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Horizons, if memory serves, is the name of this FAPazine. This is the November, 1976, issue, unless they've converted the calendar to the metric system. It is volume 38, number 1, FAPA number 142, and whole number 148. Pressing my luck, I'll also venture a guess that it's mostly the work of Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, U.S.A. Mimeography is by the Coulsons.

### In the Beginning

The Fantasy Amateur: Maybe the change in the secretary-treasurer-ship should also involve a change in the custom of requiring wait listers to acknowledge the FA. It seems unfair to require waiting listers to do something twice as often as members, and the large proportion of people who drop from FAPA after only six or eighteen months' membership indicates that this custom doesn't guarantee lasting interest in membership. I'm afraid we may have lost some potentially valuable members because they were dropped from the waiting list for lack of response. Daglocke: I've been troubled with that inability to think of a word I need since an operation five years ago. Maybe I got too much anesthetic or maybe some memory cells dropped dead of fright. ' ' I wonder if deja vu sensations could come from having dreamed a similar experience. That vague sense of familiarity is just about as vague as the memories that dreams leave in the conscious mind. Damballa: Some fans already have acquired stencil scanning equipment. Victoria Vayne and Joanne Burger are two who come immediately to mind. I think NESFA also have a jointly owned one. ' ' Chuck sent me advance copies of the photographic pages, asking me to guess. I thought the fellow fighting over the art might have been either Rothman or Wollheim, and I thought I sensed something Deglerish about the one with the pencil. ' ' There's no real need for an amendment involving first class mailing of mailings to those who want to pay extra for the privilege. It could be done by agreement with the sec-treas or official editor, just as one or two of the Australians already pay for airmailing their bundles. I Watched &c.: Just guessing, I suspect that Curt Lawrence was inserting or removing paper at his typewriter in that sentence which Bob Vordeman quotes. ' ' Did Dr. Thompson have anything good to say about anyone or anything in his book on the 1972 campaign? Remember, a lot of people have discovered that it's profitable to feed the American public's appetite for all-encompassing debunking and downgrading and they pander to that taste wholeheartedly. I also note a discouraging tendency for fandom to be as overly critical of worldcon committees as the media is toward olympic officials. Suppose some year or other a worldcon committee gets so sick and tired of all the abuse that it unanimously resigns two weeks before the con's beginning? ' ' Montgomery Ward still sells good-quality mimeograph stencils for a reasonable \$4.79 per quire. But Gestencil-type headings aren't stocked. Ultimate South: Mike O'Brien will undoubtedly regret some day giving away so many books he had in childhood. Such things take on much importance to many people in later years. The Rambling Fap: Maybe Sam Moskowitz would like to have that FAPA correspondence. I seem to remember reading somewhere that he has acquired some collections of correspondence. Or Ackerman might want to add it to his archives. ' ' I've tried not to be too blunt about it, but I don't invite fans to overnight here. I never had a really bad experience



in the years when I catered to overnighiting fans. But there are various reasons why I altered policy, with no exceptions. '' The way Gregg was unknown to so many people he met at his goh Westercon is typical of fandom today. It's so big and split up into so many areas of special interest that nobody knows the name or face of most of the people he encounters at a big con, no matter how great the fame of the person encountered. The tepid reception that Gregg's talk encountered is another aspect of the same basic fact: most people who go to conventions don't know enough about fanzine fandom and fannish legends to understand what was meant by most of the talk. Fapanzapabits: John's description of himself freed from his regular job causes me to ponder again just what I'll do the first day of my retirement. The way things have gone for me in recent years, I'll probably mark the great occasion by having visits from three emissaries of splinter faiths who want to convert me, suffering a headache that will prevent me from undertaking some monumental new activity suited to retired status, trying to find some substitute as a Christmas gift for someone whose intended present hadn't been delivered by the mail order firm where I ordered it, and finding the television programs I particularly wanted to enjoy on that first night of freedom pre-empted by a three-hour address by the president. Time-Travel Questionnaire: I didn't fill it out and mail it in. I'm not so purist a completist that I refuse to surrender FAPA ballots. But I don't like to give up a part of the mailing whose contents can't be reconstructed from information elsewhere in the mailing. Don Miller probably lost a number of possible responses for this reason. It's better to put two copies of anything which is intended to be mailed back in the mailing. The Best Lines Are Winged: Maybe Dean or some other CB enthusiast in FAPA could answer some questions that are bothering me. Why do people consider the CB slang and code fascinating while outsiders condemn fans for using their special fannish terms in fanzines? Why don't CBers conduct nine-tenths of their conversations over the telephone? Most of them seem to talk from car-to-home or home-to-home, suffering with CB equipment the transmission uncertainties, interruptions, and lack of privacy which telephoning would obviate. Why is it legal to operate CB equipment in a motor vehicle in states which have laws requiring drivers to give their full time and attention to driving while operating a vehicle on a public road or street? '' It's easy to figure out why Shakespeare made his female characters equal or superior to the males. He knew boys would be playing the roles. '' Someone at the office once persuaded me that the best typing posture comes from sitting with the rump about three feet below the keyboard's level. It felt comfortable but conspicuous, and besides, it was hard to figure out where to put my notes so I could see them without getting a stiff neck. Kitchen Sink: And I thought I was eccentric because I'm usually reading three books on any given day and require an average of a week to finish all three. I'm afraid I'd crack up completely if I tried Don's 25-books-at-once idea: exhaustion from picking up and laying down so many books, nervous strain from trying to remember where I'd put the other 24 while reading one, and many other awful troubles would ensue. Notes from Arinam: Something strange seems to have happened to my copy. The top inch of the first page is faded into a brownish hue, exactly like a fanzine which has been allowed to protrude slightly from a stack of stuff on the attic for a dozen years or so. I know FAPA mailings have been slow in arriv-



ing but it didn't seem that bad. '' I not only favor capital punishment, but I feel that judges should have the right to decree capital punishment when they feel the circumstances warrant it in convictions for any crime which put the victim's life in danger: assault with intent to kill, armed robbery, abduction at gunpoint, and so on. If the criminal endangered someone's life he should be in danger of losing his own life. So far this year two Hagerstown persons have been killed when something unexpected happened during grocery store robberies, getting the criminals excited enough to start shooting. I think most of them would limit themselves to harmless sneak thievery if they knew that gun-waving during a crime could mean the death penalty. '' I've heard the declining SAT scores blamed on the fact that a greater proportion of the student body takes the tests nowadays. According to this theory, only the very smartest kids in school used to take them. I'm not completely convinced that it's the full explanation. Mostly, I think, it's due to schools' attempting to teach in too many different ways on too many subjects. Splendiferous Stories Quarterly: If waving a copy of Analog is the customary way to identify fans, I should have been recognizable from quite a distance the other day, carrying no fewer than fifty issues down three blocks of Summit Avenue. I happened across the stack of recent issues at a yard sale on my way home, didn't have the car with me, and just made it home before the one loop of rope around the magazines let loose. (Come to think of it, maybe no fan would be willing to consider anyone carrying fifty Analogs a real fan. But they cost me only a buck, so I took the chance of ostracism in case anyone in fandom had driven by.) Floccipaucinihilipilification: I share Mike's unease when I know speaking or some such obligation awaits me at a gathering. But I no longer thirst for the egoboo that comes from such obligations. So I've just stopped saying yes to people. Within the past week, for instance, I was asked to do something at a coming worldcon and to talk to a mundane history group in a Pennsylvania city. I know I would feel proud of myself after it was all over but this retrospective glow doesn't make up, in my estimation, for the strain on the nerves beforehand. '' Meanwhile, if Mike thinks that spending a weekend at a con cuts into his loc-writing time, I can't wait until he writes his first book-length historical work on fandom and discovers what that does to his loc obligations. The ApwruX Quarterly: Bruce's rundown of the FAPA roster and the large number of members he knows nothing of is good confirmation for my theory that large quarterly apas draw from too disparate areas in fandom for the old cohesion of interests to survive. '' Gary Doerr is lucky that all those telephone calls came only during FAPA crises. Here in Hagerstown lives a man named Harold Maile. He has a telephone. The local newspapers are the Morning Herald and Daily Mail, published by the Herald-Mail Company. Poor Harold's telephone rings all through the year, year after year, when out of town people get a long distance information operator to give them the newspapers' number. '' FAPA dues were cut from the official figure because small mailings of recent years weren't taking so much postage and the treasury was growing too fast. Snickersnee: Bob's description of his desire to get the traveling over with even when his trip to Morocco was beginning is uncannily like my own sentiments when I go somewhere. Seeds & Stems: FATE was Fantasy Amateur Tape Exchange.



