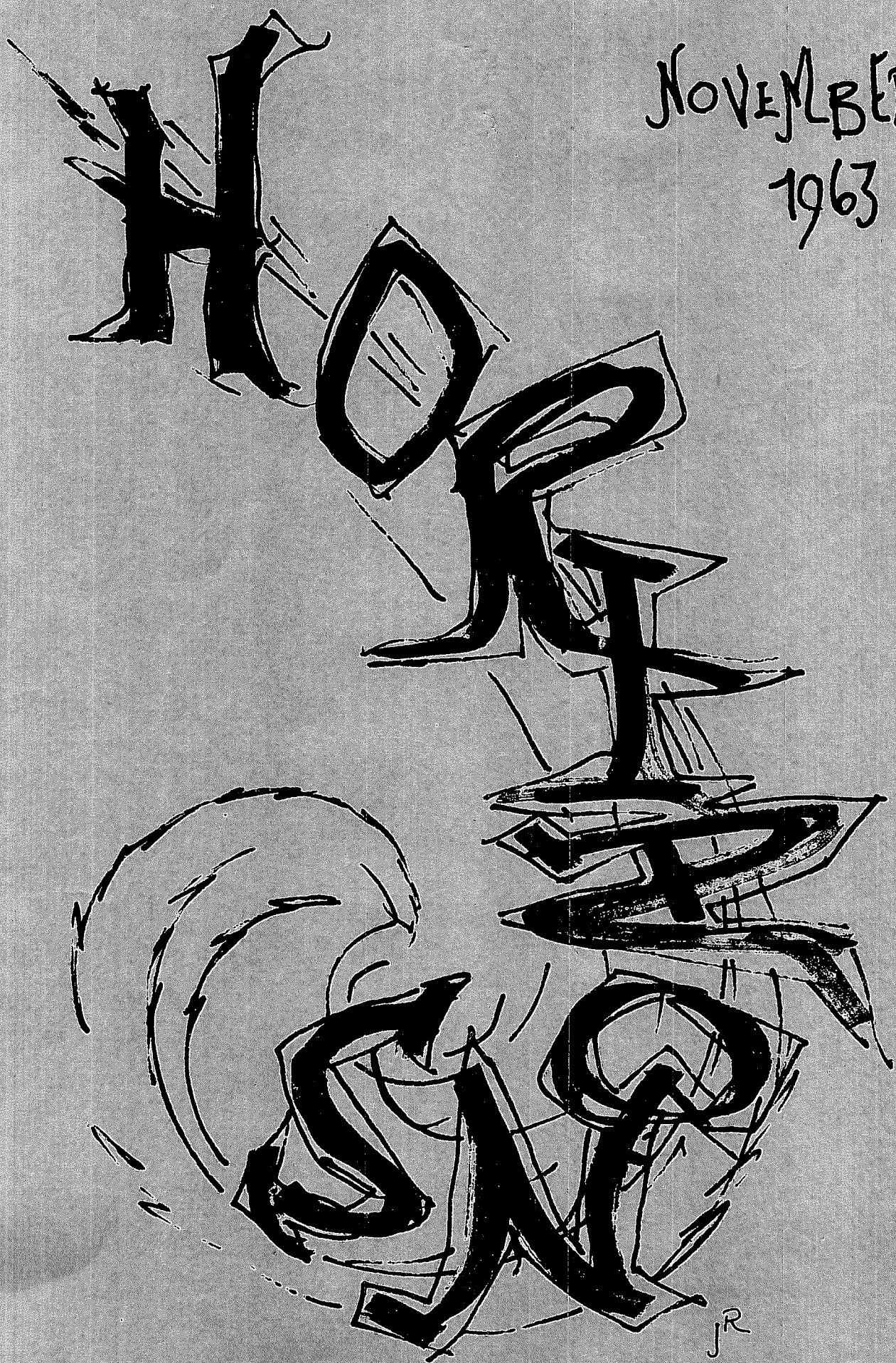


NOVEMBER
1963



For the 96th time, I must try to explain that this is Horizons. It is the November, 1963, issue, aka FAPA number 90, volume 25, and number 1. Richard H. Eney will attempt to cope with the duplication of my first struggle with Gestetner-width stencils. The cover is by Jean Rose. Most of the rest of the evidence points to Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland. 21740.

In the Beginning

The Fantasy Amateur: I voted against the proposed amendments. Those involving dual memberships are inadequate for the task that really faces us, that of doing away with the things. They are partially contradictory and might better have been put up for vote in successive mailings, to prevent the danger of both winning approval. The subscription replacement for acknowledgments for waiting listers was my proposal originally but I don't like the absence of constitutional instructions on the size of the subscription fee. Officers could fight among themselves over who shall determine the amount or it might be set outrageously high or low. Celephais: Any hermit status that may have departed when I went to the DisCon reverts to me, when I read of all these FAPA members making trips overseas. Look down the membership roster and you'll find a remarkably large proportion of members who can tell about experiences in Europe or Asia in recent years. A Bleen for Boggs: Thanks to Ken Slater's import skill, I'm reading the British Penguin edition of W. Somerset Maugham's collected short stories. I was startled to find somewhere in them that the narrator of a yarn expressed a desire to read the complete Nick Carter adventures, if unlimited time ever came to him. I thought Nick was mainly an American phenomenon. Salud: This description of less than one page gave me a clearer picture of Seattle than Speer's long essay some mailings back. But it would be good to define outward-looking. Does it mean recognition of the necessity for change, or tolerance, or eagerness to mix into foreign trade, or lots of non-conforming inhabitants, or just a synonym for the sensation of liking a city? Synapse: Is my copy incomplete or did Speer forget to explain where "here" was? Anyway, it's odd to find him going on and on about the production circumstances for these pages, like a neoapan. "Buy a roll of Tri-X film and read the printed slip inside. It warns: "Overexposure will result if this film is used in simple cameras for subjects in bright sunlight." This is not Kodak's fastest film, either; Royal-X would probably be overexposed in outdoors light on a cloudy day in cameras without a wide range of shutter and diaphragm controls. To use Tri-X in a movie camera, you'd need a lens stopped down to f/128 in sunshine, or a variable shutter or a neutral density filter. Kodak doesn't package even its fastest color film for movie cameras because it would require f/64 exposure or thereabouts in sunlight. "Visiting Rotarians may find the rituals similar to back home but I don't think they feel at home for the company. At service luncheons I've attended, guests have looked quite lonely even after getting introduced to everyone at the table. "The statement that there are only four tastes is something that instinct tells me is wrong, even though I can't prove it, like the allegation that the tonal quality of a musical tone depends solely on the number of overtones and their respective strengths. Which of those four tastes or combination thereof is brackish? What is the taste of metals to which you touch your tongue (on a warm day, of course)? Is yeast sour, bitter, sweet or salt to the taste buds? If you answer those, I have a trump card, Hagerstown's water. "I always assumed that masks for comic heroes were influenced by the depiction of justice as blindfolded. "One thing omitted from the

broadside at carelessness in fanzines: the recent eruption of the misprint "heresay". Frequently its context makes it hard to know if hearsay or heresy was intended. It is also strange that some fans who are intensely interested in equal accommodations, notably Ted Pauls, do not take the trouble to spell the term correctly. '' The references to Tanrydoon are another example of taking for granted background knowledge that readers aren't likely to possess. '' I was not Fanta-cynic, positively and definitely not. '' The office dictionary indicates that "shades" may be used correctly to refer to one dead person. It can mean the world of the dead. Revelations from the Secret Mythos: Greetings, brother; I once checked the baggage of Louis Armstrong, and I can still see the popping eyeballs the afternoon I walked into the front office of the newspaper with Carl Sandburg. '' I suspect I've told this before somewhere but it's apropos of the dog that smothered the alligator. A nearby family lived in Europe until Hitler. They'd just succeeded in housebreaking a fine dog when they left hurriedly on a slow boat. The dog took his new accomplishment so seriously that not even depriving potted plants of their soil induced him to backslide. They gave him up for dead but he somehow pulled himself onto the soil of the new world and survived the obstinacy of his principles after the 12-day test. Scatalog: So I'm not alone in the world, after all. There are some persons who dislike oriental music and others who disapprove of Tolkien. But I'd thought myself unique for the combination of tastes. Self-Preservation: Everyone in Hagerstown with insignificant exceptions like my insignificant self meanders all over the pavements. Perhaps New York isn't afflicted with another Hagerstown phenomenon: the individuals who want to fraternize only with those who are on the job. The wife of a janitor at the office is a good example. She follows her husband around, talking to him while he's trying to clean, for half the afternoon. Then she goes out and holds long conversations with all the cops assigned to downtown street corners. From there she goes to a large drug store that doesn't charge persons who sit down at the lunch counter and ask for a glass of carbonated water, places her order for this treat, chatters with the girls behind the counter until they give her too cold shoulders or the manager shows up. From there, she takes four steps to the cashier's booth, props both elbows on the counter, and indulges in another long gossip session. She will bubble over with conversation if she finds me at my desk at work, and will ignore me if she passes me on the street during off hours. Vandy: So many persons still don't see the distinction between a bullfight and a slaughterhouse. The latter does not normally attract thousands of persons for hours of brutalizing themselves by wallowing in violence-lust. Unless milk can keep me alive, I must survive through destruction and I see no reason for feeling more remorse that my continued existence causes the death of bulls than of redbeets, so I'm no vegetarian. But I refuse to risk reverting to an unhappier, more primitive set of desires and motivations by watching the preying that life requires to survive, whether it takes the form of a Japanese beetle destroying a rose petal or a matador fighting a bull. '' I may have made myself unclear about nostalgia and old reading. I was trying to say that it is possible that science fiction is getting constantly worse and that this accounts for our belief that nostalgia makes the older stories seem better; this is quite different from the situation with comic books or children's literature, since adults rarely continue to read the latest examples in the fields decade after decade and realize that they're aimed specifically at kids. Three Minute Time Test: The press services had this sort of thing in most newspapers a year or two ago. This particular version is badly done, because the

