be safer. ' ' I don't see how a person with reverence for life can distinguish between flora and fauna: if it's wrong to eat an animal, it's wrong to eat a vegetable. Ayorama: It's much better to spray against tent caterpillars before they go camping. The pests are much more susceptible to chemical sprays in the spring. Moreover, lots of serious accidents have resulted from trying to burn off the webs from the trees. ' ' The more I read about Plato's Republic, the less respect I have for his powers of imagination. He sounds as if he were simply touting a somewhat bowdlerized version of his own nation, rather than creating a mental image of a better one. Sercon's Bane: It is totally impossible to work a quarter-century for a newspaper without running "into some brawny idiot who decided unilaterally that the big thing in his life was to kick" something out of my intestinal tract. Many people react violently to newspaper stories and some of them visit the newspaper office to get physical revenge for intellectual harm. Pacifism has always worked for me up to now. Horib: If there was no bloc-voting for Erbdom's Hugo, why didn't the Mars or Venus stories win for Burroughs a posthumous Hugo as author of the favorite series? If there were just so many Bur-



fans among us that Erbdom won spontaneously, the same result should have affected the best series competition. I have found, incidentally, a superior way to make Burroughs fans react violently. Just write the name of the Hugo-winning fanzine that way, instead of using three capital letters and a hyphen. " The little essay on people who hang on in FAPA for no apparent reason provides some backing for my continued belief that we need a different way of acquiring new members. If a FAPA member knew that his popularity or the luck of a lottery or some other intangible might permit him to rejoin before long, he might be more willing to resign when he has a temporary loss of interest. Under present circumstances, nothing but selective cholera can save the person who resigns from five or more years' non-membership, if he changes his mind the day after he quits FAPA. " The only way to handle picnic weather problems is that adopted by the enormous Hallowe'en parade in Hagerstown: make the final decision 12 or 24 hours before starting time and don't change the decision even if the weather changes. People will endure suddenly bad weather in better humor than they will meet the discovery that a long trip was useless because of a last-minute cancellation. Celephais: I pity any mother with triplets, if none of them is older than the others. " Weirdly, those very old hardbound collections of old comic strips can be bought from the comic book fans at prices which are low, in comparison with the asking prices for many recent newsstand comic magazines. I've seen them listed at .50 or a bit more apiece, and I should think that they would be much scarcer because they appeared so long ago. So there must be something to the theory that comic fandom is basically nostalgia for what the fans personally remember from boyhood. " I was taught in school that it is egotistical to use the first person singular pronoun frequently when writing things on paper. If this was a widespread doctrine, it might account for the clumsy circumlocutions that have muddled so many essays and letters. I've tried to forget what I was taught, except in one respect. It's foolish to add frequently to statements "I think" and "it seems to me" and similar statements. They are unnecessary in most non-fiction, and in the case of the former, often severe exaggeration. But it's as hard to shun them completely as to indulge in conversation without sticking meaningless "well"s or "oh"s to the beginning of sentences. Foggy Day: Is there a white person anywhere in the nation with more than a moron's intelligence who isn't already aware that most Negroes want a better way of life than the sordid conditions in which prejudice has kept them? Unless there is, the riots are utterly useless. Rioting doesn't tell the white man anything new about the Negro's wish to be recognized as an equal. It does show him that the Negro can be stampeded into the same kind of hate-motivated evil actions that cause white men to lynch Negroes. Rioting won't force the white man to give the Negro his rightful place, just as lynchings didn't force the Negro to accept permanent status as a subhuman creature. Meanwhile, I can't comprehend Bob Lichtman's apparent hope that the hippies will voluntarily betake themselves to segregated ghettos of their own creation and live of their own choosing the same kind of hand-to-mouth, unproductive existence that the South and a lot of the North have advocated for the Negro all these years. When Bob says of the hippie way of living, "For those of us in it and those of us closely exposed to it, I believe we are all much the richer for the experience," he sounds just like the white supremacists waxing lyrical over the happiness that they imagine the Negro finds in the kind of idealized neighbor-



hood dramatized in Porgy and Bess. Pantopon: Efforts to link the succession of vowels and consonants as sounds with their meaning as words seem silly. Nobody can enjoy poetry read aloud in a language he does not understand. He may be briefly impressed by the swing of the meter but the sounds themselves come and go far too rapidly to leave any kind of esthetic pleasure connotations behind. This seems to be the poetry interpretation equivalent to the musical writers' efforts to prove that this key is bright and that key is dramatic, simply as keys with no regard for the composition written in them. Spiane: There is one frightening possibility if mystery story fandom ever gets going. What if some mystery story fan, about to gaffate and determined to do something nasty as he bows out, publishes a big fanzine that contains nothing but the list of the real murderer in every mystery story in print? ' ' Movie-making equipment has advanced very little since the early years of the silents. Hollywood cameramen today have only one resource of major importance that Edison and Griffith lacked: full color film. (But in the silent era, they had tinted stock which could convey the sense of a night scene better than a black and white movie can manage today, and other hues could do emotional-jogging things.) The big advances have been in ways of using equipment that the pioneers could have adopted if they'd thought about them: daring motion for the camera, much use of extreme closeups, dramatic lighting with strong shadows, for instance. A few moviegoers might include sound as an advance in techniques, but I consider it a retrogression. ' ' Miles Kimball sells a fine traveling convenience that saves you from looking for electric pot-equipped hotel rooms. It's a little cloth bag which holds a hot pot. Two plastic cups and a spoon fit into the pot, and the whole thing goes into a suitcase neatly. A small jar of instant coffee and Pream, and you're saved many extra trips from the room to buy a cup of coffee. ' ' I think that even the opera goer who has seen Don Giovanni 40 times would become goshwowboyoboy over something that happened in its third act. ' ' If fans really wrote 70,000 letters to Star Trek, I'd estimate that 50 of them were fans in the fanzine and convention sense and the remainder are 69,950 fans of their junior high school library's science fiction shelf. ' ' A fine conreport, redolent with the good old days' spirit of describing events in full. ' ' The 1966 FAPA Laureate Poll: Well, what say we stop lamenting the low response to the poll, and make a concerted attempt to Take Steps? The treasury could withstand the cost of including in the February mailing stamped envelopes addressed to the teller. Maybe their presence would improve the number of voters. If time permits, I plan to run in the February Horizons a summary of the eligible things and people: names of magazines distributed in the 1967 mailings, a list of all the major formal essays, a checklist of the members who did mailing comments in at least one mailing, a rundown of the poems and fiction, and a listing of artists represented in the four bundles. Suddenly this strikes me as more work than I'll have the ambition to undertake, but if I can achieve it, the aid to memory might impel some members to fill out ballots. Now, if FAPA really wants to make the poll representative, I have another idea. Require a filled-out poll from each member, on penalty of not counting the votes he gets from other voters. The Nehwon Review: Steve Pickering was already too low in my estimation to have sunk perceptibly by the report of the Ackerman theft. I wasted valuable hours writing an article for the fanzine he claimed he was publishing, then rewriting it after he lost it, in response to