After all these years, I can't remember specific topics discussed. But they were a general mishmash like those in FAPAazines, although not necessarily the same topics. ' ' I think I discovered something unique in the nation among the painted fireplugs in a nearby city. Among all the Revolutionary War big shots, there was Herbert Hoover. The Hog on Ice: I wish Creath luck but I don't think he'll ever convince Speer he's wrong about anything. The new Montgomery Ward catalog arrived a couple months ago, again offering old-fashioned 8 mm movie film for sale and processing service on it. I was tempted to Xerox that page and send it to Speer, in memory of our dispute on that matter some mailings back, then realized I would still be unable to win the debate. ' ' Those four reasons for creating fanzines sound quite accurate. So why are most FAPA members so reluctant to take advantage of the opportunities which fanzine production provides? ' ' Occasionally I find on the copyright page of a book a warning that the volume may not be resold in any other binding. I wonder if that claim has any legal standing? If copyright can prevent rebinding and resale, then copyright should be able to wipe out the entire second-hand book trade, rebound or not. Theatre Scrapbook: Surprisingly interesting to me, even though I will probably never see the Tulsa production. I get the impression that it resembles to some extent the drama which is offered by the company depicted in W. C. Fields' The Old-Fashioned Way. Cacoethes: I hate those guidebooks to antiques which list prices. They are a major reason why inflation has hit most collecting hobbies so hard. One person somewhere in the nation wants a badly overpriced item badly enough to buy it, after the owner had been trying for years to get rid of it. Then that price goes into a guidebook and dealers everywhere raise their prices on that same item to equal it or maybe exceed it. I've often bought thick sheaves of sheet music for two or three bucks. Early this year the local library shelved a book listing values for sheet music. Now it suddenly costs a dollar or more per item. Synapse: There's a St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Keedysville, about a dozen miles from Hagerstown. I seem to remember finding the same gentleman honored on other Protestant churches in surrounding parts of Maryland. ' ' Speer missed my point about the greater difficulty of determining temperature changes with the celsius scale. It takes longer to determine if it's getting warmer or colder if you're listening to the radio and trying to decide if you should wear your heavy overcoat this morning, or if you're watching the bank's time-temperature flasher to determine if that slush is destined to freeze up soon. My thermostat responds to a one Fahrenheit degree change. Besides, if ordinary people are going to be required to convert to metrics, why shouldn't the big brains suffer the same fate by scrapping the non-metric 360-degree division of the circle in favor of something divisible by an even one hundred? ' ' Now that Speer has asked about the identity of Al Hirt, I no longer feel quite so embarrassed about the time I wondered long ago in FAPA what someone meant by "short-arm inspection". Kittle Pitching Hubble de Shuff: I don't quite see the point in this. Surely Don Miller's reputation is such that anyone intensely interested in game-playing or mystery fiction will know about his fanzines devoted to those topics. Those uninterested in those fields will hardly get enough out of these excerpts to spark an interest, although the Nero Wolfe chronology might be useful to anyone wondering how many books were written about these characters.



## A Tale of a Tube

I never looked for a time to come when I'd write page after page about television. It seemed the written equivalent of the conversational act of desperation, remarks about the weather. But then Harlan Ellison wrote about television, so if he can't think of more original subject matter, it seems foolish for me to refrain. There was the time not too many years ago when I wouldn't have watched the tube often enough to provide fodder for this kind of video cud-chewing. But during the past two or three years I've made a few exceptions to my old rigidity which had saved me so much time for other things in the past.

Then there's the added excuse of the Olympics. I get the impression that everyone considers it worthy and proper to have watched the Olympics steadily, no matter how rarified a person's tastes may be in other respects. At the other end of the esthetic scale, it's surprising how many people who normally enjoy only the most violent sports or no sports at all were addicted to the Olympics this year. I can't imagine why this should be so. Almost everything included in the Olympics turns up eventually on series like Wide World of Sports, without producing such high ratings and so many conversations. The international aspect hardly seems to qualify as the reason for the Olympics' success on television. The international hockey matches seem to have been semi-duds in the cities where they were televised and beauty contests involving women from many nations never arouse the interest of the Miss America pageant. There's the added paradox that the Olympics seem designed to include all the forms of competition that are least popular in the United States. Presumably, the United States would win many more medals if internationally popular sports like tennis, golf, and baseball were included.

So without understanding why, I watched the great bulk of the telecasts during the summer, and missed during the winter competition only some things which work interfered with. This year, I noticed a curious change in my attitude which was just barely visible in my psyche four years ago. Now I'm rooting for the United States athletes in most of the events, instead of wishing as I used to do that those from the little nations of the world would win in everything. I still retain partisanship in the women's races for East Germany, however; they look so much more healthy and prettier.

I was gratified that ABC refrained this year from putting total emphasis on controversy. The only thing that was grossly overplayed was the brawl which some United States hockey players started in a tavern after a game. Warner Wolf, one of the few persons in the world whom I admit to loathing, made it seem quite as big an event as the tragedy involving the Israelis four years ago at Munich. But I still can't believe that any useful purpose is served by even the reduced overemphasis on certain controversial matters. The majority of the African nations pulled out of the Olympics. This was a big story and deserved the amount of attention it received when it broke. But there were no subsequent developments of any stature, nobody thought of something original to say about the effects of this pullout after twenty-four hours had passed, and what is the useful purpose served by reviewing and rehashing it, day after day? Comparisons of the past accomplishments of the departed athletes with those actually competing would have been mean-



ingful but they didn't do that consistently.

In general, I think I prefer the winter contests to the summer events. There is nothing in the summer quite as improbable as the luge, for instance. Like every other ungelded male among my acquaintances, I fell desperately in love with Dorothy Hamill as both a skater and a human being. It's so nice to see a celebrity who doesn't disguise her shortsightedness and who is so careless about pratfalls when it's just practice. Maybe my preference for the winter games is predicated in part on the fact that they don't involve water sports. This is a purely personal quirk which I don't expect anyone else to possess, but I sense a nightmarish situation when I watch the swimming races. All that frantic flailing of the bodies and the snail's pace at which the athletes go forward: it's the very sensation that we all experience at one time or another in those bad dreams where we're being chased by something dreadful and we're unable to make much progress for no apparent reason. I also felt uncomfortable during the diving competition because the camera generally cut away as soon as the athlete had submerged below the surface of the pool. I couldn't get it through my head that the contestants were coming safely back to the surface after each dive, so I had the constant suspicion that we were being spared the harrowing rescue operation. As a non-diver, I can't believe that anyone after one of those jumps can get back into the atmosphere without the help of **rescue**. Worse yet, my accumulation of phobias continues to grow, and if I live to watch the 1980 Olympics, I'll probably imagine danger from sharks during the water sports in Moscow.