three-minute limit in the first item and the presence of 24 directions would make most potential victims suspicious. Outstanding: These oneshots are mostly pleasant reading but contain few matters that invite comments. I might point out that H.L. Mencken would dislike this one, because he detested the word used for its title. '' Zipcodes got curiously little publicity at the start. The Post Office Department had an elaborate press release for the unveiling but the wire services didn't seem to realize what a major effect they would have on the use of the mails. '' I've spotted something that meets the more incredible hinted in the third line of Redd Boggs' inquiry. He misspelled Poe's middle name. The Rambling Faps: Among the more useless snatches of memory slithering around my mind is that Russell Chauvenet once claimed he intended to make a trip much like the one that Lee Jacobs has arranged. I think that Russell planned to do it after the war as preparation for writing a book about the ruins that would provide him with income until another war produced enough fresh ruins for a second trip and volume. Horizons: This may have been the poorest issue for subject matter and literary qualities in a decade. I am still very unhappy about the Martin matter and have been honestly attempting to prevent myself from writing poorly as a pointless attempt at revenge on FAPA, but something of the sort may have occurred, willy nilly. This issue, I'm trying something radical, several more characters to each line, in an effort to give the customers more quantity for their money in the event that the quality is again deficient. Lighthouse: I think that the demonstration in Washington was equivalent to target shooting practice on a crowded playground. It could do no good and might have ruined the cause of Negro equality for decades to come, if something had gone seriously wrong. I remain unconvinced that organizing a mob has anything to do with democracy or the American way of life, and I am very anxious to see the Negro get every right and privilege that the demonstrators sought. '' What conceivable reason causes anyone to think that laundry workers do not go on the official unemployed statistics when they get out of work? '' Nothing can make a FAPA member feel better than to find he has independently written a mailing comment almost identical to one by Willis. Compare his remarks and mine on Nancy Leman's essay. '' Name just one FAPA member who has expressed a desire "to see FAPA members get thrown out". I like the present membership, too. My evangelism has been based on the doctrine that chronology is not the ideal basis for selecting which waiting lister shall be admitted when a vacancy does occur. '' Continued mention of Yma Sumac gives me the right to a comment I forgot to include when someone was talking about her phenomenal range of three octaves. Such a range is not unusual for a good singer. The recent Asco two-record set of Rosa Ponselle dubbings contains everything from the D flat above high C to the low D below middle C, virtually three octaves. Leonard Warren probably had a three-octave range, although he never sang his high C in public. Callas has probably reached or exceeded the three-octave range on her recordings. I'm not fond enough of her voice to know just how low below the staff she's gone, but she has been recording music intended for contraltos and ends the Lucia mad scene with the E flat above high C. London Records once released an "educational record" that demonstrated some teacher's thesis that any normal voice can be trained to sing well everything from the bass to soprano range. All this is an example of how artistic ideals get mistaken for contests or games. Someone sings a beautiful high C and immediately people get the idea that a high C is the goal, not the beauty of the tone. '' How can Egyptologists be sure the block and tackle weren't known in obelisk-building days? This sounds as shaky a

legend as the one that says people never ate tomatoes until quite recent times because the things were always believed poisonous. Imbroc-cata: A pet cat once came home when I was nine or ten years old. He had a frightful, halfhealed gash in one rear leg. The moment he got into the house, he raced around the rooms, looking and sniffing at every piece of furniture. I've never been sure if he was glad to be home and wanted to renew his familiarity with its smells, or just wanted to be dead certain that this was the right house. Grue: And this also reminds of a semi-forgotten boyhood adventure. An apparent relative of the man who complained about rifle shooting came charging up the mountainside to the cottage where we were staying, screaming that she wasn't going to let her lawn continue to be destroyed, now that she'd caught me pitching horseshoes on it. They were toy rubber horseshoes but she was wound up and required a considerable time to uncoil. '' I will not describe my unhappy experiences in that two-dimensional world, Tom said, flatly. Well, I have a theory that each of us still has a latent instinct for cannibalism, Tom said, bitingly. Throw the Rascals Out: Maybe the fannish youngsters who created this don't realize that they have revived the wacery of the Futurians from one of the last serious election campaigns in FAPA's past. Esdacyos: Even scientists sometimes don't seem to take seriously their theories. Notice sometime how frequently you'll find in an article on science a construction like this: "A cubic inch of the material from this type of star would weigh 20,000 tons." If the writer believed in the existence of such starstuff, he would put his verb into a simple and positive form, not such a conditional and dubious "would" form. '' The baffling thing about commodes is their continued noisy flushing habits. By now technology might have been expected to produce a mechanism that would make no more noise than the modest little grunt that emanates from a modern public urinal upon flushing. '' None of these recent stories about life under water gives any hint on why humans would want to live there. I should think that undersea living would have no advantages other than the Freudian ones. '' I don't know what my rate for electricity is just now, because the government has just decided that the power company has been making too big a profit and has ordered reductions in rates. The bills never list the rate schedule, but contain a notice that the details are available upon request. Ankus: Jean Bogert of Philadelphia has some interest in spelunking, I believe. A non-fan reader of stf. in Hagerstown is enthusiastic about it. Caves and bats are too closely associated for me to branch out in my hobby. Null-F: I wish I could get as excited about the badness of a record as Ted does. But some sentences in the Mingus review are dangerously close to actionable. To accuse a manufacturer of "deliberate spite" and to hint at his having "deliberately intended to embarrass Mingus" are right on the line that separates unactionable criticism of artistic matters from the writing that is governed by the laws. '' Now that we're all worried about how to operate venetian blinds on the outer side of windows, maybe I can inquire about oldfashioned shutters. What are the principal objections to their use on houses and how effectively do they supplement the insulating work of storm windows? Most of the shutters for this house are sitting in the garage and I've been thinking about having them put up again. But there must be some reason why they've lost favor in the nation. '' Anyone who reads an entire issue of Horizons knows who mimeographs it. Paul seems to misunderstand "franking". Burbee invented the term to try to excuse his illegal inclusion in mailings of such things as a comic book produced as an oil company advertisement. Now people begin to think it means something that isn't both written

and duplicated by a member. Traditionally, material goes into FAPA mailings because a member wrote a good bit of it or ran it off. There is no imaginable way to prevent some bootleg stuff from going into the mailings, if someone lies about authorship or the hand at the duplicator. But circumstantial evidence or rumors should bring most such cases to attention. ' ' It's nice to see that reprint from Carl Brandon. It settles the question of whether he ever denied being anyone other than Carl Brandon. Moonshine: Sorry, Rick, but I simply can't follow your reasoning. You seem to say that FAPA officers have usually permitted members to stay in the organization if they paid dues a little late or got liberal counts on their activity, therefore I should not object to the arbitrary and illegal refusal of the officers to give Ed Martin credit for his activity. You say yourself that "I have never known a time when members who were unpopular with the ruling bunch (not just the officers, but those who really run FAPA), had to step around pretty lively while toeing the line exact to keep from being dropped." It isn't that I "think this is the first time" that someone has been dropped without cause; it is the first time, no matter whether I say so or not. The only precedent that you cite, George Wetzel, was never a member of FAPA and his ousting from the waiting list came as a result of a process specified by the constitution. As for Len's stand: Nobody has produced any written or printed source from which Martin might have copied or rewritten his jokes. If we are to deny activity credit for publishing material derived from what came in through the ears, we'll have to halt activity credit for most sections of convention reports, recollections of old radio programs, anecdotes about Burbee and Laney in the old IA days, music reviews, and an enormous variety of other types of material. I think it's significant that the Martin matter after two years occupies as much attention in each mailing as it did at the outset. I believe this is evidence that most FAPAns have it on their conscience. It may very possibly be the real reason for the drop in activity in recent mailings. I can't think of a better way for Martin to get his involuntary revenge. Asp: Four-bedroom brick houses in good condition run around that \$12,000 to \$15,000 price range in most sections of Hagerstown, too. Remember, a large house consumes lots of fuel in a climate with cold winters, and the extra cost of operation tends to keep the price of a house from rising in linear fashion with its size. ' ' The worst thing about 30 cups of coffee daily must be the intolerable nuisance. It would mean inability to watch a movie or take a long drive or read a novel without hopping up every halfhour and stopping everything to find another cup of coffee. This is really the major reason I don't smoke: I've seen too many persons who are acutely uncomfortable or must go to all sorts of extra trouble because there is the habitual urge for a cigarette in a museum or on a job where no smoking is permitted. ' ' The Gretchen Schwenn mailing comments are the best in a long while from a person with next to no acquaintance with the things. Le Moindre: The eagerness of most Americans to pull out their pocketbooks and show you all the cards containing proof of membership or status makes me believe that an outright identification card system would be popular in this country after the initial outrage. If the identification card ever loses its totalitarian associations, I imagine it will be adopted as a sensible consolidation of the numerous numbers we get to day from social security, the draft, auto registration, tax authorities, and such sources. Bete Noire: Bjo's voice recently rang in my ears for the first time and I find it hard to believe that the entire Bjo can possibly equal in fascination that voice. (No, no, John Trimble, your wife is not conducting a clandestine tape correspondence with me. It is an improbable and complicated byproduct of my quest for fan history