constant prodding. Pickering never acknowledged receipt of either article. He turned out an endless series of articles with the common theme of abusing fans and fandom. He strove mightily to hide his real identity as a college kid by lies about membership in the exalted company of sociologists. If he stole Ackerman's treasures, and there is no reason to believe he didn't, it's just frosting on the cake on which I would cheerfully watch Pickering choke, as one crumb to some others. But I'm puzzled about Redd's use of an Oscar Wilde quotation to start off this essay. There is no possible doubt about Oscar's guilt. Is Redd trying to hint that in another century theft will not be a crime, just as Oscar might not be charged under England's new laws covering homosexuality? Or is Redd trying to say that treatment in a mental hospital for Pickering would be even worse than jail was for Oscar? After two years in prison, Oscar resumed with greater enthusiasm than ever the kind of life he'd been imprisoned for and created nothing except one poem and the enormous letter from which De Profundis was snipped. Isn't it more humane for Ackerman to take a course of action that might lead to repair of the Pickering personality? Pickering might emerge from this treatment much better than Wilde came out of prison. I have no knowledge about the quality of treatment at Camarillo. But I am quite certain that one cousin and one girl who works a dozen feet from me are now leading happy lives because of the treatment they received at mental institutions. Esdacyos: The promise of a TAFF report is good news. I've felt for a long time that lack of TAFF adventures in fanzines has prevented the program from even greater prosperity. It shouldn't be a bounden duty for a delegate to write a trip report, but if he will take the trouble and will get at least part of it into fanzines, TAFF will be before fandom more graphically and those who didn't get to the worldcon will learn something about the delegate. 'I have somehow a half-memory of reading about the death of A. Everett Winne. I hope I'm confused. 'Horizons' pages may have appeared to be yellow second sheets, but it wasn't just for the sake of appearances. They were second sheets, the cheapest available stuff during the years when money around here was as scarce as spare time is today. 'Maybe the material in Horizons about newspaper work and Hagerstown would make a good book. But the things about the newspapers and the city that I've been too chicken to run in Horizons might make a great book. Vukat: One thing I'd like to see at a worldcon is a new kind of identification badge. It's pitiable, how one fan must greet another fan, then look down at his breast to make sure he has connected the face with the proper name. Some enterprising worldcon committee member should design a badge that would fit over the bridge of the nose and nestle against the forehead, wider and shorter than the mundane-type badges now worn at worldcons. They would permit any fan to march right up to any other fan, greet him accurately while keeping his eyes firmly locked on the other's eyes the whole time, and the other would never know that he wouldn't be recognized without that nametag. It would be wonderful for egoboo, making the most obscure fan feel as celebrated as Harlan Ellison, because that telltale drop of the eyes to his chest wouldn't precede other fans' greeting him by name. 'Highways in Hiding impressed me as the epitome of all that is bad in the recent outpouring of quickly written science fiction novels. Most of the plot cliches are there, such as the inclusion of psi as an element in the action, the hero's uncertainty about which are the good guys and which are the bad guys, a major character who can't remember something vital



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in his past, and of course a hidden war for control of all mankind that gradually becomes evident. But George O. Smith was always my candidate for the rank of most overrated writer. I gather that his popularity in fandom derived almost solely from his personality and the fact that he's such a nice guy, not from great admiration for his writings. ' ' A much publicized clause in the Constitution makes it unnecessary for me to admit how I fared in the trivia quiz. But when you get right down to it, the corpus of science fiction has grown so large in the past third of a century that it's less and less likely any given fan will have much common reading ground with another fan. When you get past perhaps fifty novels and collections with such fame that almost everyone decides to read them, any given title will be unknown to a large part of any audience, and goodness only knows if there'll be any common ground at all in another two decades. Sarandipity: This is the real, vintage Grennell, back in the same marvelous writing groove that he inhabited all the time during the Grue years but has wandered from too often of late. Mencken and Huxley are the only writers who might be able to keep up with him, when he's right, and he's right in this production. ' ' But Ellick fares pretty well himself against this high powered company, and even throws away carelessly the germ for a great science fiction story in that remark about every LA Thing being flushed simultaneously during a station break. Let's see, it's the future day when the first worldwide tv hookup is in progress, most of the two billion watch it, the production is a long, exciting and universally suggestive drama, and not only does a tidal wave roll across the globe soon after a break in the drama, but medical and midwife facilities are swamped nine months later, after which the sudden growth of income tax deductions bankrupts every nation in the world... I think I must write four novels, instead of the three I wrote about in the last Horizons. ' ' Despite my dislike for most television fare, I purchased a color set this summer, with the biggest screen I could find. My general reaction is that I don't watch television more than I did before but I would be unhappier now if I were forced to abstain completely from video. The presence of color is a major factor: it doesn't cause me to imagine I'm looking through a window into reality, but the colors do prevent me from constantly being aware of the shadowy non-reality of what's on the tube. For those who may be considering a purchase, I might relay my discovery that it's easy to get in the home with ten minutes' dial-turning much more accurate and purer colors than you'll see in demonstrations by salesmen. H.M.S. Trek-a-Star: It would be less than honest if I didn't admit that this delighted me more for the ingenuity shown in adapting the plot and inventing brilliant remarks, than for the light it throws on the ability of the television series to justify so much work on a parody. I've watched several more Star Trek episodes with growing dissatisfaction and probably won't see any more for quite a while, since it has shifted to a time on Friday when I'm almost always in the office. In any event, I imagine that Gilbert & Sullivan fandom would be happy with this, or at least that portion of it which resides where Star Trek is visible, and I'd be an instant customer if someone offered to dub a tape of the whole thing at a reasonable figure. Eight Pages of Something: I liked the poems very much. I wish I could feel the same emotion for the FAPA rule that caused a rush publication after only six months' membership but I can't. I'd like to see it scrapped in favor of granting the newcomer a year to get acquainted with FAPA's atmosphere and to escape any temporary excessive demands of mundania on his time.



*Do you think anybody cares.*

The Worst of Martin

(from the winter, 1962, issue of Grotesque, by Edgar Allan Martin)

When the two men were through with her they slowed down and pushed her out of the car. They sped away with the lights out.

Their caution was unnecessary. There was no one else around and Marya was barely conscious. She lay in the ditch beside the road trying not to remember. Her clothes were torn. She felt bruised and she ached and she was dirty.

Dirty! Dirty!

"Dirty!" was her last thought until she was aware of the hot sand on her bare foot. It was still dark and she was walking in the desert. A shoe was gone.

Marya sat down and cried and tried to arrange her torn dress. She made futile efforts to piece her bra together where they had snapped it in front. She did not need it anyway and she angrily threw it away. At least what was left of her dress hung better.

They had stolen her car, too. Now she was lost in the desert.

The man had been lying on the side of the road about a mile from town and she had stopped to help. Another man came from the side of the road and hauled her into the back seat. Then they had taken turns at the driving.

Which way is the road?

She tried to clear the tears from her eyes. Stars everywhere made a clear night. In the distance there seemed to be the glow of town lights. She blinked and shook her head trying to be certain before she made a move. She took off her remaining shoe and carried it like a weapon. Her thighs ached with every step.

She was a tall strong girl with a nice firm figure. The prim, tight-lipped look, however, scared off more men than it attracted. In fact, it had never attracted a man for any notable length of time.

My knees are tired and my stomach hurts.

The way became rocky and she fell and lost her shoe. She limped along for a half hour. The lights somehow did not get any closer. Scuttlings and whisperings in the brush hurried her on, sobbing and exhausted. Her feet began to burn.

I'm so stupid! I should have stayed where I was. I must have been near the road.

A step more and all the lights in the town winked out. The stars were disappearing and the full blackness of the desert night began to cling to her.

"A mirage? At night?" Her voice rising. She was suddenly aware of new sounds skittering around her. She slumped to the sand. Her nose was full of dust and her mouth was parched. She could not be thirsty so soon.

What if I get lost? She remembered pictures of bleached bones.

A clouded moon made it possible for her to thread her way back across the sand and the rocks. She never thought to look for her own trail and she drifted aside.

The night wind flooded in. It seemed to cool the sand in just an instant. It sliced through her summer dress and caressed her bruises. When she held her torn dress around her she could not walk straight. Loose it flapped, like an open house coat.



What will I do? It's so cold. And I'm frightened!

Instead of resting when she cut her foot she began to go faster. She fell and bruised her face. Her eyes smarting from the flying sand, she began to run. Sobbing uncontrollably she thought she saw a big man loom up in her distorted vision. He leered at her as all men did...

Not again!

She screamed, turned aside, and raced headlong into a cliff.

He was bathing her forehead with a damp cloth when she came around. Her head was spinning and for a moment she stayed in his lap, not knowing where she was.