Maybe it's newly refound patriotism that makes me genuinely moved every time they play the Star-Spangled Banner for a gold medalist. But it might be just the opposite. Every four years bring another batch of reasons for dissatisfaction with this nation. So each successive Olympics might cause me to sense with greater force the contrast between what is and what might be. When a United States of American athlete has finished first through his own ability in peaceful competition with the world, it seems like my childhood visions of why this was a great nation, the simple sentiments I used to hear and see and sense when I was small and pretended to conduct the Hagerstown Municipal Band when it played the National Anthem at the start of each Sunday afternoon concert in the town park.

I watched a great deal of baseball this summer, despite increasing dexterity of friends and acquaintances at their old trick of paying me a visit ten seconds before the first pitch of every particularly desirable game. But ABC, after such commendable work with the Olympics, committed sheer mayhem on Monday night baseball by obtaining rights from NBC. That unspeakable Wolf turned up there, too. Worse, ABC lost faith in Bob Prince, an absolute genius at play-by-play baseball who requires, however, some getting used to. Admittedly, people unfamiliar with his style were puzzled or angered by his elliptical commentary during those first weeks. If ABC had stuck with him through a half-season, he would have become as much a national favorite as Don Meredith. Instead, the network started to experiment, cutting back on his play-by-play, realigning the announcing teams, and worst of all, breaking its telecasts to present segments of the backup game, and vice



versa for stations carrying the backup telecast. This was exasperating in the extreme. ABC seems not to have grasped the basic fact that baseball is a game of individual players, and that the viewer is interested in things other than the final score. The baseball fan wants to see how the batter who struck out on three pitches the last time up fares the next time he faces the pitcher, he wants to confirm or erase his suspicion that the shortstop has lost his ability to go to his right smoothly, and there are many other things of interest in the inning or two that get lost during these cutaways, even if there is no scoring.

The ABC Monday night baseball telecasts also suffered from a growing malady which seems to affect all forms of sports on the tube: too much gimmickry in the control room. The instant replay was a fine innovation when it was used to repeat climactic plays and to provide more looks at a controversial decision by an official. It becomes a nerve-racking nuisance when it is invoked after almost every bit of action, no matter how routine it may have been. The instant replay overuse is particularly detrimental in baseball telecasts, because there is less time in baseball between bits of action than in other sports. Time after time this year, a network's telecast of baseball has missed important plays which occurred before the instant replay could be completed. There is also too much emphasis on different angles in the camera work. The closeup of the batter as he awaits the pitch and swings at it may make the director feel that he is being creative, varying the normal shot covering both pitcher and batter. But it makes the baseball fan unhappy because he doesn't know what kind of pitch it was. Replays in slow motion are valuable in baseball in certain disputed plays. But in general, I think baseball is the sport which is least suited to slo mo. Some pitchers look so grotesque when their delivery is shown in slow motion that you feel nervous all during the game, wondering if their bodies will last nine innings of such contortions. There's the added objection that slow motion reruns take away the bang-bang speed which is part of baseball's appeal, making it look as if baserunners and fielders are jaking it.

I've been trying again this fall to recover the interest in football that I possessed when I was a teen-ager. But it just won't come back and I'm finalizing my formerly tentative conclusion that I liked football then because I was too stupid to know better. What happened on the Monday when ABC resumed NFL telecasts is typical. I'd spent two and a half hours straining my optics at the dim picture from a UHF station ninety miles away which was carrying a critical Phillies game. When it finished, I decided it was too late for extensive fanac and switched to the football game, then nearing halftime. I never saw the halftime arrive because less than five minutes after I'd switched to the football game, I was sound asleep.

The Phillies telecasts had given me some cause for concern in the spring. Byrum Saam, who had the longest term of service as a major league play-by-play man, retired last fall. I wasn't sure if I could adjust in just one season to some stranger who would take his place. Whether by design or accident, Andy Musser who got the job sounds uncannily like Saam, both in syntax and in vocal equipment. Andy looks to be in his thirties so there's a good chance that there will continue to be a Saam-style voice of



the Phillies as long as it makes any difference to me. In another special dispensation of providence, Richie Ashburn continues to be the Phils' color man. It seems inevitable that a network will get him eventually. Meanwhile, I can enjoy. Three times this season on pre-game and post-game shows, he renewed his old argument with Duke Snider, who now broadcasts the Montreal games, over the question of whether Duke really caught a long fly ball which Willie Jones hit about twenty years ago. Richie also told again this year his narrative of how Sam Jethroe, the old Milwaukee outfielder, once lost a popfly in the moon during a night game. Entirely new this year was Richie's account of something he had done one day while engaging in his specialty of fouling off pitches. One of his fouls hit a woman in the stands, breaking her glasses, fracturing her nose, and inflicting serious cuts around her face and head. Richie felt bad about it, but it wasn't really his fault, the game must go on, so he fouled off some more pitches and the last of them scored a direct hit on the same woman as she was being carried carefully on a stretcher to an ambulance. "She keeps writing me letters," Richie insists.

Still unexplained is a major miracle involving baseball telecasts. In common with most Hagerstown residents, I've never been able to get good reception on the Baltimore channel which carries the Orioles' games. A local radio station's FM transmitter in the east end of town produces some sort of harmonic or something which afflicts channel 13 for those who are more or less in a direct line with it and the Baltimore transmitter. There is distortion of the picture and if the fine tuning is adjusted to create a minimum of picture distortion, the audio provides the local radio station's records instead of channel 13's voice track. Some of the Orioles' games are carried by a Washington channel, fortunately. In the past I'd usually made do with those games and the one or two evenings each summer when thunderstorms had knocked the local FM transmitter off the air long enough to enjoy the ball game on channel 13. But one evening in the middle of this summer, I decided to risk spraining a retina and watch the game on channel 13. The picture looked strange and when I tried to improve it, it suddenly transformed into living color, sharp and snowless reception, even though there hadn't been a thunderbolt for a week. The next night, reception was again perfect. The miracle hasn't gone away since then. I was reluctant to make direct inquiries about what might have happened, lest the local FM station's personnel might be alerted by my query that a diode had shorted or something in the local transmitter. The FM station has changed its call letters but it's still using the same frequency. I seem to detect a slight reduction in the strength of its signal on my little portable FM set. So maybe the station has altered its transmission pattern to send most of its output in a different direction, creating the improvement in reception. Or maybe there has been a mutation in my television set which has given it previously unknown capabilities on that one channel. Other people have better sense than to try to watch channel 13 with all that interference, so I don't know if improvement has occurred in other local homes.

Again this year, The Waltons is the one regular series that I watch regularly. This is an old habit of mine, rationing myself to just one regular series in order to spare myself real addiction to the television set. I continue to find The Waltons impressive, and



this year has produced a welcome change from last year's ominous overemphasis on John-Boy, which threatened to transform the series into remakes of the Andy Hardy movies. There are things that I could wish improved. There must be some place close enough to Hollywood on a mountaintop where the cast could be taken for two or three episodes per year in wintry landscape with snow in the exteriors. Maybe the producers think Virginia has the same climate as southern Florida. Depending on how far up a mountainside the Walton home is supposed to be, leaves in the surrounding landscape should start turning color and falling by mid-October at the latest and there should be snow regularly from November through mid-March. It just doesn't seem right for all the college scenes to show greenness everywhere, nobody wearing anything heavier than a sweater. I also find it increasingly bothersome that the Walton home seems to have no apparent source of heat. There aren't fireplaces in every room. No radiators for steam heat or registers for hot air heat are visible. The stove in the kitchen should throw out considerable warmth, but not enough to reach in the remainder of the dwelling. Yet bedroom scenes when someone is sick or retiring for the night usually cause a blanket or quilt to be put on the bed. Then there's the unavoidable problem caused by the longevity of the series. The children are getting rather long in the tooth and one of the boys even seems to be developing a bald spot.