whose entire story involves such things as two continents and Forrest J Ackerman.)'' Weinbaum's short stories were my favorite science fiction for many years. One of the few regrets involving my youth is the fact that I didn't have enough money to buy the memorial volume: not because it's worth a lot today but because I wanted so badly to do something to show how I missed the writer and my respect for his accomplishments. Weinbaum's short stories are still almost unique for their existence as sheer products of the imagination, rather than extrapolations from existing organisms, cultures, characters, or ethics. I respected his novels but I loved the short stories. '' Mailing comments that might be lost to posterity will be saved through a sudden discovery. I find that by taking off my glasses, I can detect the spots where I penciled notes on this intense color of paper. Curiously, the glasses don't have any harm on the sharpness of closeup stuff, but they diminish slightly the contrast. '' Mark Twain is another longtime love. Apparently there is something approaching a genuine fandom involving his writings. Derleth must turn green every time he thinks of the exciting times he could have, if he had the right to compile and complete Twain fragments instead of those of Lovecraft. I hope he isn't permitted to trade with the Twain executors. Sambo: It was good to hear about the second generation entering the peace corps. I can hardly withhold extended remarks on some fans who will do almost anything for the cause of world understanding except something that involves a real sacrifice of time and hard work, like this. '' Isn't it likely that most girls would be anxious to make the alcohol test on alleged users of those birth control pills? '' Sam's style continues to read smoothly and entertainingly but he's begun to resort too frequently to the exclamation point. This makes me think I'm reading an advertisement of a large department store. Descant: Hagerstown's prosperity can be gauged by the number of dandelions in lawns and back yards. When many people are out of work, the lowly flower is rarely visible, because the idle men and hungry women have gone around the neighborhood, digging up the plants for cooking purposes. When industry thrives, weedkiller must be used and we don't even get people knocking on the door in the spring, seeking to augment income by selling sassafras bark for tea-brewing. '' There was a western movie long ago that adopted the Hammer technique. I shivered luxuriously when the hero walked into the cabin where the old couple had been shot to death by outlaws, examined closely the old woman's hand, and in an extreme closeup we saw that one finger had been shot off to speed up the task of stealing her wedding ring. Ugh, after all these years. And surely Chaplin was an earlier example of an author portraying his character in movies. '' I've never put actual fans or their doings into my fiction, because I dislike the necessity of hiring lawyers. In some cases, the stories are based on people or incidents that I've encountered in mundania, simplified or complicated to meet the requirements of faan fiction. "Old Times There" was entirely of mental manufacture. I thought it out on the first or second day after busting the hip in January, and I have no memory of adapting anything from real life to its purposes. "Whatever Happened to Charlotte?" was a combination of a real trip to New York during which I had no contact with fans, a girl who used to work for the county agent, and a second cousin. The story in this issue is also entirely imaginary, and there is no significance in my choice of one of the imaginary titles from the same poem that provided a title for a famous real piece of stf. I should add that the basic idea for it came from a Maugham short story, but I've not attempted a parody or translation into fannese of that yarn, which makes its effect in an entirely different manner. The I in this story is not intended to represent the real me.

Auld Fanacquaintance

While other Americans adopted nuclear test bans or looked for a restroom in Washington, I spent some of the summer reverting to bad old habits. I purchased most of the prozines with fair regularity. This procedure had several causes. I wanted to be prepared for the slight possibility that someone at the DisCon might talk to me about science fiction. I felt repeated pricklings in an obscure portion of my id that represented reawakening of the old collecting urge, and it seemed possible that I could soothe the irritation by an occasional purchase of a current magazine, in order to avoid the piles of back issues that might otherwise materialize. Finally, I wanted to make sure that you can't go home again as a reader of the prozines. You can't, probably because the home is gone, although I admit that I might have forgotten what it really was like.

Buying partly because an issue looked good, partly because it was the only prozine on sale at the moment, I find that I amassed three issues of each of three titles and one lone representative of another. If and Galaxy may be sold at some local newsstands but I didn't run across a specimen at those I visited. I bought one issue of Worlds of Tomorrow, the August issue, and found it virtually unreadable. Maybe the impression comes partly from the fact that the magazine gives more for your money than most prozines, but I found the stories insufferably wordy and there was a general impression that the writers kept forgetting that they were writing fiction. They kept preaching or wandering from the topic at hand. Philip K. Dick's All We Marsmen was the worst of a bad assemblage of stories.

Without trying to do it that way, I read three issues of each of four prozines: Analog, Amazing, Fantastic, and F&SF. None of these magazines is depressing for deadly badness like Worlds of Tomorrow, but in those dozen issues I found only one story that I enjoyed thoroughly. That was Robert F. Young's Redemption in the July Amazing. By all rights, I should have been belligerent because of the loud buildup given to it by the editor and the tedious opening paragraphs. But I hung on desperately to the thread of narrative and found that this suddenly turned into a tightly linked chain of logical development, plated with good emotional patina. It is the closest call in years that I've had toward experiencing the reading delight that I used to get out of the prozines of the 1930's when they were unyellowed at the edges.

But this same issue of Amazing demonstrates the desperation to which editors are reduced. The other story mentioned on the cover is Ron Goulart's Yes Men of Venus, a Burroughs parody that would not attract particular comment if it appeared in any fanzine. It would be unjust to the author's intentions to claim that this story possesses any literary or imaginative merit. It exists simply to ridicule fiction that is extremely susceptible to such treatment. If a prozine is unable to find anything better than this for a cover slot, things are as critical in the field as we've been claiming for so long.

One curious thing that became more and more evident as I delved through the long-neglected pages of contemporary prozines is that they are doing just what the fanzines are doing without getting blamed for it: publishing stuff that has no relation to science fiction or fantasy. I don't refer to "science fact articles" but to stories that are as mundane as a fanzine discussion of belt buckles. This July Amazing has a sample entitled ominously The Formula, by Arthur Porges. The same gentleman has an exactly similar piece of mundane fiction in the August Analog, Controlled Experiment. They are variations on the same theme: someone apparently has nonhuman abilities and uses a trick to

try to fool people into accepting their existence. Irwin Lewis' To Invade New York... in the same Analog is another example of the mundane material that passes in the prozines uncriticized for its deviation from policy. This is nothing more than an account of someone's belief that an enemy intends to paralyze New York by causing all the traffic lights to turn green and jamming the subway turnstiles. If this is science fiction, so is every detective story in which the villain turns off the electric light after killing his victim. I don't claim there is any particular reason why prozines should not publish mundane fiction. I do say that the people who lament the intrusion of mundane stuff into fanzines should pick a bigger target occasionally.

There are several other stories in these 13 issues that I enjoyed somewhat, but not many. I read the first two instalments of Heinlein's Glory Road and was moderately entertained, but it may be significant that I forgot all about the last instalment until that issue had gone off the stands. A New York informant says that Heinlein himself cut 120,000 words from the novel for magazine serialization. It could hardly have gone intact into F&SF but I think it would be more reasonable to publish 30,000 uncut words from somewhere in the narrative. The abrupt transitions, loose threads, bewildering brief treatments of various topics, all are ruinous to enjoyment of the novel. It is sufficiently picaresque to permit enjoyment of one of those "unabridged excerpts" that we occasionally read about in advertisements.

Harry Harrison's The Ethical Engineer in Analog also had its moments. The absurd title and completely irrelevant opening scene almost disgusted me with it before I discovered that the greater part of it is an adventure tale somewhat reminiscent of some of the old Unknown novels. This narrative also gives an abridged impression, but this could very well be the result of the writer's failure to tell the entire story on the grounds that Campbell wouldn't know the difference anyway.

Another criticism directed endlessly to the fanzines by outsiders and neofans involves the difficulty of understanding everything in them, before a fan penetrates the inner circle and has a couple of years' fanac behind him. I find that there are flaws of exactly this sort in the prozines. I had not read an Analog for several years and didn't recall anything in fanzines about Joseph Goodavage and his ideas. So I could make no sense whatever about the "Report on Crucial Experiment No. 5" when I encountered it in the July issue, and I felt no more competent to cope with the similar item in the August issue. "Astro forecast" means nothing to the new or prodigal reader, but it suggests something that has been deduced from artificial satellites. I have since been given to understand that all this actually derives from a second cousin to astrology. I see no difference between this type of unexplained material, covering three pages, and a mention of Nydahl's disease in a fanzine, other than that of quantity of space consumed by the mystery. I must try to remember my intention to look up back files of the local newspapers and determine if these comparisons cheat by skipping weather situations that did not conform.

Fantastic Stories of Imagination is rather alarming because of several dubious themes that run obsessively through most of its stories: escape from reality into the past and uncertainty about the reality of the world around us, in particular. A little of this isn't objectionable. But story after story on these premises make it appear that the magazine is intended solely to make schizophreniacs feel at home. There is another sample of the ingroup tradition in the August Fantastic. I hadn't read a Leiber Grey Mouser story for many years, had forgotten everything about those I'd previously encountered, and

found Bazaar of the Bizarre quite impossible to enjoy properly. It gave me the same leftout feeling that I experienced in 1938 when I first read faan fiction in which the individuals were thinly disguised New York and Philadelphia fans about whose personalities and activities I knew nothing.