The cloth moved down the side of her face and across her throat. She could see his face was twisted in what was supposed to be a reassuring smile. Her dress had fallen open. He was taking advantage of her.

Marya swung at him and scrambled away. She had a rock in her hand when she faced him.

"Hey! Take it easy, lady. I'm just trying to help you."

She remained entrenched with the rock poised and tried to hold her dress together. He did not try to move closer. He turned and sat near a small fire sheltered by the cliff.

"It's a lot warmer here. What happened to you?"

He's only acting nice to disarm me. But what else can I do? What a horrible looking character, muscled and hairy, hasn't shaved in weeks.

"Been spending my vacation prospecting, so pardon my unshaven appearance. There's not too much water around these here parts."

More likely he's an escaped convict. She was suddenly very chilly. She clutched the rock so tightly a sharp edge cut into her finger. He could be another sex maniac.

"Come on over and relax. I won't bite! Here, wear this!" He threw a blanket over and moved as though making room beside him.

"I'll have some food ready in a few minutes."

She sat across the fire as far from him as possible. The rock pressing in the small of her back was little consolation. But the blanket did feel good.

He smiled. "Actually, at this point in my prospecting I have more bourbon than water. Care for a drink?"

"I rarely drink."

"The way you're shivering you should have one. It would do you good."

He's trying to break down my resistance by being kind and giving me drinks. He's having a second one. What will I do when he gets drunk? She shivered again.

"Here," he said, and poured a half tumbler. "Drink this!"

"Don't shout!" She shook her head nervously and took the glass.

"You act as though I'm going to beat you. What happened to your clothes?"

She looked at him wide-eyed then drank quickly. She strangled and he went over to pound on her back.

An excuse to be close. That's all it is! When she recovered her breath she cried: "Leave me alone! Must you maul me?" She tightened the blanket around her.

(to be concluded)



### ~~EX/LATK~~ Nycon Three

It must have been during the Disclave that a New York friend telephoned me. He told me that I'd been nominated for a fan achievement award as a fan writer. I told him that all Saskatchewan was in revolt and had just set up Leland Sapiro as emperor. But he finally convinced me that it was so. The logical procedure for me was to demand a recount, because I'd had virtually nothing published in fanzines during 1966, except letters of comment. Obviously, this was a mistake, unless it was fandom's way of telling me to remain silent in 1967 again as a contributor of formal material to fanzines. Nevertheless, I was deeply touched by what might really have been the pleasure some fans have found in the things I've put into fanzines. I determined that as soon as the Nycon had ended, I would try to repay this vote of confidence by turning out more material for general fanzines, and by writing on some subjects which I've always passed by in silence.

For instance, I've never written an all-out conreport. The Discon caused three or four pages of half-report, half-reflection to emerge from this typewriter. I may have produced a few paragraphs on the two Phillycons in my past. But in all these years of fandom, the closest I've ever come to a genuine conreport was the long distant evening when I typed out for a Bob Tucker fanzine a conreport written before the fact. He stenciled it neatly, in a way that made the lines end just where the facts I couldn't foresee would have begun. Maybe this involved the first Nycon; if so, this would be good to write my first honest conreport about the third Nycon. It takes a certain amount of courage to undertake a conreport. Not only am I too old to learn new fannish tricks, but I can't gauge how violent might be the reaction of half of the corporation that publishes Horizons, the half who is not enamoured of this highly specialized art-form.

Then too, there's the fact that several extensive conreports should already be in print, by the time this TAPA mailing goes out. But I feel confident that I can include some information that is not likely to appear in other narratives of the same general events. Why did I leave for home before the Nycon ended, for instance? What awful faux pas did I commit in front of Ruth Berman? What special feat of photography did I almost pull off during the fashion show, and how will I achieve it properly if I manage to attend another worldcon equipped with a fashion show? Read on, and accept as a promise that I'll be as brief as possible in the preliminaries that lead up to the description of my con experiences themselves.

In a sense, the worldcon began for me at a meeting of the board of trustees of Hagerstown Junior College, eight days before the Nycon was scheduled to open. I attended the meeting after the meeting in my capacity as a newspaper reporter. I had nothing against the meeting itself, but did not attend that because they wouldn't let the press in. The junior college is sweating out the attempt to get accredited and the authorities are terrified lest the newspapers report something that might reflect unfavorably on the institution. There is a minority opinion on the board that the damage has already been done, because of publicity about a manhole on the new campus. Nobody knows what the manhole was created for. The closed meeting lasted a couple of hours, and then the open meeting threatened to continue until the arrival of the first students for the fall semester. I started to get nervous about



deadlines and left a little after 10. The college moved into this campus only a few months earlier and I wasn't completely familiar with the fastest route from the library building to the parking lot. But I put my fannish mentality to work, deducing through imagination a shortcut despite the handicap of the darkness all around the dimly lighted patches of the campus. I was right, inasmuch as the short cut took me between buildings on an almost straight line. But only when I suddenly acquired the conviction that I'd stepped out of my spaceship's airlock did I remember how the architect had designed little flights of stone stairways to permit easier progress up and down the hillside on which the college is scattered. Eventually, I landed quite distant from any lighted area, where it was most unlikely that anyone would find me until dawn, if I couldn't get up: the odds were against anyone else inventing my particular shortcut and only one night watchman serves that large campus during vacation months. But I managed to hoist myself without even the aid of bootstraps. I had a couple of badly skinned knees, a wrenching pain in the back, and no notion of which way was which. Five minutes or so of limping, cautiously watching out for more hidden stairways, and I managed to find the right direction to the parking lot.

By the weekend before the Nycon, I thought I was going to miss the event. I couldn't sleep properly for the pain in the back. Earlier, I'd arranged to have the car painted, and managed to drive it without too much difficulty to the shop eight miles away. But they brought me back to town in a truck that reproduced accurately the behavior of a bus, and I almost died in that quarter-hour ride, an obvious warning that I couldn't take a six-hour bus trip to New York.

But my vacation from work couldn't be changed at this late date, several days of relaxation at home caused me to feel a trifle better, and then I realized suddenly how idle it was to hope that anyone would believe this excuse for missing the Nycon. Two facts militated against credence. Everyone knows that when I fall, I break a hip. And nobody had really accepted the true fact that a bellyache had prevented me from going to the Tricon the previous year. So I revised slightly my plans for congoing. My reservation provided for arrival late Thursday afternoon. Instead, on Wednesday morning I arranged with the post office to stop the mail, telephoned the dairy not to leave any more milk until after Labor Day, and almost stopped by police headquarters to arrange for a watch to be kept on the empty house. In the nick of time, I remembered a few things about some recent acquisitions in the local constabulary and decided to do without police attention.

One unfortunate lacuna in all conreports known to me involves the decision on what to take along. Do other fans hesitate over this or that perhaps necessary item, while filling up the suitcase? On this particular occasion, my decision-making was simplified in a sense. The back was much too tender and weak to let me handle anything beyond one case, preferably not too heavily laden. Automatically, this eliminated a lot of possible photographic take-alongs. I'd hoped to do a lot of picture-taking at the worldcon but inability to lug a gadget bag caused me to leave home some stuff that would have made possible certain sorts of picture-taking. Without flash, I couldn't stop action in the dimly lighted hotel, even though film is fast enough to use without flash when there isn't rapid motion in front of it. I didn't risk putting extra lenses in



the suitcase, lest they suffer damage, and I was afraid I'd be top-heavy if I slung two cameras around my neck. In the end, I decided to take along nothing but my Contax with the 50 mm lens and some film. I don't want to get ahead of my story, but one of my few purchases in New York City was something I'd meant to buy for years and years. It was light enough to cause no physical problems, a neck strap, and it facilitated candid picture-taking so greatly that I wish I'd bought one many years ago. The leather case is necessary protection for a 35 mm camera and I'm continuing to use it constantly, but it's superfluous when you're among friends and will be using the camera off and on during several hours; the person you want to photograph will be gone by the time you've opened the case but the neck strap permits shooting with a bare two seconds' preliminaries.