But those are minor difficulties. The basic appeal of the series remains, although it represents a basic difficulty for many persons because of its rarity on television. Love is the thing which seems to puzzle and annoy those who dislike The Waltons. These people seem uncomfortable or uncomprehending when they encounter real love, not the mild affection or the urge to procreate which are usually substituted on television and in many homes for love. It's a shame that the producers of the many series which tried and failed to duplicate the success of The Waltons didn't realize that this was its secret ingredient. They imitated all the other elements like a big family or hard times or rural surroundings, not understanding that these are just side issues.

There was one absolutely awful new episode on The Waltons this year. That was the one which caused Olivia and two of the children to get lost in the forest. It caused Olivia to go totally out of character, behaving like a moron. Any woman who lived in rural Virginia would know the basic ways to avoid wandering in circles, as the trio did all through the episode. Moreover, they would know better than to be afraid of that bear they encountered. Black bears were the only kind left in Virginia in the 1930's and they are of all wild creatures the least belligerent unless some idiot tries to take a cub away in its mother's presence or somehow corners the bear and begins to torment it. But there were many good new episodes to compensate. I particularly liked the one in which we finally learned what really happened to Grandpa Walton on San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War, played exactly right, so it didn't become sentimental. One of my favorite episodes was rerun this year, the dance marathon one. It seems to capture the atmosphere and general appearance of a walkathon much better than They Shoot Horses, Don't They?, and its low-key ending is far superior to the unmotivated tragedy with which the movie ends.



I admire Jane Fonda for many reasons, but I do believe that the obscure Deirdre Lenihen outacted her like all getout, looking just right for the part of the girl who insists on enduring every indignity of the dance contest because she just doesn't want to stay in an obscure Virginia town any longer.

My movie-watching probably slackened somewhat this year. It was partly the result of a courageous renunciation on a number of occasions when I wanted to watch a film but felt it would be cheating when there were so many other things that should be done. But the scheduling and policies of the television stations which provide decent reception in Hagerstown had something to do with it, too. One particular cause for concern is what has happened to the late show tradition in this area. I've checked program listings in newspapers from big cities in several parts of the nation and I couldn't find any evidence that the situation around here is part of a general trend. I used to watch one or two movies a week via the late show when I could choose among three or four different films offered on various channels. They started at 11 and 11:30, finishing in time for me to see the end and still get up and go to work in the morning. Gradually this form of innocent merriment has been eroded. Now two channels available here offer the same thing, the CBS late movie, at 11:30 except on the nights when it is delayed by a news special or by a Kojak rerun. The only other late shows that I can pick up on weeknights begin at 1 a.m. and 1:10 a.m. (This omits consideration of the ABC 11:30 network slot, which used to feature films but is now polluted with crime show reruns, beauty contests, and various other specials.) The situation isn't much better on weekends. I can't imagine why the late show should be delayed so long on those two channels. It's hardly fear of competition from the CBS movie at 11:30, because that network isn't offering much of great interest. There must be a fair quantity of people in the Baltimore area who can watch through the small hours because they work the second shift or don't work at all, but in Washington most people must go to work in the morning. Those newspapers from other cities indicate that it's still possible to choose among three or four different late shows at a sane hour in most areas where plenty of channels can be picked up.

But the movie situation isn't much better at other times. A Baltimore station has dropped its morning film on weekdays and a Washington station no longer shows an early afternoon film on weekdays. These changes don't affect me because I'm rarely able to watch television for any length of time on weekdays, until after dark. But I'm afraid the changes are symptoms of more erosion of films on television to come. They have been replaced by the items which make even less demand on the intellect than a bad Hollywood film: mostly kid cartoons and old sitcom reruns. Quite possibly, station managers are convinced that the public no longer has the ability to remember the course of events in any dramatic offering that lasts more than an hour. The ultimate luxury, that of watching movies on the local stations which provide perfect reception, rarely comes. The local public broadcasting station has its scheduling controlled by state authorities and they almost never schedule a film. The local commercial station has gone in big for religious programming which now clutters up the hours when movies were sometimes shown. Of course, the prime time network movie situation



is the same here as everywhere else in the nation: none too good. I don't feel the prejudice toward made-for-TV movies that some people do. But I'm tired of made-for-TV movies which are meant solely as guinea pigs toward the establishment of a future regular series or are vulgar exploitations of real life events or consist solely of auto chases.

So there's nothing to be done except to hope that whatever form the video recordings take when they go on the market, they will make movies available from all decades, not just a few recent successes, and that the discs will prove so successful that a really big catalog of offerings will quickly become available. Even a complete Julie Andrews addict like me can't be satisfied with that one TV showing of The Sound of Music and can't find it fit and proper to pay fifty bucks for a super-eight version which has been cut down to 375 feet; not when the entire film might become available for less money than that on discs.

The most bitter disappointment of the television year for me was the coverage of the first unmanned Mars spaceship's landing. I assume it was the same elsewhere as it was here: the networks cut away just about the time the first pictures started to come in. To complete my misery, I watched the wrong network for most of the coverage that existed and switched to another just as Ray Bradbury was receiving thanks for having done such a fine commentary job. After that disgusting morning, I no longer made any particular effort to get news of what was happening on Mars through television. The little that I did see convinced me that coverage continued to be amateurish and inadequate. I have no idea whether the chiefs or the Indians should be blamed. But somebody or maybe everybody seemed to be striving for the impression that man's first exploration of another planet was just the sort of tidbit that should be used to fill an empty twenty seconds of time on any newscast when such an idle part of a moment happened to turn up. We marvel now at the troubles Columbus had getting backing and credence five centuries ago. I wonder what people will think in the 25th century when they search through video tape archives for the tiny bits of coverage given to the start of interplanetary adventures for the human race? The big difference will be in the greater awareness of how the people behaved. We know only the names, sometimes not even that much, of those who were indifferent or hostile to Chris. Five centuries in the future, everyone will see the faces and hear the voices and know all about every network announcer and analyst who ignored or barely mentioned the start of the interplanetary era.

On the other hand, I am solely to blame for another video fiasco. As every faithful Horizons reader should know, my code of television behavior permits me to watch anything Kim Darby appears in, new or rerun. I'm usually successful in my efforts to preserve on audio tape the soundtrack of her television manifestations. So the magnitude of my transgression should be clear when I confess that I neither saw every episode of Rich Man, Poor Man, nor did I get any of its dialog and music on my old Wollensak. An unexpected visitor forced me to miss the first episode. The TV Guide listing for the second episode gave no indication that she would be among the cast involved that night, so I skipped that episode voluntarily, learning later that she had been prominent in it. I managed to watch most of the remaining episodes but didn't



tape sound for any of them. By then, the sensationally high ratings achieved by the first episodes had been publicized. This convinced me that ABC would rerun the whole series soon to capitalize on the public interest. When that happened, I reasoned, I should be able to get the whole series on one 2,400' reel of tape in proper order, for easier listening later on. So ABC didn't repeat the series and I've found nothing to lead me to believe that it will be offered again before the spinoff weekly series begins. And that new weekly series with new performers in some of the roles will probably destroy all hope of rerun for the original series, lest it confuse the viewing public by the changes of faces and figures.

Amid all these miseries, there was some consolation on the tube this year. The trend toward resurrection of very old television offerings continued. One Washington station is now offering Burns and Allen five nights a week, for instance. The same channel seems to have hit the jackpot with the Honeymooners series. I don't care too much for that one, but others seem to like it, and for a while the station was presenting two episodes each evening. I also detect a slight improvement in the choice of more recent series chosen for rerunning. The Odd Couple is another non-favorite to me, but it's better than things like Mod Squad which had been more prominent in recent years. One curious phenomenon which may or may not be limited to stations in this area is the craze for Room 222. It seems to offer itself at least once an hour on some channel or other, all day long. This is strange because it hardly appeals to the small pre-school kids toward whom the daytime reruns seem otherwise to be directed.