One great difficulty with the current prozines is that of determining what is meant seriously. Alfred Bester's They Don't Make Life Like They Used To gave me the impression that this was a parody on all the cliches and stereotypes of after-the-bombs stories written in the past decade. The impotence of the two survivors, the clockwork regularity with which something collapses, the absurd clinging to certain conventions while others are skipped over lightly—all these and many other elements seem to be deadpan comments on the events in many very bad stories and a very few good ones like The Long Loud Silence and Rebirth. Yet the two blurbs by Avram Davidson in this magazine give me an uncomfortable impression that he believes it's at least a semi-serious story. If Sam Moskowitz had ever displayed anything resembling a sense of humor, I would take for granted that the reprint in the August Fantastic is the result of it. The Devil in Hollywood might very well be the winner in a contest for the fantasy story in the past half-century of publishing that was not read by the most persons, was not remembered by any of the minority with the greatest unanimity, and that was most utterly forgotten one month after it hit the stands. Yet in this reprint it is given the full barrage of the Fantastic reprint . . . scholarship and an illustration that accomplishes the difficult feat of parodying Prosser.

I don't see much complaint about the dreadful editing of today's prozines. Stories are jumped to the end of some magazines in arbitrary manner, a dangerous proceeding when the paper and binding are so cheap that the number of leafings-through without disintegration is sharply limited. Proofreading is as bad in them as in a daily newspaper, and whatever the production difficulties, the prozines have more time to catch mistakes than a daily publication. The clustering nature of spelling errors in some stories and their comparative absence from others makes it probable that the author got the words wrong and neither editor nor proofreader, if the jobs are done by two separate persons, know the difference. In all the typographical eccentricities of fanzines, I don't recall anything like the use of toward's in a recent Analog. Campbell obviously forgot to put the Analytical Laboratory into the July Analog, where In Times To Come got a half-page with three inches of white space, and where two Peace Corps plugs, unpaid advertising, were used to fill holes, then he proclaimed pathetically in the August issue about "space problems on this type-metal jig-saw puzzle called Analog" and refers to "not having any room last month."

I suspect it will be another ten years before I read 13 more prozine issues. Today's prozines are scandalously overpriced and under-edited. The level of the writing is no better on the average, and the average quality of the illustrations is much lower, than the prose and pictures that are found in today's better fanzines. I see no reason why we should worry if all the remaining prozines collapse completely, for the few readable stories that they publish would find their way into book form, without much doubt. Besides, the dissolution of the prozines might give the few talented persons connected with them, like Avram and Pohl, enough spare time to resume their much more entertaining and readable output, for the fanzines. If I get any more urges to read prozines, meanwhile, there are boxes full of old ones in the attic, waiting to be enjoyed again.

The Waiting Game

The last time I was in Boston, I asked my fannish friend about Walter Thygessen. There was a persistent and exciting rumor that this elusive and great writer lived in that city.

"You won't have any luck with him," Jim Bailey warned me. "He doesn't attend cons or club meetings. He'll send you his autograph if you write him in care of his publishers but he won't give you any other kind of answer to your letters. He doesn't have a telephone, not even an unlisted one. All he does is write."

"And how he writes!" I said to Jim, with more sincerity than felicity of phrasing. I'd just finished reading "Elms in Thunder". It had left me unable to say anything polished and rational because I was still reeling from the unexpected poetry that this realist had put into his latest sf. novel. He'd outdone Heinlein for the savoir faire and worldly knowhow that bobbed up in every page of the Red Spot series of books. It didn't seem possible that one man could have that versatility. I haven't acted neofannish for years, I hope, but I had an idea that would have been worthy of the newest NFFF recruit. "I have three days ahead of me with nothing in particular to do. What if I try a new approach? I'll start to follow him around like a pet poodle. I don't care how much a great author wants to be separated from his public. He'll notice me pretty soon and he'll either ask what I'm doing or call police or hit me on the nose. No matter how he reacts, I'll have a chance to get some good long looks at him. Maybe he'll even think I'm worth talking to, when he finds out how much trouble I'm taking."

"Leave me out of this," Jim protested.

"All you have to do is get me started. Just get me within sight of Thygessen somehow. I'll do the rest."

"Well, you can usually find him in Club 13 at this time. I'll take you there, on a condition. Don't bother him while he's there."

"Of course not. I've told you, all I'm going to do is keep in the line of sight."

It was exactly the kind of place where you'd expect Walter Thygessen to dine. I was nervous, not only because of the dubious procedure that I was launching, but because I don't feel comfortable in such fancy and expensive places. Jim and I had just ordered the least we could decently command when Jim waved a thumb inconspicuously. "There he is. Over by the sick palm."

I saw the man sitting alone at the table with a strange sense of familiarity. But this wasn't the deja vu phenomenon. This was the recognition that comes on that rarest of occasions, when a mental picture of an individual suddenly manifests itself accurately in flesh and bone. Even seated, the man was obviously inches above six feet in size. He had the thick hair, ruddy complexion, firm lips and deepset eyes that every reader thought that Walter Thygessen must possess. Every great writer must put something of himself into his heroes and what was more natural than that a very great writer, the first to make sf. respectable in mundane literary circles since Wells, should paint his own physical picture in his heroes? I was even prepared for the impeccable and very expensive cut of the clothing. A writer who had mixed with the great of the world often enough to depict them so convincingly in "The Flag Was Still There" must dress as their equals.

I stared unblinkingly at the great figure of the man. He was studying a menu while a frail-looking waiter stood slightly slumped. I felt that there was no cruelty in delaying the order while the waiter stood on aching feet. Walter Thygessen would order food with the same deliberation and intelligence that he chose a figure of

speech. Besides, I intended to wait for three days, if necessary, to be noticed. I couldn't feel sorry that a tired old man must wait three minutes to take an order.

Then he reached a decision and began to talk, intently and deliberately as if he were dictating the climactic chapter of a novel. He did not wave his hands or nod his head. Such gestures would be superfluous in a man who made every word count in his fiction. Was it Knight or Davidson who said in a review that an expert editor could calculate to within 250 words the count of a Thygessen novel, given a brief plot outline and the first two pages of manuscript?

"Is he something like your picture of him?" Jim asked me. I started to answer, then shut up. A young man had just approached the table by the sick palm and had begun to talk rapidly. It was too far from my table to hear the words but I am pretty sure that I could catch the newcmer's voice penetrating the hubbub of the room. The young man was gesticulating loudly enough with his arms, at any rate.

My mental picture of Walter Thygessen would have offered the young man a chair at his table and quieted him with the steady gaze of those eyes under their prominent brows, had this been a dream or a waking fantasy. And in reality, that's exactly what happened. It was impossible to imagine the writer showing turmoil in the company of any agitated conversationalist. The man who had described with such scap-elized sharpness the leavetaking and death scenes of the blinded scientist and his children in "The Flag Was Still There" would not be upset by whatever trivial matter an acquaintance was pressing upon him. The youth grew visibly calmer. I couldn't hear whatever comforting words were producing this effect, but I was staring at the lips from which they emerged and this produced the most remarkable aural illusion. I thought that I heard that deep and diction-perfect voice, although my imagination did not supply me with intelligent words. Instead I got a series of nonsense syllables that were perfectly impressive. It was something like the occasional dream in which you are affected sincerely by a series of illogical and impossible events.

I've never been a jealous sort of person. But when I saw the next thing that occurred at that table, I felt an emotion that can hardly be defined in other terms. From somewhere in his suit, my quarry had produced several sheets of paper. They were large and looked unfolded and I can't imagine where he had been carrying them in this manner. He was writing on them, not rapidly but with the most perfect rhythm of the hand and without the least hesitation, line after line. His young companion shifted nervously in the chair. I squinted for a while, then tried the other tricks, first holding my glasses a couple of inches in front of my nose and then looking through them at the top edge near the frame. None of these expedients made it possible for me to make out a word of the manuscript that was forming before my eyes. I looked hard at Jim, a terrible suspicion forming. Had Jim been lying to me about Thygessen's seclusive habits? Was this youth another fan, for whom he was writing out something from a work in progress?

The waiter returned, slowly and bent. The men at the table took no notice of him. The waiter with his free hand appeared about ready to clear away the loose sheets of paper and serve the meal, then obviously feared that this might upset the pair. He instead propped the free hand on the top of an unoccupied chair and waited. Even from this distance, I could see that his tray was beginning to quiver a little. Something finally made the youth look up. He said something to the waiter and the old man recoiled. I suppose he accused him of spying on the manuscript. Then with an angry gesture the youth grabbed the written sheets. My hero smiled for the first time. The

waiter began to serve. The young man walked away, looking upset.

"Jim, I'm going over there," I said. "You can see for yourself that he talks to people. What's the use in waiting around like this?"

"But you can't. Don't you realize that he--"

I didn't hear the rest. The young man had reached an exit and encountered a girl dressed in something dark. They talked for not more than ten seconds and she uttered a little scream, more like a wail. And she almost ran in a beeline for the table I'd been watching. I suppose the young man left; I didn't see him after that.

I could count on Thygessen to cope with this new situation, although I realized now that this was more than a reader's encounter with a great writer. He rose, pulled out a chair for the girl. She was red in the face and ignored the chair. He closed one of those big hands around the upper part of her right arm and accomplished something extraordinary. Apparently he pulled down very hard and almost instantly exerted an alternating upper motion, because the girl found herself sitting in the chair, bolt upright, before she knew what had happened. He beckoned to the waiter again. The paper was gone, to whatever mysterious place it had emerged from.