Even though I traveled light, I took along for the first time a pair of sunglasses, and here was another act that should have been consummated ages ago. I need sunglasses when I drive a car, at the penalty of frightful headaches, and never wear them when in the sun under any other circumstances. Common sense should have told me that the contrast between the brilliant windows and dark interior areas of a bus calls for sun glasses even for a passenger. But this was the first time I'd worn them on a bus and it was the first long daytime bus ride I'd undergone without at least a mild headache as a reward. I profited by a previous embarrassing experience and put a small pair of bluntnosed scissors in the bag. On a previous trip to New York, I'd splurged generously on old magazines, books, and music, acquiring too much to carry along back. So I'd bought heavy paper and cord at Woolworth's, so I could mail them back to myself, and suddenly had no way to cut the paper and twine. I couldn't find even a small, dull knife for less than 99¢, which may be evidence of how high the price of violence is in the big city, and I was determined not to lay down that much money for something that I would use only for five minutes. The devil then whispered to me about the substantial fee I was paying for my hotel room and the fragility of the glasses in the bathroom. Sooner or later, I was bound to do a small amount of damage to an inexpensive item of hotel property, somewhere, and why shouldn't it be now, in the form of a cheap glass that would provide a nice, sharp edge? I hope nobody's ideals will be shattered by the admission that I was raising my hand to commit the crime when my eye fell on the pitcher. A big piece was chipped from one side of the lip and there was a razor-sharp edge I hadn't noticed before. I was laughing later over my narrow escape from purgatory-quality sin with Les Gerber. He deflated me by asking why it hadn't occurred to me to buy a small pack of cheap razor blades.

Something else eccentric went into that suitcase: three large bars of Hershey's Milk Chocolate with Vanillin, an Artificial Flavoring. This is a con resource I've not seen recommended anywhere. The Discon had been saved repeatedly for me by the fact that I'd bought a stack of these bars of chocolate. Every time I felt myself growing fatigued, nervous, or confused, I slipped up to my room and ate chocolate until my spirits were back in proper condition. As things turned out, Hershey's is not a panacea, for it doesn't help a backache, but I still recommend it as a safer and healthier way of relaxing than lying down in bed with a cigarette or waterbombing policemen from the hotel roof.

This was the middle of a week's vacation, but at the last moment I discovered that I would have to go to the office before leaving town. I found in my mailbox an envelope stuffed full of news from a



friend who is sort of an unofficial press agent for a small nearby town. Tanzines frequently run lengthy dissertations on why a fan exists and there was even the occasion in the dim past when Sam Moskowitz thought a natural law operated to prevent more than one fan from demonstrating full fanaticism in any given city. But no comparable inquiry into the small town equivalent of the renaissance man is known to me. Almost always in a town with fewer than 3,000 or so occupants, you will find one man who is a sort of superFigaro. He belongs to every civic organization, knows all the lore and legend for three miles around, provides information to the nearest daily newspaper, dabbles deeply in municipal politics but seldom holds office himself, holds a full-time job, and makes extra money from a couple of parttime occupations at which he works during spare time. In Washington County, one such man is a convenient thing to have in each town: he is in one town a retired railroader, in another he runs the fertilizer plant, then there's the hamlet where the grocer holds this status, and in another it's a truck farmer. On rare occasions, one of these men dies and his loss is felt longer than the passing of the mayor or preacher. This particular general factotum had learned how frequently things get lost at the office, and he has taken quite illegally to bringing his news stories to the house and sticking them into the front porch mail receptacle. It's a good thing he paid his call early that day, or some news would have gone unpublished until my return the following week, unless neighbors saw the envelope there day after day and broke into the house in the belief I'd suffered a fit. It was a woeful way to start a vacation trip but I managed to persuade the switchboard girl to send the stuff to the news room, and got out of there with only two people asking what I was doing around here on my day off.

So it was an extra block of walking to the bus terminal, and a little more time to reflect how unnatural new things look in Hagerstown even after they become old. This city used to be served by a power company-owned bus line, the relict of the trolley company which the power company had previously organized in order to increase the sale of electricity. The electricity people sold their bus line to Greyhound nearly twenty years ago and the filthy little terminal just below Public Square was closed, for the simple reason that the Greyhound vehicles couldn't squeeze through. This necessitated a new terminal a block away and this in turn doomed several houses, including the one where Dr. Peter Buys lived. He was Hagerstown's bandmaster for a half-century, a Dutchman who had come to the United States in early life to join the Sousa Band as a youth. His home was the closest thing I'd ever been able to find in Hagerstown to a musical shrine, even though it contained nothing more remarkable than a recent edition of Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, a lot of pictures of bands which Dr. Buys had conducted, and piles of the owner's compositions. I'd fallen into the habit, early in my journalistic career, of dropping by one afternoon a week, theoretically to pick up the program for the next band concert, but in actuality, to savor as best I could this dubious link with professional music-making. Dr. Buys had his limitations as a conductor and as a composer. But he managed to keep the municipal band alive down through the decades when it was almost the only live musical ensemble in the city, before the schools started to emphasize bands and orchestras, and he didn't make music eccentrically. Like Richard Strauss, he conducted mostly with his eyes and kept his amateur musicians in time and almost in tune, even though his dotted rhythms almost came



out as triplets and he was always feuding with bassoonists. Dr. Buys had a respectable extra income from the royalties on his compositions, which never appeared in Goldman Band programs or got recorded, but were tuneful and fairly easy, just the sort of thing that bandmasters with modest abilities would order for mediocre musicians. Maybe I told in a previous Horizons about the big night the community gave Dr. Buys as he neared retirement. From dusk to almost midnight, musical and lay celebrities rattled off one speech after another in praise of the bandmaster's good influence on the community, impeachable personal conduct, place in the world of music, and international implications (he was one of the few foreign-born persons who ever got accepted by Hagerstonians). Dr. Buys must have been near 70 that night, he hadn't been back to Holland since before World War One, yet he still spoke with a strong accent and never risked complicated sentences or a rapid rate of speech in English. He was shaken when he rose to respond to the acclamation, and couldn't make a lengthy speech. Instead he said, simply and straight from the heart: "Ladies and gentlemen, anything I could say would be repetitious."

Now Dr. Buys' box-shaped, red brick, non-nonsense house was only a memory that was too vivid to make the bus terminal look as if it should be there. Once inside, however, I found myself more firmly in this particular probability world. There was the old man arguing about the time of departure of the next bus with the girl at the ticket window. I wonder how many persons in the nation spend all their waking hours arguing at bus ticket windows, and how often a girl at that window admits that she was wrong when she gave the information a little earlier? There were five boys in their late teens, lined up on one of the pew-like benches, each with a cigarette held at the same angle between the same two fingers of the same hand, all of them talking at once like a bunch of old women at a Sunday school class picnic. I wonder if it's just my imagination, or do young people spend more time just sitting and gossiping than they once did? I can't remember my own generation spending hours in a restaurant booth or standing at a corner, talking and doing nothing else. There was a greater impulse then to do something, anything that would interrupt this quiet, never-ending prattling. I never did find out anything about these particular boys, and this bothered me in the days that followed. They were fairly well dressed, so they weren't parolees from the nearby reformatory whose inmates start home from this bus terminal. They got off in Baltimore, so they weren't going a distance too far for a cheap used car to cope with, so why wouldn't at least one of these kids have owned a car in which the group could have made the trip quicker and more comfortably? They had no luggage, which might point to plans to go to the Orioles' game, but this was too early a bus for such a purpose. They seemed to regard the other passengers with superior scorn, yet they didn't have the sneer of the really bad teenagers. I'll probably never know the true facts, but their presence caused me suddenly to realize something: Increasingly, the intercity bus is becoming the only way to travel anonymously. Hitchhiking grows more difficult all the time, as through traffic moves to interstate highways where it's forbidden. Passenger trains are vanishing. You need a driver's license and registration card if you sit behind a passenger car's wheel. I'm not an airline traveler, but I get the impression that your identity gets known up there through the insur-



ance you purchase, the reservation you've made, or some other stratagem. It's a chilling thought, that in some future year all manhunt scenes in fiction or on the screen will involve a Greyhound bus.