This was the first time since a television set has been in the house that I watched absolutely nothing from the political conventions. I just didn't have the heart to sit through the totally predictable nonsense. There's always the chance that someone will get the reels mixed up when you're watching a rerun; there isn't even that hope for a surprise when the Democrats and Republicans are in session. My only concession to the presidential issue was to turn on my bedside radio the night the Republicans finally began calling the roll of states, just in case the networks and news services had somehow been misled about Reagan's strength. I fell asleep before I found out.

All this sounds as if I'm almost as anti-TV as Redd Boggs. But I don't really feel that way. Despite all the inadequacies of the medium, I feel toward it much the same as if I were employed in an office with an extremely lovely and congenial secretary constantly hovering around me. The temptation is tremendous. Time after time, I've gotten through all the things that absolutely must be done in a day and found myself inclined to turn on the television set and sit down in front of it and watch whatever came on the channel to which it happened to be tuned until bedtime. Maybe there's a stimulus of a psychic nature to do that, resulting from the fact that such vast quantities of the American public indulge in that very sort of conduct night after night. In The House Guests, John D. MacDonald confesses to a weakness of this sort after a hard stretch of writing. So I'm not alone. Intellectually, I know that falling into the habit of constant, unthinking TV-watching would be fatal to fanaticism, might cause me to pick up too much weight, would leave me too mentally lazy to concentrate on good music or books. But it's the easy way out and I might be happier and less likely to suffer a nervous breakdown if I yielded.



There's also the very real advantage of tube addiction involving conversation. My failure to attend college, my lack of a razor-sharp reasoning ability, my undependable memory, such things don't handicap me nearly as much in the task of holding my own in conversation as does my ignorance of most of the current television series and their stars. And every time I mentally kick myself nowadays for not having listened to the radio more during its golden age, I realize perfectly well that if I should live another twenty years or so, I'll be just as furious with myself for having skipped all the wonderful things that I might have watched on television during the 1970's.

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(Summer, 1953, issue of Grotesque, by Ed Martin)



## The Book Stops Here

There is rarely anything unexpected and different in the day's sheaf of mail. Almost always, there are a couple of fan-zines which will need to be loosed if I can ever find time to read them, several bulk mail items which aren't worth the bother of being opened, a letter or two asking me when I will write a new book about fan history, and perhaps a press release. So much of the mail addressed to me at the office in connection with the job has been stolen that I've arranged to get the more important stuff addressed to my home.

But once in a while there's an unforeseen item. The most recent was a copy of *What'll They Think of Last?*, an H. L. Gold collection whose existence was unknown to me. It came as a gift from a certain kind old-timer in fandom, stirring old memories of both him and *Galaxy*. Among the things that I know I'll never accomplish but still can dream about is the creation of an extremely long article, something like Alva Rogers' paeon to golden age *Astounding*. Mine would deal with the first half-dozen or so years of *Galaxy*. Those years of that title are almost always overlooked when fans talk or write about the great prozines of the past. But in some ways, those years of *Galaxy* under Gold must have been almost as important in the history of science fiction as the first decade of *Astounding* under Campbell. Gold seems to have angered a lot of authors for various reasons. He never catered to fans through a letter column. His illnesses prevented him from becoming a familiar figure at conventions. They may be some of the reasons why the early *Galaxy* years have gone into eclipse. But I suspect that eventually they'll be recognized both for their fictional contents and for the sway that those contents exercised on the whole field of science fiction writing. Meanwhile, it's very nice to have this kind of hardcover souvenir in the form of a collection of Gold's non-fiction, mostly taken from *Galaxy*.

It didn't occur to me when I read these items in their original appearances. But re-reading them one after the other in this form, I suddenly imagine that a great fanzine writer and editor was lost when Horace became a successful professional. He has the fannish sort of mind, curiosity about recondite facts, wild flights of fancy from some prosaic basic assumptions, the willingness to keep exploring all the possibilities of some idea time after time. For that matter, a few fans bob up in this collection because they wrote to Gold despite the lack of a loc section in *Galaxy*, and he mentioned them in his editorials. Something else is newly evident from this collection. Gold's writing style undergoes so many changes from one item to another that he doesn't really have an identifiable basic style. I never noticed this, reading a couple pages of his prose once a month. I don't know who Janet Slemko might be, but she has done marvelous illustrations which are thickly scattered throughout the book.

Of Lena Geyer is a novel I've long wanted to read. It's that rarity, a commercially successful book of fiction about musicians. Marcia Davenport, the author, tells quite a bit about the novel in her autobiography, including a somewhat toned-down description of the day Toscanini slugged her. He apparently didn't think she'd actually modeled the conductor in the novel on him; he seems simply to have thought that the writer had damaged the image of the



race of conductors by the way Vestri behaved. There is a surprisingly lavish use of real people as characters in this book, particularly those who were prominent at the Met early in the century. I suppose most of them were dead by the time the novel saw print and the writer counted on her friendship with the others to stay out of court. It doesn't seem to be a roman a clef. Marcia claimed that Lena Geyer was an amalgamation of all the great singers in her experience. But it's strange that she chose a name so similar to that of one of the greatest, Elena Gerhardt. However, Geyer's vocal equipment is considerably different from that of Gerhardt. The same situation prevents any attempts to trace much of the novelist's mother in the fictional singer; Alma Gluck sang as perfectly as Geyer, but didn't have that big a voice. The novelist wrote elsewhere that she had based Geyer's performance of Fidelio on that of Lotte Lehmann, and the only recorded portion of Lehmann's singing of that role confirms all the good things that the novel says of the performance. It's a shame that it isn't a better novel in the general sense. It starts promisingly, there is some nice character-painting while Geyer is starting to emerge from obscurity, but once she becomes famous, it simply ceases to be a novel: all the main characters are overwhelmingly heroic, altruistic, and constitutionally unable to engage in the arguments and conflicts which are needed to make fiction go. Nevertheless, I can't think of any place where it's easier to find an extended demonstration of how a person who really loves great singing can react to it. And it's easy to spot little bits of business which must be accurate descriptions of Gluck's behavior, like the brutal comments on an inferior singer and some of the practising tricks.

Another gift was the new Niven-Pournelle novel, *Inferno*. It came from someone at the office who said he had read it and thought I might be interested in it. I'm pretty sure he was trying to draw me out on my role in fandom, which is semi-known around Hagerstown by now, but inextricably mixed with another rumor that somehow has gotten started to the effect that I'm one of the most famous pro writers of science fiction under an alias. I won't be surprised if I get a visit from the Internal Revenue people some day, inquiring about my failure to report all that revenue from novel-writing, because everyone seems to be talking about it, even the people who wouldn't think for a moment of believing some of the true facts about me. Anyway, I profited by the occasion to read the book and failed to react as strongly to it as many fans have done. The big surprise which is supposed to come near the ending involving Benito seemed so obvious to me from the character's first entrance that I felt disgust with the hero for failing to catch on through all those chapters. I'm not happy with the amount of sadism which the book contained. Dante might be forgiven for lingering on suffering, because he apparently had theological convictions which justified this sort of thing. I doubt if Larry and Jerry really believe in this sort of a hereafter or put any faith in the ability of a paperback novel to cause readers to start behaving themselves. I read part of Dante in English translation years ago, but I remember virtually nothing of it so I couldn't experience the excitement of recognition as the successive areas came to attention. To make things worse, I didn't notice the diagram of



inferno on page 6 until I'd finished reading the novel. (I always skip the blurbs until I've completed a book, then read them to see if I agree with them, and it was during my blurb-search that I happened across that page.) Niven and Pournelle should be honored for an ingenious idea, for choosing a different sort of subject, and for daring to end the book on a religious note in an era when religion is out of fashion. But I can't help wishing that they had chosen different and better ways to accomplish their laudable basic purpose.