At this point, the girl began to cry, staring straight at him, without moving her head or hands. It was extraordinary. Even at my distance I could see the tears rolling down that face that got redder and redder, and for some reason became apparently plumper and rounder. His back was now to me and I have no idea what he may have been telling her. She didn't move until the waiter arrived and she waved him away angrily.

My hero bent forward toward her. She reached into her purse, fumbled for something that I couldn't see, handed it to him, and he gave it back to her. At this point comes the most difficult episode to describe. I don't want to intimate that Walker Thygessen might possess supernatural muscular coordination or reflexes. However, I saw with perfect distinctness the girl reach for a large carafe of water on the table, raise it in her right hand like a hand grenade, and throw it straight into the face of the seated man. He did not move a muscle, I tell you, until container and contents had left her hand and were crossing the 24 inches or so that separated them. Then he ducked, so fast that I saw for a moment two of him through persistence of vision. The bottle and liquid made a mess on the floor almost at my feet. The girl squealed again and dashed for the door.

I was already on my way to his table. I couldn't restrain myself. "Mr. Thygessen," I told him, "that was the most magnificent handling of a situation--"

"My name's Wilson," the man said. "I'm sorry if you almost got drenched."

"I know who you are. Is it true that your next novel--"

Suddenly his card case was in his hand. He put a card into my hand. "Warren Wilson, master plumber," it said. I looked suddenly back at Jim. His finger was signalling something frantically. "I'm sorry about the disturbance," the man told me. "Now, if you'll pardon me, I have another engagement."

I started to follow him, determined not to let my hero trick me in this manner. Then I felt something tapping me on the shoulder. It was two thin and white fingers. They belonged to the waiter. He had a large and not too clean rag in one hand, a whiskbroom and container in the other. He had almost completed the job of mopping up the mess on the floor.

"I couldn't help overhearing," the waiter said. "You see, I'm Walter Thygessen."

Pro and Con

I do not intend to write a DisCon report, Buck Coulson. But there are certain matters involved in my first experience with a world convention that will serve as a coda to the conreport in the previous issue of Horizons. All fandom might suffer a frightful convulsion, if a fan failed to write anything at all for publication about his first worldcon.

There is a certain finality involved in my fannish career in these early days of September. The DisCon was the final remaining opportunity for me to get out of fannish obligations completely, cleanly and without extensive explanations. Periodically this or that fan has either departed our midst or changed beyond all recognition as a result of some cataclysmic experience at a worldcon. Nobody would believe me if, after a quarter-century of fanac, I suddenly announced that I had tired of reading fanzines or felt myself just arrived at a maturity too advanced to permit me to indulge in fannish rites. But if I should have begun, the day after the DisCon ended, to refuse all mail, or had rotated Summit Avenue into the twonk dimension, fandom would have understood that I just had undergone a climactic experience similar to the one Jack Chapman Miske suffered. I didn't have any unspeakable experiences in Washington and I like fandom too much to pretend that something nasty revolted me there. So now I am doomed for a certain time (until my incapacitation or death) to walk the fannish night. It's difficult to think of any fannish events that could drive me into total gaffiation, while the momentum and bad habits of 25 years of fanac have swooshed me unscathed past the DisCon.

But I almost didn't attend the DisCon. In fact, I experienced a narrow escape from a very tight spot just a couple of days before that event. All during my career in fandom, my letters have been written, my stencils have been cut, my mail has been read with the fleshiest part of my anatomy pressed against a comfortable sponge rubber pad on the cane seat of my massive desk chair. I was writing a letter that night when I heard a crackling noise and experienced a sinking sensation. It would be nice to claim that my intellect immediately deduced the events that were sequencing. But reflexes are to thank for the fact that I jumped up instantly in alarm and when I began to think, an earthquake was the natural phenomenon to come to mind. But an inspection of my immediate environment gave no evidence of earthshaking events. Then I saw the spoor of my mishap: some fragments of cane on the floor beneath my chair. I realized the extent of my escape only when I raised the pad and looked at the yawning hole that had opened in that chair's seat. With the slightest delay in that instinctive leap, I should have found myself impacted in a jackknifed position of extreme undignity. Rescue wouldn't have come for nearly 24 hours, after someone remembered at the office that I hadn't shown up yet. I'm sure I would have been in no condition to attend a worldcon until I had recovered mobility and had regrown skin over the punctured areas.

Most of my remarks about the DisCon last issue still hold good. But let me say some things about which I am now more certain. I spent one full day and most of two other days in Washington in the exclusive company of fans. This experience confirmed the conviction that I had acquired at the 1960 and 1961 Phillycons: that science fiction fans and pros are quite normal, good, sound and healthy people. They are not a lot of handicapped humans attempting to use fandom as a crutch, as Jack Speer intimates; they are not a group of half-sane individuals with only one sane person somehow included in their number, as Buck Coulson recently described them; they are not the anti-social, patho-

logically repressed, and perverted creatures imagined by the gay inspired school of fannish psychiatry. They are no different except in field of interest from most other groups that have conventions. They have more intelligence than the conventioning Moose and less intelligence than the conventioning atomic scientists; they hold their liquor somewhat better than American Legion members and somewhat worse than Rotarians; they get along among themselves during the convention much better than a state AFL meeting and not quite as well as a Lutheran synod in session. I imagine that I have attended more varieties of conventions than anyone in FAPA, because of my work, and I felt at home at the DisCon immediately. Conventions are all like one another, whatever the surface differences, just as all men are basically similar. The person who claims to find something terribly different in fans en masse, whether good or bad, is as nastily mistaken as the person who claims that a man is different from other humans because he has black skin or was born in Russia.

It would be hypocrisy to claim that I found everything at the Statler Hilton on those three days impeccably perfect. But I don't intend to add to the store of misery that has accumulated in the world by complaining specifically about the dissatisfactory things. They were in the minority, I had foreseen some of them clearly enough to be resigned to their occurrence, and hardly any of them were the fault of anything more evil than circumstances or my own idiosyncracies. I was bored stiff by the Hugo luncheon but this hardly counts on the debit list because I should have known that anything as pro-oriented would not be calculated to put me into raptures. There were compensating graces even during those three hours. I had a pleasant chat with Mike Deckinger, who sat beside me, and the rewarding surprise to find him immensely more grownup and a splendidly distinct personality today, in contrast with the tentative youth I'd met in Philadelphia a couple of years ago. His fiancée, with us at the table, is a topnotch person, and I'm sure I don't know which of the pair is luckier to have found the other. Then there was the backhanded consolation that if I had not attended the luncheon, I might have been even more bored, because there were precious few non-dining fans outside the Presidential Room during the meal.

I made some odd miscalculations because of my ignorance of what would result from the first combination of Warner and worldcon. I took not only a bit more than a hundred dollars in currency but also a checkbook with me, fearing that I would splurge from such constant and prolonged imminence to hucksters. I got home with the checkbook unopened and most of the currency still in my possession. I hardly got over the ten-buck spending total, if the unavoidable trio of transportation to and from Washington, lodging, and food are left out of the account. I ordered a copy of the banquet photograph, joined the Frisco although I have no intention of attending it, paid for my luncheon ticket, and that was it. I closed my eyes tightly every time I caught the scent of old prozines and new books. The auction terrified me by the height of the prices and offered little that interested me. My reaction to the art show was even less spectacular than I'd expected. The style and quality of art by fans that looks fine on fanzine covers and when compared with prozine art gives me an entirely different impression when viewed as an art exhibition. There was literally nothing in that room for which I would have considered paying more than a fraction of the asking price or base bid, with perhaps a half-dozen exceptions, and most of those exceptions were ATOM cartoons. Perhaps the best demonstration of my reaction was my mistaken first impression that the Lawrence painting was selling for 50¢, rather than being sold in a raffle on which chances cost that sum. I can't help judging art by general artistic standards when I see it under something

resembling the environment of a mundane display of art. Then there is the matter of the individuals with whom I spent particularly large segments of time at the DisCon. Never in my wildest conjectures would I have grasped one truth: that Ed Wood, of all conceivable people, and I would hit it off so well. Another total impossibility was that I should have Dr. E. E. Smith to myself for an entire halfhour Sunday morning and that we should spend that time in a secluded corner of the upper lobby talking about nothing but photography. I imagine that we would be there yet if his daughter hadn't dragged him away by brute force to get him dressed for the luncheon. Yet another astonishing discovery was created by breakfast with Les Nirenberg, who evinced a continuing interest in fandom that I couldn't have guessed from a fan who had turned down FAPA membership and had made such a success of Panic Button. But perhaps my greatest miscalculation, the one that it gave me the greatest pleasure to see turning out so sloppily, was the one concerning what I would do during the con. I resigned myself to my usual procedure, that of going off in several directions at the same time, attempting to accomplish more than one person can achieve and getting nothing done properly as a result. I almost took along the movie camera and tape recorder to Washington in addition to the Contax. I stuffed one pocket full of copypaper for note-taking purposes. I bought a lot of stamps for use at the convention. To my delight, I did not take a note on anything except a few minor matters like room numbers. I didn't regret the absence of the tape recorder and I shot off only one roll of film, after deciding that the banquet photograph would serve much the same purpose as making myself miserable tracking down people to take their pictures myself. Despite some brisk twinges of conscience, I didn't get signatures for the "gee, we miss you, we wish you were here" documents that I'd intended to prepare for some fannish friends who couldn't make it. Instead of doing such useful and systematic things, I simply stood and sat around talking. It saved me from writing a long conreport, from accumulating lots of useless souvenirs, and kept me healthy. I took one aspirin as soon as I registered at the hotel and didn't have a sign of a headache, belly-ache, or twitching nerves for the entire duration of the convention.