Grudgingly, I purchased a ticket to New York through the routing that Hagerstown's incarnation of Greyhound Lines provides unless you put up a big argument. This is the old, traditional route via Baltimore which means that after 70 miles of travel, you are almost precisely the same straight-line distance from New York as you were at the start. Recent highway construction has made it possible to travel from Hagerstown to New York on first-class roads almost as straight as a beeline, through Harrisburg, Allentown and Easton. I understand that this cuts nearly an hour from the travel time, if you're using a private auto. But Greyhound has no through bus service that way and poor connections, so it's still necessary to fidget two hours from Hagerstown to Baltimore, then sit in the Baltimore terminal for minutes or hours awaiting the departure of the next through, non-stop bus to New York. Non-stop can be an exaggeration if you get on one of the older buses without restrooms. Some obscure law forces them to take a 20-minute rest stop an hour out of Baltimore.

I settled myself into the bus, where I'd found a seat on the side away from the sun for most of the trip, and mentally checked back on preparations for the worldcon. I had my reservation slip in my pocket, my ten-year-old street map of New York in a hip pocket, a recent issue of Munich Roundup in a side pocket to provide reading matter on the way, sunglasses were on, the hot water heating system back home was off, and one trusted person at the office knew where I could be found in the days ahead, just in case something cataclysmic should come about during my absence. All systems were go, and I should have been thinking of nothing but the future as the bus rolled from the terminal, the future of the next few days for their worldcon and the future of the next few years for the light the worldcon might throw upon them. Instead, my mind came to a wrenching halt and reversed into the past, the past of a week and of many years, at the first thing I saw.

It was a few boys, sitting on a front porch of a house just down the street from the terminal. Instantly I was reminded of something I'd done a week earlier. I had sat on a front porch with a bunch of small boys, and had suddenly been transported back into the era when I had sat almost daily on a front porch with boys of my own young age. I was seeing the boys and the porch through a man's eyes on that afternoon a week ago, but the experience had still been moving and a trifle unsettling, as if I no longer belonged totally to the present but was partially under the spell of the past. The smell of the front porch was unchanged from the past, the scent of slightly decayed wood and nearby growing grass with perhaps just a suggestion of paint odor if the porch was painted within the past couple of years, mingled with a faint warmth of roasting concrete sidewalk below. It's shocking, that neither Bradbury nor Wolfe has ever devoted a chapter to the scent of a wooden front porch. The boys before me a week ago looked indistinguishable from the kids who had been my contemporaries, because the apparel of growing boys seems little changed during a third of a century, unless there has been a slight trend away from short pants after the age of four or five. Hair styling is about the same, now that the craze for crew cuts has abated among local kids, and if the human race is growing taller, I don't think it



makes much effect on kids before adolescence, when they suddenly do shoot up in a manner that would have been freakish in my own day. I had reverted to this old pastime for a half-hour because United Fund publicity demanded a picture of a group of neighborhood boys with a campaign official; he was very late arriving, so I had plenty of time with the kids, time enough for them to get over their suspicion of the camera. It's awfully hard to remember what we talked about when we were boys sitting on the front porch, but some of the chatter this recent afternoon sounded vaguely familiar. But there were new things I couldn't have talked about when a tad. Boys' football, for instance, which has just been introduced to Hagerstown's ten-year-olds and is a matter of major interest to them. I learned that it has virtually the same rules as high school football, except for the absence of kickoffs. "Ah," I said, "a wise precaution, lest tender bodies suffer harm from the most perilous of all moments in football, the only occasion when both teams have opportunity to gain full momentum while pursuing opposite directions...." "Naw," the smallest boy interrupted me. "We just can't kick far enough to kick off." This modern front porch was also somewhat agitated by the fact that any lingering thoughts of white supremacy nursed in these youthful thoughts had been crushed beyond hope of redemption by the recent field day's results. "Well, at least we didn't do bad in the broad jump," one boy had said. "No wonder," someone replied. "That's the one they forgot to enter."

I must spend more time on my own front porch, I told myself as the bus inched further through Greater Hagerstown. It's really a shame that it sits there unoccupied, summer after summer. I haven't even put out any porch furniture in recent years, and I began to wonder if it was too late in the summer to get it out of the cellar and put it to use. Then suddenly I grabbed at my pocket, pulled out the brown envelope, and looked inside to make certain it was an unread Munich Roundup I'd brought along. It was, and the action fulfilled its purpose, that of reminding me that I was morally bound to attend the convention, not jump off the bus at the first stop light and spend the rest of the week inhaling my own front porch.

I'd chosen MRU as traveling companion for a couple of reasons. Its German text would prevent anyone sitting beside me from asking embarrassing questions, as he might if I had an English-language fanzine. Besides, I'd virtually caught up on reading and loc duties on fanzines published in North America, during the days just before the trip began. It had been a long haul, reducing a pile of backlog that had grown steadily ever since late in 1966 during spells of ill health, free lance writing, weltschmerz, and newspaper demands. The Nycon would have been spoiled for me, if I'd faced a weekend of evading a lot of editors whose publications I hadn't acknowledged. So I steadfastly neglected foreign-language fanzines, Australian fanzines, even some from the British Isles which are normally my favorite type of fanzines, and a day or two before leaving, I knew that I could talk to anyone apt to attend the worldcon without necessity for explaining away my failure to create a loc. I didn't know that one of the first people I would meet at the worldcon would be a German fanzine editor to whom I was particularly in literary debt... But a vacant lot was flashing past the bus window and I don't want to rush through a sketchy conreport by jumping ahead of my story. A vacant lot on the outskirts of Hagerstown is hardly promising subject matter for inferring the future of the nation. But a local vacant lot had been obsessing me in recent months, representing a symbol of the fu-



ture's grimmer possibilities and throwing some light on how far the present has gone toward that misery to come. The City of Hagerstown has tended to feel of late that it's about time to build sidewalks in a city whose shakedown period is nearing its end, after two centuries of primitive colonization days. The city has been encouraging the construction of sidewalks, block by block, by the subtle method of telling the property owner to do it, then moving in and doing it with municipal workers and billing the property owners who fail to follow instructions. When the city got around to this block on the edge of Hagerstown, one of the property owners it notified was the Board of County Commissioners. The county, it seemed, owned a vacant lot, a normal-sized lot obviously intended as the site for a home. The commissioners indignantly disclaimed all association with the property, until a search of land records showed that the county had bought it during a tax sale in 1940. Nobody in the courthouse could remember why the land was purchased for the county: it is too small an area for a school site, doesn't have any strategic location for such purposes as road-building, and lies much too far from the brawling heart of metropolitan Hagerstown to have been acquired simply for investment purposes. The county didn't want to spend money building a sidewalk but overtures to the city disclosed that the city wasn't interested in owning such a dinky little piece of ground, either. The commissioners talked of selling the lot at public auction, but didn't make arrangements, so the city will undoubtedly build the sidewalk and the county will pay the cost and then the existence of the lot will be forgotten by everyone except neighboring property owners for another quarter-century. A small matter, of course, but it scares me. Here is government of, for, and by the people which does something for no apparent reason, forgets that it did it, displays only a mild interest in the circumstances when forcibly reminded of it, and lapses back into lethargy again. Meanwhile the land has been off the tax rolls all these years, depriving both city and county of a steady small trickle of property taxes, and it has been ineligible to serve as site of a new house that would bring in more taxes and would house a taxpaying family. There are parallel situations in other aspects of government. The laws, for instance: Hagerstown, and I imagine most other cities as well, has on its official books scores of ordinances that are technically operative but practically ignored and forgotten and the entire county is theoretically subject to the futile force of stacks of legislative acts which have fallen into disuse but have never been removed from the books. What will happen to the already groaning populace as the years come and go, if galloping bureaucracy continues to make government still more complicated, even more prone to do pointless things that are forgotten but have an indirect force for evil: there are many other possible equivalents to a patch of ground that has been removed from public ownership or laws whose flouting causes the public to feel a subconscious lesser respect for the laws that need very strict observance?