A novel which is much less important in theme but much better reading is Joe David Brown's Paper Moon. Well, that's the title on the paperback edition I bought at a garage sale, although Addie Pray was the original title of the novel. I still haven't seen the movie, but my memories of the television series remain as pleasant as ever, and I was happy to find that the video version and the novel have much the same general flair and atmosphere. But I'm not certain that the novel stops in time. Somehow, the long final adventure involving Grandmama Sass doesn't seem to mesh with what has gone before. It's so much longer, it verges dangerously on melodrama, and it just doesn't seem right for Addie to have all that jewelry as the book ends. Still, that's a minor matter. I was pleased to note that such a successful novel puts everything Long Boy says into phonetic dialect, against all the advice of experts on science fiction who tell beginning writers that this is an amateur's blunder. The whole feel and look of the 1930's as I remember them seem accurately embodied in the novel, even though I experienced the Depression years in a somewhat larger city and much further East than most of Addie's tale involves. One thing I do miss badly in the novel is the radio which Addie lugged everywhere with her in the television series. Her obsession with that clumsy old radio was a stroke of genius, a trait that proved her to be a small girl after all, not the elderly midget which some of her activities seemed to point to.

But the book which caused me to do the most thinking and made me argue back at many of the pages, out of this batch, was the L. Sprague de Camp biography of Lovecraft. I got the paperback edition, which underwent some abridgment from the original. The grapevine indicates that in the transition, some of the most controversial passages were thrown overboard.

I've never been a solid, dependable all-out Lovecraft enthusiast. I enjoy his fiction when I don't read it too frequently, I like his poetry considerably more than some of his real devotees do, but I've never felt impelled to collect Lovecraftiana or do research into the author. On the other hand, I've always had the most intense admiration for Lovecraft as a human being. It has infuriated me all through my years in fandom to encounter those ad personam attacks on Lovecraft's fiction, the reviews which insinuate that the stories are bad because they were written by a fellow who didn't conform with the behavior and thinking of the average United States of American. So this biography doesn't outrage me particularly for the tepid enthusiasm which the writer displays toward most of Lovecraft's stories. I do find some unforgivable things in it when it deals with Lovecraft as a man.

Fanzine reaction to the biography seems to have accused de Camp of almost every imaginable fault except the one which kept occurring to me. Now, I've repeatedly complained about criticism of writers which seeks to give psychoanalytical interpretation of



their behavior. The people who engage in this lack the many years of training needed to carry out such endeavors in real life. Most of them haven't had the dozens of hours of the most intimate conversations with their subjects which the real qualified expert insists on staging before he ventures a tentative diagnosis of the situation. But Sprague leaves himself wide open by guessing at the internal workings of Lovecraft's mind and subconscious at many points in this biography. So I think I'd be almost justified in imitating his example just once. What I wonder, even though it seems not to have occurred to any other reviewer, is: did Sprague take this semi-hostile tone toward Lovecraft out of exasperated jealousy? Sprague is the exact opposite of Lovecraft in almost every way. He is a man of vast educational background, gregarious, highly skilled in the knack of selling virtually anything he decides to write, usually to a good-paying market, systematic and efficient in all the ways that pay off, a paterfamilias, and so on. Lovecraft was a failure during his lifetime in almost all these respects. But the one thing which I'm sure Sprague would never claim for himself and which nobody else is apt to assign to him is a ranking at the very top of the nation's or the world's writers of fiction. All of a sudden big shots in the mundane world of letters begin to mention Lovecraft in the same breath with Poe or Rimbaud, this very same Lovecraft who never used more than two fingers when he typed, who didn't go to college, who never had much more money than the bare minimum needed for survival, who sold his fiction only to a couple of obscure pulp magazines. I wonder if something in Sprague's subconscious didn't make him write a beat-him-when-he-sneezes biography as a sort of revenge?

As many others have pointed out, Lovecraft's bigotry is blown out of all proportion in the biography. Nobody considers that bigotry as anything other than a blot on Lovecraft's character. But I can find only three places where that bigotry should justifiably be considered in a biography of HPL. It needed to be written about in detail as soon as it became evident in Lovecraft's character, around the time he came out of adolescence. It should have been considered again in connection with his marriage and his move to New York, the two events in his life that forced him into daily contact with the races he was bigoted against. The same topic properly should reemerge somewhere toward the end of the biography in connection with the modification of his ideas about race. But there is no justification for the way this biography reverts to the topic at every opportunity. Nor is there much in the biography which puts Lovecraft's bigotry in proper perspective against the rest of the nation in Lovecraft's day. Ironically, Sprague who emphasizes all the ways Lovecraft differed from the average person fails to go into details about the fact that this bigotry was one way in which he was like the average person. Lovecraft put his bigoted ideas into letters which were so well written that many of them were saved, and he became famous enough for the letters to come to the attention of people other than the addressees. That's why his bigotry emerged into the open. But I don't think his bigotry was any greater than that of perhaps eighty per cent of all the nation's residents today, ninety per cent of his contemporaries. Most people don't have their thoughts perpetuated, that's all. They limit them to conversation or to letters which are



thrown away the next day. There is also the fact that Lovecraft's bigotry was intellectual in nature. Sprague acknowledges HPL's failure to act as a bigot when he encountered in person a non-WASP, his friendships with Jews. What kind of a biography would Sprague have written if HPL had put his bigotry to practical use, as so many millions of his fellow countrymen did during his lifetime, by refusing to hire Jews or blacks for a job, or participating in lynching parties, or selling white supremacy material to the tabloids?

Less important but annoying is the way Sprague makes some of HPL's quirks the springboard for resounding pronouncements which put him into the worst light. Lovecraft's exceptional memory is interpreted as a symptom of something ominous. His failure to get a steady job is made to seem something almost unique when in actuality it was the kind of behavior which many people followed when they had enough income to keep them alive. There's no mention in all the moralizing about HPL's failure to finish high school about the fact that practically nobody finished high school in the first years of this century. HPL's fondness for sugar is pictured as another symptom of internal problems. But since the sugar price rose so high, lunch counters where I frequently eat stopped putting it within reach and hand it out in little packets; I've noticed many customers asking for more than the two packets which are normally doled out with a cup of coffee.

The best thing about the tone of this biography is the way it guarantees the creation of more extended biographies of HPL by those who want to put him into a better light. A more neutral attitude toward his subject might have caused Sprague to be the only big-biography creator for an author who deserves to be treated in various lights. But I hope that those who write more biographies will consider the possibility that simpler explanations are possible for the elements in HPL's life. Isn't it conceivable that instead of all the hypotheses about physical and psychological aberrations, the first half of HPL's life could be explained as the outcome of his having been spoiled rotten by overindulgent relatives? Couldn't the passages in letters late in his life which Sprague considers proof that HPL was unhappy with a ruined life represent in actuality the same momentary self-doubts which all of us feel periodically through our lives?

I continue to read every month or so another Booth Tarkington book, and every time I read one I find a couple of others I've never seen before. Someone must still be writing them, something like Vivaldi concertos. My most recent Tarkington reading was *The Flirt*. It's outstanding for its possession of a small boy who is even more appalling than Penrod as one of its principal characters. This youth finally gets his come-uppance in an episode which might get the book banned if published today, because it treats lightly another child with a retarded intellect, which just isn't done at a time when almost anything else goes in fiction. But this isn't the only way in which Tarkington doesn't meet present-day standards. It would be possible to find in his novels every aspect of the novels of Dr. E. E. Smith which get blasted in fan-zines as amateurish or clumsy writing. Doc Smith was just imitating a very successful contemporary whose style happens to have gone entirely out of fashion by now. It's also considered today



rather naive to write a Cinderella novel, and that's what this one turns out to be on the last page. I'm not quite sure about the source of the interest I find in Tarkington's fiction. Most of his characters are a bit too high in the social sense and too far back in the temporal sense for me to feel really close to them. Almost all Tarkington novels have the defect of starting poorly. The opening pages rarely provide anything in which the reader could be expected to take any reasonable interest. But the first Tarkington book I ever read was a copy of *Penrod* in the waiting room at my doctor's, where it took me about a year to work my way through it due to the regular interruptions when the doctor was ready to see me. After that I read the other two *Penrod* books, then I started reading some other Tarkington novels in the hope of finding them as funny. They weren't but they hooked me somehow on his unpromising style and unfamiliar adults. I acquired just recently a half-dozen more novels which I'd never heard of. They should last me through the winter if I don't get too greedy toward them.