Perhaps my biggest worry had been how to fit my teetotaling self into the high humidity that prevails at a worldcon. Someone had advised me to find an expert on the topic and get from him the largest, strongest drink available as soon as I arrived, then carry it around with me for the ensuing three days. Another fan assured me that this type of compromise with convictions was not necessary and that I should simply avail myself of soft drinks. I ended up by keeping my hands in my pockets or folded across my concave breast while at parties, nobody seemed to consider me conspicuous for this behavior, and I felt honest about it. Of course, I can't judge the extremity of the parties at the DisCon with those of past worldcons. But I was told that the situation in the Californians' rooms Sunday morning made a very respectable showing against the memory of the congestion and noise of celebrated room parties of previous cons. If this is so, I am disillusioned. It was not nearly as bad as the midway at the Hagerstown fair on a Friday night or the Washington County courtroom during a murder trial. I did not even get bruised. I did have a sore throat for some hours because I insisted on continuing to converse all during the costume ball. I'm not accustomed to talking loudly enough to be heard over a competing orchestra, public address system, and several hundred other conversationalists.

It's just as well that I didn't commit myself to do a conreport for anyone, because I attended little of the formal program. I saw Saturday afternoon only a few minutes of the comic art clambake. On

Sunday, I got in late for the FAPA meeting, skipped the rest of the afternoon program except the luncheon, and in the evening heard perhaps five minutes of Seabury Quinn, then patronized the entire business meeting. George Scithers is the best presiding officer in my experience of business meetings of any kind. Be sure to elect him to Congress as soon as possible. I saw nothing on Monday's program except a few frightening moments of the first auction. Moreover, I do not feel any particular urge to purchase the proceedings, assuming that they are published. Worldcon programs are absurdly overloaded on the professional side of the balance. The DisCon scheduled one fancish topic in its open sessions, somewhat more than normal for recent cons. Unfortunately, it's one of the few phases of fandom that have no significance to me, the matter of stenciling fan art. For me to attend this would be like the Venus de Milo purchasing a manicure set.

Trips to Washington occur for me not more often than monthly, and occasionally several months elapse without my penetrating the District line. So I'm not an authority on the general atmosphere of the portion of the capital outside the worldcon at the start of this September. But I have the firmest kind of impression that the people who normally live and work in Washington were more relaxed and cheerful than at any time in my memory. Maybe everyone was relieved that the big demonstration hadn't resulted in riots. Perhaps the most sensible late summer temperatures I've ever experienced in Washington helped the morale of the public. Whatever the cause, I feel quite sure that the taxi drivers, waitresses, pedestrians, drivers, and even the tourists were in the finest humor that I've ever found in Washington. If this could be a permanent state of affairs, I wouldn't mind residing there. With some hesitation, I might as well try to prove my point by describing the last thing that happened to me during the trip, although it's hardly likely that I'll be believed. Greyhound Buses treated me magnificently. To return to Hagerstown, I arrived at the terminal at the very moment that my bus was due to leave, knowing that no Greyhound has ever crept from the kennel less than a quarter-hour behind schedule. But right on the dot, I saw my steed begin to edge from its stall. Unwilling to believe this impossible apparition, I asked the driver of the neighboring bus if this really was happening. He immediately chased the departing bus a half-block up I Street, came back in panting defeat, then offered me a seat on his own bus, the Detroit express, which doesn't stop in Hagerstown. Fortunately, the Hagerstown signal department cooperated by providing him with a red light at an intersection, permitting me to jump off without delaying the other passengers or creating an unscheduled stop that might have caused all sorts of interstate complications.

I paid little attention to the pros at the DisCon. Theoretically, I suppose that I'm suspended halfway between the two worlds of fandom and prodom, since I'm a fan at heart and I probably earn more each year from my literary labors than four-fifths of the pros at the worldcon. I didn't go into the bar at all, undoubtedly missing the pros at their best. I felt a trifle sorry for Campbell, who was wandering around alone and unnoticed a great deal of the time. It was amusing to watch the baffled and embarrassed expression sweep over the faces of several pros to whom I was introduced: the individual doing the introduction supplied only my name and these pros had obviously never heard of me and were afraid they should have. The opposite side of the coin turned up when one quite celebrated editor not only remembered me from our sole meeting two years ago but also gave me a copy of his latest publication, then I succeeded in making Fritz Leiber smile briefly at a mildly ingenious remark, and in the adventure with

Dr. Smith. I didn't get to talk with Asimov, regrettably, because I am curious about him. His toastmastering left me completely cold at the luncheon, and it would be nice to know if he is an acquired taste or simply someone whose style sets up an allergy in me. I am afraid that I committed one serious booboo. During a party someone, a rather slender, blond and quiet man of perhaps 35 years asked me if I was the Harry Warner who had sold some stories to the prozines. He rattled off fluently several titles and the magazines that published them. I explained that I had been selling with fair regularity for a year or two, then realized that I was not likely ever to write first-rate science fiction, saw no reason to unloose on the world still more second-rate stf., a substance already flooding the nation, and felt that the kind of money paid by the prozines was not sufficient to cause me to write for solely financial reasons. He looked hurt and walked away a moment later, after I'd noticed that he wore no nametag and realized that he might be a pro rather than a fan. Maybe I'll never know if I caused someone unhappiness with my reasoning.

It was gratifying to notice the interest in the fan history project that seems to be general throughout fandom. It may be that some of the older fans will be as anxious for me to stop writing it as they now profess themselves to be to see it start to appear in print. Several fans brought to Washington substantial quantities of documents that will help me immensely, like minutes of extinct local clubs and rare fanzines. I had hoped to be able to tell everyone that part of the history was completed and awaiting publication. But the status as of Labor Day was simply: about 25,000 words complete in first draft, requiring to be rewritten and copyrighted before they go to stencils. It has been a difficult summer for finding spare time and the first half of autumn does not hold promise of much improvement.

So now I'm a convention fan but I don't aim to challenge the more celebrated examples of this breed. It's a good thing that Angel Records didn't release its promised lp set of Schnabel's Beethoven sonatas just before the DisCon, because I'm quite sure that nothing could have dissuaded me from diverting the money intended for the DisCon to those discs. That being so, I can't imagine that I'll feel any desire to go to San Francisco next year, unless some completely impossible series of events should leave me free from necessity to work and with unlimited supplies of spare cash. "I'm not going, either," one sensible southern fan told me. "It'd cost me just about as much as a year of college tuition." I'm quite sure that the smaller dimensions of a Lunacon or Phillycon will satisfy me in 1964 if I get the con urge. I can imagine myself going to England the following year, because I want to see the country, an incentive that California does not offer me. I heard rumblings in Washington that both Philadelphia and Baltimore will be interested in getting the bid for 1967 and I will tentatively promise to be present that year, health permitting.

Maybe the conreports this autumn will be different, in that they will omit the bitching at the con committee and hotel. However others react, I must add to this nonconreport my possibly naive but absolutely firm conviction that the DisCon committee did all that could reasonably be expected of such a group for the confort and entertainment of the fans, without disrupting traditions and the desires of the majority to arrange certain factors to my own peculiar and minority taste. The hotel is beginning to grow a bit shabby and within a few more years it may be rundown enough for me to feel comfortable in it. But it gave me the novel thrill of sleeping under two blankets on the first day of September. The air conditioning was so potent in my room that it was wintry even with the dial turned all the way to "warmer" and I refused to complain to the management. Use of blankets in Washington over Labor Day will be something to tell the grandchildren about.

Two-Week Stand in the Coliseum

As most FAPAns know, I got saddled with the city editorship of Hagerstown's morning newspaper last year. This involves assuming the editor's duty when he isn't around. Vacations, days off, conventions, and other phenomena give me the temporary bossing duties on about one out of five working days throughout the year. But this summer came the longest unbroken period of this editorless condition at the newspaper so far for me. The editor took two weeks of vacation consecutively for the first time since I'd been upgraded. Moreover, this was the first time that he was off without disclosing to me his intended whereabouts. I couldn't call for help if I got into trouble. One of the defects of journalism in Hagerstown, quite possibly the smallest defect, is that there is nothing beyond the second in command on either of the daily papers and there is no shifting between the two staffs. Thus, if both the editor and I should be out of town or incapacitated simultaneously, or a combination of these difficulties should occur, there would be nobody to leap to the rudder or helm or whatever this abortive metaphor requires. This has been the situation ever since anyone's memory extends and it has never produced difficulties. Like the precious few men who know the secret formula of Coca-Cola, the editor and I attempt not to eat together or to ride in the same vehicle, in order to avoid sharing simultaneous poisoning or accident. During my last broken hip, he did tell me that he was thinking of initiating another member of the staff into the arcane secrets of the editorship. But he complained that he didn't quite know how to do it and maybe he wouldn't get the virus that was then decimating the office staff. I can recall some close calls in the past, but always one or the other has staggered up from a sickbed or surmounted transportation difficulties and kept the newspaper appearing. Technically, I suppose that Pearl Harbor could be claimed as an occasion when the system broke down. Both the editor and city editor were at different football games that afternoon, neither returned until early evening, and then it was too late to put out an extra. The front office erupted, not knowing that the whole concept of extra would be extinct within another five years, killed by union rules and interred by television.