Quite aside from this particular incident, the bus was now passing through the eastern outskirts of Hagerstown. It had reached them more rapidly than it would have come to the sere and desert terrain if it had headed in any other direction. Hagerstown has been notoriously slow to grow to the east, while expanding fast in three other directions. There were always many discussions over the reasons for this odd situation, but when houses finally did appear on the undulating plains only a few blocks east of Public Square, their pur-



chasers immediately discovered the true cause for the long-standing situation. Previous generations of Hagerstonians had better sense than to live downwind from the sewerage disposal plant.

I suppose that's why they put the hospital in this end of town. The bus passed within a couple of blocks of it, and I noted admirably how well it had been transformed from the structure I detested because of long stays in it. An expansion program has nearly doubled its bed capacity and has hidden its former appearance from most angles. But I really shouldn't have looked, because the hospital reminded me that I was semi-disobeying the doctor's instructions by going to the Nycon. I'd been to see him a day or so earlier, and he had found my blood pressure lower than he prefers. I'd just gotten over another problem which he diagnosed as a mild case of the flu, characterized mainly by a persistent fever and a steady ache in the legs. However, after some poking, tapping and staring at me, the doctor had muttered something about how the skinny ones occasionally manage to stay alive longer than anyone has a right to expect. So he hadn't threatened to cut me off without a wonder drug if I defied the germs and the effects of the fall and made the trip. The doctor had some strange information, too, which he gave me for no particular reason while he was doling out some little pills that are supposed to prevent me from turning into a greasy puddle. My doctor claimed that he can no longer find any supplier of the little sugar pellets that doctors used to provide in vast quantities to the patients who were perfectly healthy but didn't believe it and wouldn't be happy without something to take every four hours. I gather that doctors are now giving sedatives to these persons instead of the effectless fake pills and the supply of sugar pills has failed for lack of sufficient demand to keep it alive. It made me feel just a trifle better about the phasing out of my dearly beloved monaural records. My doctor probably didn't buy many of them, anyway. He is notorious locally for honesty when a patient comes to him with imaginary ills. He lost the wife of the richest man in town permanently for his bluntness to her one day in his office, and this trait has also made him very unpopular with the residents of the nearby reformatory, where he was staff physician for many years.

But now, even though it seemed only a moment since departure, the bus had reached the open countryside and was sneaking up on Route 40 where it could begin in earnest its daily pastime of throwing the fear of god into the people who drive only ten or fifteen miles per hour faster than the speed limit and get nervous when something big streaks by almost before you can smell its diesel fumes. Already I was beginning to be troubled by an odd verbal disability. Someone in FAPA once confessed to reading misled as misled. My difficulty is a trifle different in nature. Whenever I look from the window of a vehicle and see outside a motel or drive in theater the sign that says "entrance" I don't think about the possibility of turning off the main road into the place of business. Instead, I get the feeling that someone is trying to turn me into a sorcerer or magician, striving to persuade me that I should put under a spell everyone else in the vehicle. Maybe the time will come when these signs will be changed to access road or something of the sort, to prevent trouble with highly sophisticated sign-reading machinery when vehicles are steered by automatic pilots that would blow a transistor in the effort to engage in hypnotic activities not programmed into them. Just to be safe, I think they should get rid



at once of the signs that say: "hidden entrance". They could have dangerous effects on the subconscious of persons with unsuspected mental abilities, creating a conspiracy to subjugate a nation before we knew about it.

I'm starting to think like a bad prozine story, I told myself. In self-defense, I turned my eyes from the window and in self-justification, I reminded myself that I wasn't entirely to blame, for I'd been reading the prozines strenuously during the past month. I try to get acquainted with the current prozine scene during the weeks before I plan to attend a con. This is partly intended to provide a source of instant conversation, in case I encounter someone with whom I suddenly sink into one of those awful moments when nobody can think of anything to say. Reading the prozines is also intended to give me some background that will lessen the danger that I'll make a serious blunder at a convention, like asking Ray Cummings if he will write a sequel to *The Girl in the Golden Atom*. I'd managed before this bus trip to read the most recent issue of virtually all the current prozines, except the ones that publish little except reprints. I hadn't bought them but I'd been unable to work up the wrath of the righteous toward them as some fans are doing. After all, they're following exactly the same procedure as Hugo Gernsback utilized in the first years of *Amazing Stories*, and except for a bit more reluctance to pay for reprint rights on occasion, they're following the pattern of some highly esteemed more recent prozines like *Avon Fantasy Reader* and *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*. I suspect that they would get a much better fan press if they had a sleeker appearance; the cruddy appearance and carelessness with the illustrations hurt them severely. The only thing that stopped me from buying one, in fact, was that the cover advertised a story by H. Hyatt Verrill. I can turn the other cheek toward pirating but not toward blasphemy.

This summer, I found these non-reprint prozines little changed in quality from those of the year before when I'd read in preparation for the aborted trip to the Tricon. The biggest surprise was a Campbell editorial that not only sounded logical but jibed with my own opinions. It was his blast at LSD and his speculation that it may induce genetic changes that affect the heredity patterns for future generations. Yet I wonder, if fate had contrived that Campbell had been the first to discover the effects of LSD, would he take this attitude today? I suspect that LSD would join dianetics, the Dean drive, and all the other unwanted children of the mind or science which Campbell advocated for no apparent reason except the fact that nobody else had yet taken up these particular causes. The most rewarding thing about the fiction I read, probably, was the stuff by Zelazny. It was my first encounters with him. I fail to find in these stories anything that would justify his classification with the new wave writers. Instead, he impresses me as a very talented person who adheres quite faithfully to the old pulp traditions, but disguises them with such a wise choice of words and seasons them so well with fresh inventiveness and imagination that it's hard to discern at first glance the origins of the style. I'm not inclined to continue to read the prozines regularly between now and the month before the next prospective con trip. The fiction's general level is dismally low, compared with the quality you'll find in the better lines of paperbacks. And an older fan can't get rid of a sense that he is being cheated. Even if he understands and keeps clearly in mind the economic factors that produce high cover prices and small formats, he can't forget the massive pulps that once fell into his



hands for a quarter or less. Besides their greater weight, there was about them a general atmosphere of bounteous plenty. You could read for a while before coming to the end of the page, and you could decide which stories you planned to read that evening, instead of having no reason to make such a choice in a modern prozine that can be easily read from start to finish within an evening. Maybe the first step toward rehabilitation for the prozines would be to persuade the 70,000 fans whom The Committee persuaded to plug Star Trek to buy some prozines. A circulation of 70,000 copies would be ample to interest a lot of advertisers. High Fidelity and Hi Fi/Stereo Review are examples of current magazines that get along very well on circulations in that general area. They sell space to the manufacturers of audio components and recording companies; prozines with bigger circulations could employ advertising directors who could act persuasive with publishing firms that issue lots of science fiction books, firms like Edmund Scientific whose products would tend to interest the science-minded people who like science fiction, and a variety of other advertisers. No magazine can survive today without advertising, unless it's subsidized like technical journals, and prozines that are 99½% non-advertising are going to die for lack of this form of revenue.