Ned Rorem when he writes prose might be the equivalent of Harlan Ellison in the field of music. I hope the increased attention that his composing should receive, thanks to that Pulitzer prize, won't distract him from publishing more collections of words like *Pure Contraption*. It infuriates me and enchants me, usually on the same page. Rorem has the awful habit of saying things which sound impressive until you try to decide what he meant, like "Music changes meaning as it recedes in time the way stars do as they approach in space." From there he proceeds to sum up perfectly in a few words something which others have devoted whole books to without accomplishing anything. For instance, when he writes about Debussy, he lists his faults as a composer but then epitomizes why he thinks Debussy was so great: "He was special because he was better than others playing the same game." Rorem is a dreadful egotist, and yet he's able to kid himself when he recalls the time he and a publisher were so sure he could write a musical setting for the Lord's Prayer which would make even more money than Malotte's famous version. His song bombed and now Rorem can think of the wasted time and trouble as divine retribution for his atheism. Sometimes Rorem gets into moods when he flails around wildly, debunking and condemning everyone and everything he can think of, no matter how far he must reach to find a connection between his targets and his subject matter. And then he proceeds to turn out several kind, thoughtful pages of sympathetic analysis of the prose and music of another double-threat creator, Paul Bowles, whose limited powers in both fields somehow don't suit him as objects for his wrath. He likes to demolish some sacred cows with a word or two, as when he drops a casual mention of the Catholic mass to put down those who are all excited about the invention of the mixed media. It's pretty hard to sit quietly while you read his praise for Virgil Thomson, but Rorem isn't the only important person who sees clothing which isn't there on that old charlatan. This particular book contains very little of the sensational disclosure about his personal life that perked up interest in some of his previous books. Some of it has a limited interest because it contains quite a few book reviews and performance reviews which involve some things and



events which we're not apt to encounter at this late date. But it's still a good example of the vanishing art of writing plainly and briefly about music from an authoritative mind.

From the Steeples and Mountains makes an odd complement to the HPL biography. Charles Ives did everything just as Sprague thinks Lovecraft should have done. Ives went to the best of colleges, found himself a most congenial woman to marry, didn't try to live off his highly specialized type of creativity but became really rich in the insurance business, saw his doctor so often that he lived to a ripe old age, and so on. So, as David Wooldridge's book recounts in great detail, Ives suffered exactly the same sort of creative fate as Lovecraft. Tiny crumbs of recognition in the outside world for his compositions during his lifetime, sudden culthood after his death. Moreover, Ives' adherence to the accepted way of doing things didn't seem to leave him the cheerful, competent individual that we are asked to believe HPL would have become if he'd been more efficient. Ives didn't write nearly as much music as such a long life would have permitted, and he virtually stopped composing throughout all his middle and late years. He did almost nothing with his pen in those final decades but look through his manuscripts and write indecipherable changes in them and then put them back in the wrong order, creating performance problems that will never be straightened out with finality. He grew so embittered over the failure of his music to attain popularity that he wouldn't even attend the performance that the New York Philharmonic finally granted to one of his symphonies. (Wooldridge gives a different version of the manner in which Ives listened to it over the radio at his home.)

It would be interesting to draw up parallels between the writer and the composer. Both were New Englanders to the core, both had a passion for saving improbable things, neither could be bothered to copy what he'd created into a manuscript suitable for submission, Ives was just as bigoted toward most composers whom the world considers great as Lovecraft was toward other races, and so forth. One big difference between the two involves their biographers. Wooldridge is as iconoclastic as Sprague is conventional in the way words go onto paper. I can't imagine how Wooldridge got a major publisher like Knopf to leave unaltered his strange writing habits, like the use of two or three parenthesis marks instead of the conventional one, lavish sprinkling of slash marks where a conjunction would make things much clearer, mentions of obscure people who are never identified, and so on. To cap the climax, Wooldridge treats one individual in much the way Sprague did HPL. Horatio Parker, who taught Ives at Yale, receives a dreadful pummeling. I can't imagine why; Ives' music proves that he wasn't so bad a teacher, the bulk of it was written or sketched while Ives was under Parker's influence, and the only fault I can imagine as the cause of all this was Parker's great amount of fame and respect contrasted with his pupil's failure to be known outside a small circle during the years when both were alive. I have this awful urge to try to figure out some way to persuade Wooldridge to write a new biography of HPL coupled with a biographical project by Sprague involving Ives. The two books that would result should be exciting.



## Hagerstown Journal

September 10--It started in early July. Nasty voices, one male and the other female, blaring through my house when I played records, and sharp flashing lines destroying the color and partly concealing the picture on two television channels. CB enthusiasts had moved into a house across and just up the street. They didn't use their CB equipment constantly, but it was seldom that I could listen to music or watch those channels for as long as a half-hour without encountering the interference, and they generally kept going a half-hour or so while they were at it. My first impulse, to complain to authorities, didn't last long. I've already had one confrontation this year, the one with Advent and Ed Wood, and I'd prefer to wait a year or two before getting myself into another imbroglio. Also influencing my decision to be Mr. Milquetoast was what had been happening in a small nearby town, Smithsburg. Its residents had been carrying on something fierce about a man who was damaging their television enjoyment, then some other people sprang to his defence, pretty soon the whole town was feuding, and it even started to invade the newspaper letter column because the defenders charged that the accusers were spoiling a poor blind man's only amusement and the accusers asked the defenders how this man if he was blind could be working daily as a flagman for the county roads department, so that brought government into the fuss with an explanation that someone else tells him when to wave his flag and when not to wave it. So I decided to figure out a method which would bring relief without bloodshed. I dug out an old magazine in which I remembered having read an article on the topic of such interference. Its general moral was that nothing is a surefire remedy, except perhaps very expensive modification to the equipment which is picking up the CB transmissions. My audio equipment is more than a decade old and it seemed extravagant to pursue that path, when old age might cause some sort of serious breakdown in it before long. I talked to a local man who I knew sells lots of CB equipment. He offered to sell me a filter for the television antenna but warned that it probably wouldn't do any good. He told me he'd suffered vandalism to his truck the other day at the hands of a CB operator to whom he'd talked about TV interference, strengthening my belief that I was following the safest course. So I took evasive action, which gave me considerable relief with record-listening. I started to play nothing but old 78's. The prehistoric GE variable reluctance cartridge which I use for them has more output than my Shure V-15 lp cartridge, and 78's have stronger background hiss than most lp's. The two differences combined to mask those nerve-wracking voices in all but the quietest passages. I thought about trying to find another lp cartridge with stronger output. But everyone seemed to agree that such cartridges are hard on records and I hesitated to risk it. The magazine article had said that once in a long while, improvement occurs by reversing plugs or fiddling with power lines and connecting cables. I tested every imaginable combination of polarity with the plugs on the audio equipment and TV set. There was no difference. I tried unplugging various things, in an effort to determine where the signal was getting into my house. The findings were mystifying. Sometimes removing the antenna from its