I don't intend to claim that my presence during those two weeks was the only thing that kept The Morning Herald appearing daily. The newspaper has always managed to come out whatever the situation. Its perfect record has survived a stereotypers' strike (non-union composing room men knew more about operating the machinery than the strikers assumed), complete collapses of the press (newspapers in neighboring cities offered their machinery), and a blizzard that cut off all telephone, teletype and telegram connections with the rest of the space-time continuum, back in the 1920's before news broadcasts were frequent and extensive on the radio. (KDKA in Pittsburgh learned of the local plight through a ham operator, canceled many of its regular programs, and read Pittsburgh newspapers over the air slowly enough for Hagerstown journalists to copy down the news.) But my failure to do the work properly could cause severe difficulties during those two weeks. The newspaper would not break its regularity record, but some other perfect mark might be threatened, such as its distinction of never suffering action for libel or my record of never having been fired from any job. I'll tell you immediately that nothing serious went wrong, because I don't intend to make this a suspense epic. Instead, I thought it might be instructive to show how odd, picayunish, and exasperating are the matters that take up much of the time of the person running the news department of a daily publication. It's quite different from the text-

book and cinema incarnations. And lest anyone accuse me of magnifying the myriads under my command, I should point out that with the editor departed, the news staff of the morning paper consists of a telegraph editor, a tri-state editor who handles stuff that occurs neither in the city and county nor yet too far to be interesting, two proofreaders, two social page girls, two sports department inhabitants, three reporters, two parttime employes who lead a twilight life in which general reporters and sports writers are inextricably blended, and me. With this imposing throng of journalists, we put out a newspaper that appears as frequently and contains 75% as much lineage as morning papers in the nation's largest cities.

The editor's vacation covered the weeks beginning July 28 and August 4. But my solo stint began sooner. He always goes home at midnight Friday, leaving me to sit up with the Morning Herald until parturition is complete several hours later Saturday morning. Friday night, July 26, had been a noisy one because I was slightly nervous and very angry. My neat plan for assigning people to duties on the following Sunday had been disrupted by a ruling from the circulation department. The tri-state editor's customary substitute, one of the reporters, was henceforth prohibited from fulfilling that function because she'd fouled up the page often enough recently to cause subscribers in these outlying precincts to grumble audibly. It meant a musical chairs sort of resorting of duties. Right here is another fact of life that journalism majors don't learn: on a newspaper published daily except Sunday with a five-day working week, some people are off every night. It averages out to two defections per working night in this case. Moreover, most of the employes have enough years of service to get three weeks' vacation and the company likes vacations to be taken during the summer months. In addition to the editor, one staff member was vacationing in one of my two weeks and two staff members joined the editor in leisure the other week. This meant three or four persons either doubling up on jobs or doing other people's work every night. The only asset I haven't mentioned was what the management called a journalism intern, although the rest of us referred to the individual as summer help or that college kid. He was on the payroll, but just barely, and got some kind of credits toward his coming year's courses at the University of Maryland through this summer occupation. I had been told on his arrival to help him learn the ropes, but I soon found that he already knew it all, like many another college student. One last bummer factor was that one reporter had already resigned as of September one, to resume his education, and didn't care if he did his work or not in those final weeks.

So I refused to say goodbye to the editor when he left at midnight and he failed to leave with me the name of the electrician who should be called in the event of a power failure. I worked myself into a better humor by chatting with the composing room foreman about the circuit court cases I'd covered that day. The one that I wrote a galley about, involving a man on trial for stealing \$643 from an old-fashioned country grocery store, was interesting only for the fact that the store kept that sum in a cigarbox in plain view as a cashbox, and when the theft was discovered, the proprietor had remarked: "Well, it's lucky there's more upstairs." The interesting case was one that I had given only two sentences to despite its novelty. One Fred Henson was a decrepit old soul who had been charged with carnal knowledge but acquitted by virtue of insanity. The poor fellow was paralyzed in virtually all parts of the body with a single important exception. The state's attorney had objected vigorously every time the defense lawyer had referred to Henson as an invalid.

Sunday, July 28, was the first full day of my solo work. It would be nice to explain how I arrived at the office to find a desk piled high with news copy, a sheaf of long distance calls awaiting me at the switchboard, and a shady-looking visitor who confided in me the inside story on what happened to Ambrose Bierce. But the reality is quite different. There was no news on my desk because the person in charge gets there before anyone else early Sunday afternoon. There were no messages at the switchboard because the thing isn't womaned on Sundays, since nobody is in the business or advertising departments. Instead of the visitor with a scoop for me, there were an assortment of switches requiring attention so that AP copy and tape would arrive and people wouldn't break their necks on dark stairs. And the editor's first duty at the start of a new week is the incredibly dreary one of going through about fifty pounds of mail that has arrived over the weekend, first segregating that intended for other departments, then sorting that destined for the news staff of the morning paper by suitable recipients, finally opening several hundred envelopes, knowing almost all will be useless press releases of no local interest, but one or two will involve something worth publishing. I was about 90 minutes deep into this task on that Sunday when I realized that it was unnaturally silent. The teletype and perforator should have started a half-hour earlier. I followed the prescribed emergency procedure, which always requires two violent arguments, the first with the telephone company in Baltimore where the man on duty never wants to accept a collect call, then with the man in charge of the teletype service who always wants to blame the AP for lack of service. Hoarse but victorious, I finally determined that someone had simply forgotten to start service that Sunday and we hadn't missed anything. The familiar pounding began immediately. Eventually, to my surprise, someone showed up for work. It was the college boy, whom I got rid of by telling him to get some kind of hot weather picture. He did, in the form of a giant sun with a foreground sign from Hotel Alexander, showing only the first three letters. It was a stroke of genius, but the contrast knob was not set properly when the engraving was made on the Scan-a-graver, the sun and surrounding sky were almost identical in gray tone on the resulting engraving, and the readership was vastly puzzled when the picture appeared on the front page in the morning with a caption that told of a sun that wasn't visible. There wasn't much local news, a situation that bothered me during the entire two weeks. During these periods of responsibility, there is nobody to take over the work that I normally do myself, I must continue most of it in addition to the editor's work, so I leave the telegraph editor almost complete discretion with AP copy, aside from preempting as much space as local copy will demand. This is hard on the nerves, for he is a capable person given to occasional harebrained experiments. Last November, I discovered too late to change things that he'd used as the front page streamer: "THANKSGIVING DAY OCCURS." But during this fortnight, he was on good behavior. I managed to get everything done despite taking a total of two and one-half hours off for eating and rest breaks. We got the front page to bed at 2 a.m., so I'd put in only ten and one-half hours of work on this first day, and I felt I was lucky.

Monday, July 29, was a nightmare, however. There are two company meetings that the editor or substitute must attend each week. The one on Monday is for all department heads and the publisher. With a dozen participants, it can occasionally go on interminably. I was lucky and got out of there in a half-hour. But circuit court, where prisoners are always sentenced at 10:30 a.m., a time that has prevailed since law first came to Hagerstown, picked this particular occasion to suffer an aberration. Two prominent prisoners were up to hear their fate that

afternoon. Cecil Marks got 18 years for second degree murder. He had been fighting off and on with his wife, they had separated, and one cold February afternoon he went to the house she was staying and shot her through the head. He had claimed that he didn't realize that he had a gun with him when he went calling, and kept harping on the fact that his wife didn't want him to wipe the blood off her face when he was doing his best to be helpful. William Lee Dixon got ten years for manslaughter. He'd hit another drunk over the head with a bottle too hard and then kicked his victim after he'd fallen. I also picked up a minor civil case that gave me some difficulty in the writing. A tabloid could have had lots of fun with the local girl who was awarded \$3,600 in an action against the Maryland commissioner of motor vehicles involving her baby. But this looked worse than it was: the commissioner was defendant only because of a technicality in the state's compulsory auto insurance law. An uninsured driver had caused a collision, the collision caused a miscarriage for the girl, and it was necessary to sue the commissioner to collect from the fund that the state provides him for such cases. I had more assignment problems on this day. The only reporter available to cover the coming Republican picnic categorically refused to go to it, because she had told the party's publicity chairman that she had another assignment that night, in an effort to get gracefully out of accepting the invitation to go to the picnic with him. God took mercy on me and sent rain. I got only 90 minutes' worth of breaks on this day. Just then, Peanuts was in the midst of its annual baseball sequence. In one strip, Lucy said: "It's your responsibility, Charlie Brown. You're the pitcher. You're the one who has to hold 'em." Charlie took the words out of my lips when he replied from the pitcher's mound: "I feel like I'm standing in the middle of the Roman Colosseum." I clipped the strip and taped it to my desk, then destroyed it after two days because it was getting on my nerves.