Maybe I let my attention wander too long, but I didn't see a sign at the edge of Hagerstown that has been a local landmark. So highway improvements may have resulted in its removal at last. Years ago, the city of Hagerstown sent workmen out to the eastern boundary line to put up one of those "welcome to our city" signs. They got it at the very point where the city territory ends and the county rule begins, but they made one slight error. They put it on the shoulder closest to east-bound traffic, so its wording was visible only to vehicles that were driving away from town. Nobody seems to have noticed the mistake for months. Then people started laughing about it and the newspaper ran a photograph, suggesting that this was the wrong time to welcome travelers. Someone in the street department made a personal visit to the site and reported that he couldn't get permission to move it to the other side of the road, so it must stay where it was. In vain did geographically minded friends try to show him how it wouldn't even be necessary to dig a new hole, if the sign must be left on the south side of the road; all that was needed was to rotate the sign 180 degrees, so east-bound traffic would see only its bare backside and the vehicles approaching Hagerstown would be able to feel wanted if they had good vision among their occupants. But this was vain. The sign survived dualization of this section of Route 40, Hallowe'en raids when much more imposing signs got moved many miles, vehicles careening down the shoulder out of control, and political upheavals in City Hall.

In fact, as I watched the countryside flash by the bus window, I realized that quitting my job wouldn't prevent me from seeing this roadside with journalistic eyes for many years to come. It would take a long time before journalistic associations with almost every large building would grow dim. Here was the small industry where a worker got killed in a machine which another worker started up at the wrong moment, the owner never reported the tragedy to authorities, and we at the newspaper had the greatest difficulty convincing the sheriff's office that something had happened, then worming some information on the incident out of the owner. Just a year or two later, he got killed very rapidly and spectacularly in an accident caused by another stupid employe at almost the same spot.



There's the lane into the farm where just a few weeks ago, I'd agreed in an incautious moment to introduce a little novelty into the stereotyped sort of pictures normally run in preparation for the Hagerstown Fair. So I'd gone to this farm to take a picture of two little girls giving their lamb a cleaning in a bathtub full of water. If there are any photographers in the audience, I advise you urgently, try other forms of novelty to brighten up pictures. The lane is only a few feet from Cool Hollow Road's intersection. What, I wondered, had happened to the couple who used to live up that narrow road, in a rickety little frame house, with only one interest still flickering in their burned-out lives: buttons. They were mad about buttons, which seem to have a remarkable affinity for residents of this area, now that I think about it; the wife of the Episcopal rector became notorious for shoplifting buttons in dime stores many years ago, an activity that nobody ever officially recognized, but one that must have played its part in lowering the standing of the clergy throughout the city. This old couple obviously didn't have many financial resources to begin with and probably lavished most of them on their button collection, but they were kind-hearted and offered me a plate of their turnip greens, probably their only food of that day. I wasn't offered even a damaged button. A little further down the road you can turn off to reach one of my favorite visiting places. It's the closest thing we have around here to an orphans' home. The kids are almost exclusively bastards whose parents are very much alive but too worthless to be trusted with their care. The home is supported in part by income from investments, partly by contributions from the members of the church denomination which chooses its superintendent, and it gets an annual sum from the county. It's the only recipient of county funds that hasn't increased its demand over the years as expenses have gone up. I am the last person in the world to enjoy having lots of kids around me, and I'm perfectly aware that the majority of these youngsters won't stand a chance at happy lives when they leave this institution and try to make their own way in the world, because of the environment they endured before transfer to here and lack of a lot of close friends to advise and help them. The people consider it something of a triumph if a girl finds a job as a waitress when she leaves. But while they're there, the kids are apparently supremely happy, they haven't acquired the greed, big mouths and sophistication that make most kids in private families unendurable, and I suspect that a few pleasant years in a dreary life is as good a deed as society can do until humanity begins to behave humanely. If I should live long enough to survive the rest of my few remaining relatives, I suspect I'll want my money to go to this home, where it's likely to go for the kids' benefits, not for the purchase of fancier kitchen instruments and a new car for the superintendent.

This particular stretch of Route 40 is embarrassing evidence of the incompetency of the State Roads Commission through the ages. It was originally built before World War Two as the first lane of a dual highway. Wartime conditions prevented adding the second lane for a while. Then politics took up where the war left off. Meanwhile, other states began to build east-west toll roads, and then came the federal interstate highway system. By now Maryland highway authorities seemed to feel they'd be desecrating an old familiar tradition, if they constructed a dual road through this area. So now, the two dozen miles between Hagerstown and Frederick represent the only place between the Eastern Seaboard metropolitan areas and the Midwest where it's necessary to stop for a traffic control signal or



slow for a densely populated section. Interstate 70 is now under construction to take traffic from this deadly little stretch of road where motorists keep going at the 70 mph speed they'd maintained along the superhighway and crashes occur with deadly regularity. To culminate the moronic highway history, the state has continued to control construction along much of this portion of Route 40, because of the nebulous possibility of a second lane someday. The second lane will never be built, with the arrival of interstate highways which must follow shallower curves and climb gentler hills than this old road. So a year or two from now, this will be the loneliest road in the state, forsaken by the through traffic which will follow Interstate 70 and unneeded for local traffic because few homes exist along it and the businesses it now serves will be forced to move for lack of tourist patronage.

To get my mind from such gloomy thoughts, I broke out my MRU survival kit and began to read. One of the saddest things about being a fan in the United States is the low probability that you'll realize the existence and the excellence of this publication. I have promised to a certain fan a long article on German fanzines, so it wouldn't be proper to go into great detail here. This fan reminds me every year of the promise and maybe I'll get around to keeping it soon. But it's impossible to mention MRU here and dismiss it by explaining that it's the German equivalent of some English language fanzine. I can't think offhand of a familiar publication that has ever matched its somehow logical combination of the most diverse elements. It publishes enormous quantities of straight reviews and some science fiction. But it's also fearfully directed, replete with bright remarks at the most unexpected places, the best gag-type cartoons anywhere in fandom, reprints of borderline material from mundane publications, picture pages of excellent photographs taken at European cons, and then you suddenly encounter a science article that might have come out of an older Astounding. The reproduction is an unpredictable combination of mimeographing, dittoing, and litho or photo offset processes, and all this has been emerging from Munich regularly for years and years--the 96th and 97th issues reached me soon after the con. The former has the sort of cover that would have fitted perfectly into Innuendo. It's a reproduction of a photograph of a girl sitting on a chair, in the wildest state of elation, her arms flung high, her head thrown so far back that little except teeth is visible, and her already short skirt engaged in prodigious antics. A cascade of small fragments of paper rain down all about her. The floor is already half-covered, more paper fragments nestle on her bosom, and there is a little mountain on the partially visible typewriter on the table at the left. The caption has reference to another German fanzine which has good qualities but is somewhat single mindedly serious: "You, too, can relax with Pioneer!" I nominated MRU for a fan achievement award at the Nycon, knowing perfectly well that it wouldn't gain nearly enough support, but unwilling to let such excellence go unrecognized, just in case the con committee should decide to issue a complete list of all nominees. The most interesting thing about the issue before me now was, of all things, a Roumanian science fiction story. I couldn't be sure from the introduction by the editors which source it had come from, fannish or pro. But I decided aboard that bus, sliding steadily toward Baltimore, that if fanzines were beginning to emerge from Roumania, the apocalypse had arrived and all possible things had happened.