connecting posts on the television set muted slightly the intruding voices. Usually, it made no difference. Rotating the antenna had no effect on the interference. But unplugging the control box for the rotator caused a dramatic increase in the volume of the CB chatter. Turning off the amplifier and listening to records via headphones plugged into the pre-amp put the interference into only one ear but fiddling with the balance control which should have cut out the interfered channel didn't lower the volume of the interference. I lifted, twisted, repositioned all the wires, all to no effect. By this time, I had already realized the futility of efforts to sidestep the problem by changing my record-listening habits. The woman has small kids and stays home all day caring for them. She is on and off the air at all times of the day when my job permitted me to try to listen. Her husband gets home just after 5 and he is at it intermittently until midnight or later. I filed mentally for use only in case of final desperation the awful idea of going to bed early, setting the alarm for 4 a.m., listening then, and going back to bed. It didn't seem very promising, because I'd be too befuddled after half a night's sleep to enjoy music and then probably wouldn't be able to get back to sleep again. After a couple of months I began to lose my temper, more with myself than with the CB couple. This big lp collection had become useless to me, I'd been forced to give up all efforts to watch those two TV channels because the interference jangled my nerves, and I might face the same thing for years to come before the couple tired of CB or moved away. Like a dog that keeps chasing autos even though it knows it has never caught one and wouldn't know what to do with the car if it did catch it, I occasionally fiddled some more with the wires' position, uselessly, but today I was in a mean mood when I did it and I yanked so hard on the wire from the turntable to the pre-amp's ground connection that I not only moved the slack in it but also pulled it out of position where it emerges under the turntable, and a monstrous hum roared out of my speakers. I hastened to move it back, the hum ended, and the CB voices were less obtrusive. Hardly daring to hope, I risked some sort of serious equipment damage by forcing the wire sideways up under the turntable, unable to see what I was doing. Ten seconds later, the CB voice was so soft that I could barely comprehend what he was saying with the volume control turned up almost to maximum level. I jammed the turntable case into a position that sandwiched the ground wire between its bottom and the edge of the cabinet on which it stands, to prevent any further change in its position. I will assassinate the cleaning woman if she touches it. The interference seems to be gone altogether from one of the TV channels and it's less obtrusive on the other. I have no idea what I did, but I dare to hope that I can enjoy lp's again until at least the first of the new year, when all those additional CB channels come into use and the neighbors begin to intrude into Horizons or somewhere equally awful.

September 6--The big bicentennial parade was held tonight. I didn't go to it. My main emotion was one of relief that the commemoration came and went in Washington County without giving me big problems. The bicentennial went off here with much the same mistakes as elsewhere: too much commercialism, too much faith that the public would be enthusiastic about it, too much emphasis on



ephemeral activities which left nothing behind as a permanent memento. My involvement with the bicentennial lasted only a few months a couple of years ago. The local committee asked me to help with a publication subcommittee. The original plan called for producing a new history of this county as a bicentennial project. This seemed like an excellent idea. The two existing county histories written about 75 and 100 years ago are riddled with inaccuracies and lacking in the matters which didn't involve wars or politics. One of the first things that happened was the suggestion that I should write it. I don't do many things right, but on this occasion I rose above myself and said no, thank goodness. I could have used the money but I knew that there was no way someone with a regular job could do a new county history in just two years. The other committee members couldn't understand why I felt that way, even after I reminded them that there would be considerably less than two years available for the writing, because time would be lost finding money to support the project and the printer wouldn't be able to turn out a full-length book in a week or ten days. But the subcommittee chairman was obsessed with the thrill he would get from editing such a book, and he was reluctant to give up the idea. So we began planning a full-length history whose writing would be split among many persons. The county would advance enough money to satisfy the printer, we were told. Meeting after meeting followed. The chairman devoted so much time to describing his editing plans that nobody even started to write his share of the manuscript. Besides, at every meeting, we would learn that somehow the plans had been changed since the last meeting and all the previous understanding about the book's organization must be forgotten, since new approaches would be taken. It must have been around this time that I asked if the county had budgeted that contribution, and learned that this very thing had happened, but the money was to be used not for the book but for commemorative "coins" which the committee would sell at a profit, thereby raising still more money for the book. By now the bicentennial was barely a year distant, much too close to get such a book written and published even if the printer would agree to wait for his pay until all those souvenirs had been sold to collectors of such things. At the last meeting I attended, there was another complete change in plans. Now there would be no new history of the county but in its place would emerge a long series of lavishly illustrated booklets on various phases of county life which would sell for only a couple of dollars apiece and therefore would find many more buyers than an expensive fat history book. Then they began to hold the subcommittee meetings on Saturday afternoons. I wasn't going to let a bicentennial prevent me from the NBC Game of the Week-watching, so I faded out of the bicentennial picture. Out of all this, all that emerged was a crude-looking, 80-page softbound booklet purporting to be a collection of memories of elderly county residents about the distant past. It was overpriced at \$3, since there are advertising notices on almost every page, and the contents are a muddle. Some pages are interesting little memoirs, but others are literal reprints of newspaper articles about various phases of local history or obvious rehashes of standard books on such things as the trolley era. One article was completely outdated, referring as it did to a totally vanished



local landmark which by the time the booklet appeared had been partially restored. One of the contributors raised such a ruckus over the fact that someone else's picture was published where hers was supposed to be that all purchasers were asked to go to the chamber of commerce office and get a copy of the correct picture and paste it in where it would cover up the pretender. I noted that only one of the nine persons listed as the committee which turned out this book had been a member of the original subcommittee while I was laboring on it. And yet this is probably the only useful thing to come out of the bicentennial commemoration here, unsatisfactory though it is. Much fuss was made over a time capsule, even though the time capsule has become superfluous nowadays: microfilms, antique shops, and similar modern phenomena offer all that any time capsule can provide. The committee hired a commercial firm to put on a big pageant. This automatically meant lots of money-raising through ticket sale contests and the like. Twenty years ago, I helped with the committee that arranged the bicentennial commemoration for Fort Frederick just west of here, the only surviving stone fort from the French and Indian War in this area. We staged an all-volunteer, all-local pageant that was as elaborate and attracted as many people with no admission fee as the professionally managed, high admission fee pageant did this year. The Freedom Train made a stop in Hagerstown and infuriated everyone by not permitting anyone to get aboard but tried to peddle its wares anyway. That caused such a commotion that a return trip was hastily arranged, promising freedom to see the Freedom Train exhibits. The bicentennial parade completed the task of angering anyone who might have remained unmoved by the other bicentennial activities. Somehow, advance tickets to the fairgrounds grandstand were sold for \$6.50, and those who bought them discovered that only \$4 was being charged at the gate. There's no parking space worth mentioning in the evenings on streets around the fairgrounds and the committee decided to prohibit parking on the grounds itself because so many units were entering the parade, creating more ill will. The city chose this particular occasion to tear up two streets in the central part of town, preventing the parade from going in that direction, and the fact that it started at twilight guaranteed that it would be almost invisible to those watching in the dimly lighted residential blocks around the fairgrounds. At the last moment, Susan Ford was offered to the parade committee, who snapped her up, apparently unaware that this would be proclaimed in some national dispatches as the start of the Republicans' election campaign, new cause for grumbling among local Democrats. Fireworks were scheduled at the fairgrounds at the end of the parade. They should have made everyone happy and taken the bad taste from many mouths. Unfortunately, someone goofed. The aerial pieces were sent up from a spot which guaranteed that nobody in the grandstand, no matter if \$6.50 or \$4 had been spent for the seat, could see them, owing to interference from the roof. I suggested in a newspaper column that maybe one more time capsule might be in order, a 98-year one. It would be filled with nothing but advice to the tricentennial committee on the things that should and shouldn't be done in preparation for 2076. It's so nice to know I'll be out of journalism by the time the next big local commemoration occurs, the 125th anniversary of the Battle of Antietam in 1987.