By the following day, I was settling down to something resembling routine. This consisted of marking first of all two newspapers, the morning edition for the girl who keeps track of how much news is provided each day by each department, and the new afternoon paper to show which of its stories we could use without rewriting. Then the sorting and opening of mail, not as bad as on Sunday since the business office had already taken the items directed at other departments. Next a dash around downtown to the offices and institutions that I normally cover and telephone calls to those I didn't have time to visit. The editor's telephone doesn't ring constantly on a newspaper of this size: not oftener than every 30 minutes, as a rule. Contrary to popular legend, there aren't many requests to keep things out of the paper. I got only one during those two weeks and didn't even get cussed when I turned down the request. On Tuesday, I yelled at a staff member for the first time: the college boy who kept sneaking off to the darkroom to make prints for his own pleasure when there wasn't anyone else available to read proof. I got my first sick headache that night. The next day, I lost all faith in the reporter who was supposed to go to the picnic, when she turned in a story about policemen in which she succeeded in misspelling both the first and last names of two of the city's best known preservers of pacificity. On Thursday, after getting home at 3, I was roused before 9 by the telephone: A cousin had smashed himself up while driving a taxi, could say only one thing, "No, thank you," and this terrified his wife, because it is not his nature to refuse anything. I knew what she wanted and I refused to offer a loan. He is the son of the city's best-known and most prosperous physicians of the previous generation, after his

parents' deaths he ran through more money than I have ever known and his family couldn't be starving so soon after this accident. His wife settled for the current address of another relative who was visiting in California. Hagerstown began its annual summer bargain sale promotion this day, and I had to stick my elbow into the ribs of an elderly man to get the last remaining seat at the lunch counter because of the mobs of shoppers. I'd no sooner returned home from this lunch trip than the telephone rang again, and I was forced to jump into the car and dash to the rescue of my 90-year-old grandmother, who had bought me a watermelon along with her other groceries for the week, got into the middle of the parking lot, and realized that she couldn't carry everything. I doubt that I'd have survived that afternoon if I hadn't let my routine go hang for an hour in order to get a picture and story on the public opening of the home of Hagerstown's founder. The curators are a splendid couple, the property is secluded from the bothersome things about city life, and I relaxed among 200-year-old stone walls for the first time in five days. I needed the break, because Friday was the dreaded day. It's the telegraph editor's day off, and that left me with all the AP stuff to handle, plus makeup on several pages. To defy the fates, I deliberately began the working day by doing something unnecessary: some photography of a contest at a playground. I'd gotten some of the local news prepared the night before, so my typing fingers didn't get too sore. But this was the day that Dr. Stephen Ward was expected to die at any moment and this caused front page complications: Rusk's trip departure seemed important enough for the top streamer and Ward for the lower, but Ward's death would reverse the situation. In the rush, I somehow managed to do only one thing seriously wrong. In a headline for a small AP story I didn't read the copy carefully enough and thought that someone had killed a man when he stabbed him. The girl who got the cops' names wrong returned to my good graces by noticing what I'd done. I shot up the composing room at 2:30 a.m. because of the unforgivable botch a linotype man made of corrections on a story, running the first half of the first paragraph into the last half of the second paragraph. They tried to console me by pointing out that it made more sense that way than the way I'd written it originally. Six persons were off that night, for various reasons. I was tired when I got home, and Saturday didn't provide the relief that the day off should give. I got drenched when I miscalculated the arrival time of a thunderstorm while walking downtown, I found a dead cockroach under the piano in the afternoon, and I had a sweating spell in the evening.

The second week began better. There was little space for news in the dummy, because of the advertising situation, and it didn't matter as much that local news remained scarce. I grumbled to one reporter because he'd failed to get a story after I'd given him the basic facts on Friday, and I made the girl rewrite a column she had done on the mean treatment that clerks give customers in local stores, feeling she'd made it a little too strong. Just to make certain, on Monday I showed it to the publisher in this revised version, he felt it was still exaggerated, so I rewrote it, toning it down again. It is just as well that the original didn't run, because even this double dilution caused one large store to cancel an order for two full pages and clerks at another store sent the writer an elaborately wrapped box of overripe iris together with a warning of the kind of service she could expect the next time she went shopping. I found my own self on that Monday perhaps the most interesting local story of those two weeks. Five of the 18 families in one of the county's

smaller communities had filed action asking an injunction on the theory that it damaged the standing of their community for 60 cows to walk down the road every morning and back up the road each night. At home, the telephone was still bringing me bad news. My last great aunt had suffered a stroke and might not live. And on Tuesday, while I was hiding all things of value in the house in preparation for the arrival of the cleaning woman, I received word that my great aunt was dead. The funeral was scheduled for Friday, my one-man-gang day, 33 miles away from Hagerstown. It would upset my few remaining relatives if I didn't go to the funeral and I didn't see how I could possibly get away the minimum of two hours that attending it would entail. It worried me frightfully. My great aunt hadn't been out of her home for ten years or so and I didn't get to that Pennsylvania town very often, but we kept up a lively correspondence and toward the end, her writing became shakier but her prose grew positively poetic in an unintentional way. She had told me in the spring that she was sure that various portents indicated an imminent end of the world, and she was right in a certain way, I suppose. Around 6 a.m. Wednesday, the phenomenon that I'd been expecting happened. About twice or thrice a year I get awakened from a sound sleep by sensations that I dignify with the term of gas pains, but the symptoms are startlingly close to those of colic. I lived through it but it sort of broke up that night's sleep. It always occurs when bothersome things accumulate in such quantity and arrive so frequently that they affect my nerves. In a sense, it's a relief when it happens because it always means that I'm over the hump of this particular barrage of the arrows of fate. Sure enough, a kind relative telephoned me Wednesday with a guarantee that nobody expected me to go to the funeral under such circumstances and a reminder that my great aunt hated funerals and other death fusses herself. This was probably my easiest day of the fortnight at the office, because there was next to no local news. I might have been blamed for failure to scent it out, if it hadn't been for a strange accompanying circumstance: there wasn't even an obituary to run that night. With 100,000 persons in the immediate area, we average a half-dozen death notices each night. If nobody was dying, news was obviously taking a freak holiday that nobody could remedy. Stranger yet, there was an accidental death on Thursday but no natural deaths, and on Friday there was again a blank space where the obituaries normally belong on the dummy. Nobody on the staff could remember three such days. I had another narrow escape Wednesday night. We'd been saving for weeks an editorial page cartoon that showed a stork carrying a baby across housetops and a man on the sidewalk saying to a companion: "Well, here comes the candidate for 1999." I heard someone say that the Kennedy baby had arrived, sent it to the composing room, then a few hours later had the happy inspiration to check up on the full story. Learning that the baby was in bad shape, I made a mad dash to switch cartoons. Maybe this can be done easily on some papers, but in Hagerstown the only way to make sure it's been done is to get the unwanted mat and tear it into shreds with your own hands; otherwise, sure as fate, it will slip into the paper.

Thursday was a strange day. I made the mistake of lying down and dozing off during one of my breaks, got up too rapidly after rousing, and spent the next couple of hours in the strangest sort of daze, fully aware that I wasn't coordinating quite right but unable to shake myself into normal condition. I try as diligently as Captain Corcoran to be popular with the crew, but I got into disgrace this night with the girl who makes the engravings. She also copies off the captions from the wirephotos, because they're frequently hard to read under the poor light conditions of the composing room. I asked her this

night to leave a space between AP and Wirephoto when typing captions for the pictures. She'd been running it all together and it was frequently necessary to change it on the proof, annoying the composing room. She became a human fragmentation bomb. People from other parts of the building kept dropping in to see if I remained in one piece. I haven't figured out yet what engram this aroused, but she went over my head about it, my stand was upheld, she thereupon proclaimed that typing out captions was out of her job category, and reporters get saddled with it. Fortunately, my spirit was still so lofty over another incident on the same day that I didn't worry about the fuss. I had done something no editor in Hagerstown had ever done: rejected a dummy. The advertising department is supposed to leave at least 120 columns for non-advertising matter. Shortchanging is frequent and accepted as occupational hazard by the news staff. But this time, we had only 70 columns. I went to the advertising director who without twitching redesigned the dummy to give the edition four more pages. It took every fragment of boilerplate in the composing room to fill up but the people who heard about it were impressed.

I woke on the morning of the final day, Friday, August 9, with a clear mind and wobbly nerves. I resisted the temptation to go to work at noon rather than 1 p.m., worked hard when I did begin the duties, and tried to forget that on this particular Friday I was without the aid of the editor, telegraph editor, sports editor, social editor, and the publisher had vanished somewhere as well. At 8:24 p.m. something totally unforeseen happened. I was prepared for almost anything but this: I caught up. All the time copy for next week was in the jackets, all the AP tape was downstairs aside from sports, there wouldn't be any more local news to process if the community remained quiet, I'd forwarded the letters asking for diagnosis or advice from our syndicated physician and lovelorn expert, and the proofreaders were keeping up with the nightly struggle. I tottered to Newberry's and discovered that my favorite waitress was back on the job after apparent retirement earlier in the summer. She couldn't stand being around the kids all day long.

Things remained in this peculiar state of grace even after midnight. Somehow, the composing room foreman and I had remained on speaking terms uninterruptedly during this fortnight and he seemed a trifle awed in my presence in these early morning hours because it looked as if the front page would work out if my dummy was followed. Clyde hadn't expected such an event, after previous experience with my dummyping. I kept my thoughts about the blind hog in an acorn patch to myself. We spent the last hour reminiscing about events that prove the general shiftlessness of most of the reporters, including the time a visiting boss from South Bend had wondered why the social page copy was so slow in materializing, had gone into the news department, and found both of the girls knitting in the utmost concentration. There's a certain link between the composing room superintendent and me, because his wife once cut my toenails, a service she hasn't yet performed for him. She is a nurse on the hospital floor where they took my first broken hip.

We got to press a half-hour early that morning. I bought gas on the way home, an obligation I'd not had time to fulfill since the boss left. I hadn't received a complaint from the front office or needed to run a retraction or correction in those dozen issues. I'd managed to find a local picture for the back page daily. I'd spent over \$300 of the company's money, signing invoices for comic strips that I don't read. My one consolation was that the editor had used up all his vacation time. Pittsburgh and Houston were still playing a double header when I got home, and I fell asleep listening to it for some reason.