By now, we were ascending South Mountain, which looks healthier than its appearance in any late summer for many years, thanks to the abundant showers nature has bestowed upon this section. I should have kept my thoughts steadily on the fanzine before me now and the con that would be before my eyes in another day. But human nature is as weak in me as in many other sinners, and I deviated from duty sufficiently to wonder how fine the autumn leaves would be this autumn. I've read somewhere that the vividness of the colors is dependent to a great extent on how much moisture the trees have encountered during the previous season, and this has been borne out by quite mediocre fall colors in the recent drought years. This is not the best place to see autumn leaves in Western Maryland, fortunately, because few spots exist along the road where it is safe to pull over and stop for a while to drink in beauty. But Emerson was right about compensation: we gain fine autumn leaves and we lose a touch of science fiction when it rains frequently during the summer. Every recent summer until this one had threatened to turn into a genuine plot out of science fiction but had confined itself to being only a theme from science fiction, fortunately: weather control. The area peasantry had grown convinced during the drought summers that the weather was being manipulated and on several occasions came very close to staging a genuine insurrection, after government officials failed to pay too much attention to their charges. It had started long ago when nearby orchardists contracted with a weather control firm to prevent hailstorms. Farmers didn't object to the lack of hail, which can be almost as hard on corn and beans as on peaches and apples. But the non-orchardist rural residents quickly associated dry summers with hail prevention. The ruckus went on for years, there were a few more or less authenticated incidents of farmers trying to bring down small planes with high powered rifles, and even after the orchardists stopped hiring the firm, the bulk of the public believed that the orchard men were having thunderstorms broken up clandestinely: fruit requires much less rain than most crops for best results. Two summers ago, the wrath mysteriously transferred itself to contractors who now received all the threats and profanity that the orchardists had endured. The contractors were suspected of paying secret agents to prevent rain so they could make faster progress on road construction. The contractors replied that it wasn't so and even if it was, it would be foolish because it's as hard to build roads in completely rainless spells as during monsoons. Some heavy equipment was seriously sabotaged late one night and a wild rumor that a pilot had been arrested when his weather control plane made an emergency landing at the local airport caused the biggest local excitement since Mafeking was relieved. This summer, rains have been plentiful, the weather modification controversy has been forgotten, but life hasn't been dull. Torrential summer rainstorms had been almost unknown during the years when nearby residential developments were springing up and this summer their occupants discovered simultaneously that most of their developers hadn't bothered to arrange for proper drainage. Even though I like science fiction and have enjoyed some stories about weather control, I still feel more comfortable when surrounded by old, familiar mundane litigation over who should pay the bills when a cellar fills up with water or a lawn has been washed away.

And then we were beginning the dizzying plunge down the mountain side, all four hundred feet of it, into the fertile and beautiful



Middletown Valley. You will look uselessly for entries under this heading in reference books and tourists' guides to Maryland. Perhaps this results from a conspiracy established by the residents of the valley, to keep it from exploitation. It possesses no unique kind of scenery, historical things have not occurred in it, and its population has not grown nearly as fast as most of Maryland and the nation. Nevertheless, it is the closest thing I have seen in my limited travels around the northeast of this nation to the 18th and 19th century concepts of America, the pre-Babbitt national ideals, the American philosophy you'll find in McGuffey readers, America the Beautiful, and Hawthorne's fiction. I don't mean that the Middletown Valley has somehow escaped fast automobiles and television antennas on the houses. But it has remained primarily agricultural and small town in makeup. Most of its inhabitants have spent their lives in the valley, without being so fanatically loyal to it that they engaged in inbreeding. It might be possible to imagine that the settlers here were the pioneers who were just a little more daring than most folks but not foolhardy, thus they climbed the first mountain inland from the parts of Maryland which could be reached by navigable waters, but they didn't continue beyond that first mountain conquest. Their offspring must have had a psychological impulse to stay put, since there were mountains on two sides of them, the river to the southwest, and Pennsylvania's border disputes in the only geographically open direction. Today, the main roads bypass the largest towns in the valley, so the old folks who have put away a comfortable nestegg usually move off a farm into a small town in their later years, and for the sake of their comfort, the kids in these towns don't run quite as wild as they do in most small towns. The best general view of this valley is not from Route 40 but from Route 40-A, which has a scenic overlook just east of the top of Braddock Mountain, at Braddock Heights, unfortunately somewhat spoiled by a vile power line that loops like a snake into the direct path of the eye. I note that the population of Frederick County is supposed to increase at the rate of about 1,000 persons annually for the next few years. This is consoling, because it means not more than perhaps 150 or 200 more residents of this valley each year. The earth is good, and it can swallow them up as unobtrusively as it took over the original settlers.

Reflecting thus, I suddenly wondered how readily New York would swallow up a more temporary increase in population during the days to come. It is hard for a small town resident like me to keep in mind the minute effect a worldcon has on a big city, since even a state gathering of Elks or the VFW can create any number of crises in Hagerstown. Nobody ever mentions the matter in fanzines, but I have always felt that fandom's ability to have giant worldcons without making itself too conspicuous is an excellent proof that fandom is not the seething den of iniquity that some people think. Surely, if fans were as immature, exhibitionistic, dishonest, and split from reality as occasionally charged, a worldcon would by now have created local situations in even the biggest of cities that would have ended in overpopulation of the nearest lockup or front page scareheads in a newspaper or mass ejection of the whole shebang from the host hotel. Vast quantities of conreports in fanzines had exaggerated the things that really happen at fan meetings in my mind, and I'd been a trifle unsure about what I'd find at my first events, the Discon and two Phillycons. In reality I had found fans better



behaved, more sophisticated, more competent to handle the problems of a few days away from normal restraints, than any of the non-religious conventions I'd seen in Hagerstown or any newspaper convention, the only other sort of con I'd ever attended in another city.

But such considerations aside, it was obviously time for me to do some hard thinking, not about MRU or nature, but about what I wanted most to do at the worldcon. The bus had already taken me about twenty miles on my journey, there were only 240 miles to go, and it wouldn't do to miss certain opportunities I might find at the Nycon but nowhere else for years to come. Overriding everything else was the desire to closet myself with someone from Advent and find out if the fan history would ever appear. (Before leaving Hagerstown, I had been tempted to make up a little sign that I could wear dangling in front of me, something like this: "No, I don't know when it will be published. No, this isn't my first worldcon. Yes, I really have the seventh and eighth issues of Famous Funnies but they aren't for sale.") I also wanted to inquire about another writing project, in an attempt to find out who had bought two translations for which I'd been paid very many months previously. Chief among the old friends I wanted to see at the Nycon was old-time fan Langley Searles, for whom I'd bought a 78 rpm record in Hagerstown circa 1944. He'd paid me for it and promised to pick it up some day, but his only trip through Hagerstown since had been a dozen years ago when he stopped at the office and didn't have time for me to wind up a few details there, go home, and get the record for him. I know how a cock had preyed on one man's mind and I'd hate to have Langley engage in a legal battle with my executors over the ownership of that record. There was no real reason to believe that Ray Bradbury might attend the worldcon, but I had lingering hope that memories of the very young Bradbury who had gone to the first Nycon might impel him to make the trip. He is one of the few pros I've always wanted to meet, both for the sake of common days in long-ago fandom and because I still think he's a great writer, no matter how far he has fallen from fannish grace. Every dip in the road caused my back to ache a little harder, a warning that I wouldn't be able to buy anything from the hucksters or at the auction which would be difficult to mail to myself safely, but another irrational thought came to me: by some wild circumstances, an old fan might decide to let go of the earliest FAPA mailings at this event. There isn't much out of fandom that I'd pay a premium for, but I would bid desperately on these, if they completed my collection of FAPA bundles. I wanted to call Harold Piser and make one more big effort to talk him into coming to the Nycon and see for himself that fans aren't as terrible as he imagines. I also wondered if I would have the courage to try to pay Dick Bergeron a visit; my reputation as a hermit just might be good enough to cause him at least to let me look at him for a moment, even if he didn't invite me in. Maybe some ancient fan would reveal to me the joke that had caused Meyer to be a catchword in California fandom for the better part of a decade. It should be much easier to expand my personal acquaintanceships among previously untapped lodes of fandom, particularly the MIT-centered fans and those from the Washington area whom I'd grown to know well through fanzines but not in person. Of course, Norm Clarke would be there....

But, inexperienced as I am in writing worldcon reports, I find that a slight miscalculation brings me to the end of the available space with the conreport not yet completed. You'll have to wait.

*I hope this wasn't just an excuse for a late de facit*