



— J. H. A. By —

1964 .....

JR





Horizons almost didn't get stenciled this quarter for the sublimely logical reason that its editor couldn't think of anything to write about. But the force of habit triumphed over common sense and so you are putting fingerprints and eyetracks onto the February, 1964, issue. This is FAPA number 91, whole number 97, volume 25, and number 2. Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, thunk up the words, Jean Rose drew the cover, and all the rest of the work was done by Richard H. Eney.

### In the Beginning

The Fantasy Amateur: A feller could think that his whining wasn't audible, when he grumbles and groans for a whole year and then the FAPA president complains that the officers are idle because of placid members. But there will be a monumental howl from here if anyone is dropped from the waiting list because The Fantasy Amateur isn't delivered. The post office has given me too much trouble in recent months to warrant making it the decisive force for anyone's non-membership in FAPA. I got one Christmas card returned with an "unknown" notation on the envelope, although correctly addressed to an individual who had not moved in the past four years. An Australian fanzine took seven months to reach me. I know of specific cases in which third class mail did not reach me at all. It would be so logical and simple to follow the constitution, now that we've finally disposed of that asinine acknowledgment provision.

Alexandria Trio: I've read Rogers' article thrice. Eney was kind enough to supply the ms on a prepublication basis for fan history use, I read it twice in that form, and I went through it again in published status. In many ways it's as fine as the Laney piece that inspired it. My only reservation to enthusiasm is that I'll be forgotten as the iconoclast who first tried to put ASI into its proper perspective, via an article in Void. I'm flattered to see that someone who was there agrees with my long distance interpretation, but readers will assume that I'm copying Alva's opinions, when I reiterate them in the fan history. Meanwhile, now that we've had a reprint of ASI, this rebuttal to it, the Stormy Petrel volume of word pictures of Laney, and various other reprints of his fanzine articles, isn't it time that someone published a fine, thick sheaf of his letters? He was a correspondent of unparalleled abilities, and the number of surviving letters must be subtracting in each passing year. I also sensed an extraordinarily good person was before me when I encountered Janie Lamb at the Discon. But like many others, she missed the Dorcas Bagby meeting because the word hadn't been spread sufficiently around the hotel that the meeting place had been switched to the Missouri Room.

Bisbigliando: I had already discovered that a piano is quite wide. But it has been my experience that concert grands are not normally played with the keyboard broadside to the listeners. The angle at which the instrument is placed and the distance at which the listeners had better sit if they don't want to go deaf from the loud parts cause it to provide absolutely no stereo effect in real life and it's absurd to try to provide one in the form of a stereo recording. The stereo addicts could get the same effect with two speakers and some twiddling of their tone controls, in any event, because most pianists prefer to have the bass notes on one side and the higher pitched strings on the other. The singer who insisted on using her favorite key reminds me of Sigmund Spaeth's confession about how he and his sister used to think there was a misprint in the parts for the Franck violin sonata, and always played the last movement melodies in unison instead of the canon that the composer had so carefully worked out.

Sercon's Bane: I still think that my reaction to The Cold Equations was valid. Wishing didn't make things so in the stories about lifeboat dramas after shipwrecks, but the individuals



in those stories had enough gumption to try to improvise some sort of salvation or to put up a token fight for life. Revolting Development: Even if this great rocket experiment never happened, it contains a reminder of my own inability to do things properly the simple and logical way. I've never tried to manufacture amateur missiles, not since boyhood, but there was the matter of the film sheets for stencils. I purchased stencils equipped with films for a while, then stinginess got the better of me and I bought a batch of films cheap so I could put them onto stencils myself at a saving. But when the stencil and film did not grow up together, I found it difficult to get them into the typewriter without wrinkling the film inordinately. I muddled through nearly an entire issue of Horizons, losing my temper every time I started another stencil. Finally something which I have tentatively identified as the voice of providence came to my rescue and inspired me to try inserting the stencil into the typewriter with a half-inch of the film folded over the top of the tab. Salud: Norm Metcalf hasn't published in years? I have been receiving two or three apa publications almost every three months from him during the past couple of years, representing his activity in OMPA, N'APA, and various other ayjay groups. Booze in the Night: Maybe I don't understand the unwritten laws of oneshots. But I can't help thinking that they'd be much more fun to read if someone corrected the non-inspired mistakes in spelling before the stencils are put onto the duplicator. A Propos de Rien: The poem has possibilities but it also has very large blunders that make me wonder if this isn't the first draft. What merit lies in the switch from second person singular to second person plural in the course of the seventh line and back again in next one? Then after the high-faluting tone of the beginning, the sudden jolt of the conversational "When we eloped" breaks any mood that might have been growing. "I'm willing to back the proposal to have an annual lottery to pick one waiting lister for instant FAPA membership. Anything that will get some reasonably unjaded fans as members is better than the present tradition which is not a tradition to me because the waiting list is an innovation that began after I became a member. Akvavit in Aylmer: If Norm Clarke does come to Hagerstown, the local population of jazz enthusiasts will be doubled. The only present inhabitant who is choosy about the kind of jazz he likes has a hard life, trying to be nice to this or that person who helpfully suggests that he should go to this or that restaurant or cocktail lounge and listen to the nice jazz played by a factory worker or piano teacher as a sideline. Psi-Phi: Perfume used to be something too expensive for any but the richest to use. Maybe its survival to the present day is caused by the same subconscious influences that make suburban dwellers labor over the front lawn; this has been ascribed to a survival of the time when it was a mark of distinction and wealth to possess an exceptionally green and rockfree pasture. "Ray Nelson continues to mix up wonderful insight and inspired remarks with nonsense. "Society damns to the darkness of the subconscious that part of each person's personality that does not correspond to his or her obvious physical gender." Venus Plus X did the best job of pointing out how the whole modern way of life is trending to just the opposite attitude. I agree fully with Ray's basic contentions about the impracticality of this universal brotherly love and I wish he hadn't spoiled his thesis with unbelievable statements. Kimchi: Dick Ellington has the best writing style that you'll find anywhere in FAPA. It's a kind of prose that doesn't possess eccentricities to cause it to stick in the memory. But it's good enough to be a model for aspiring essayists. I assume that it's natural and not the result of many re-writings, because Ellington correspondence possesses just the same virtues of style. "I always sign my FAPA ballot. I can't understand



why anyone should fail to engage in this form of expression opinions publicly, in voting that doesn't threaten his livelihood as a non-secret ballot for public officials conceivably could. ' ' Our Own Town was superb. I've never seen the Wilde play but I've read it several times and memory permitted me to catch the parallels and allusions without hunting the original, a process that is almost always fatal to the chances of enjoying a parody. The Ambivalent Amoeba: Diplomacy sounds like the game that I would least like to play. Nothing can be drearier or potentially harder on mankind than power politics, to my way of thinking. I even find my enjoyment of Lehar's operettas slightly spoiled because so many of them deal with the people and situations that made Europe such a mess around the turn of the century. Different: Most reference works ignore science fiction because they are aimed at adults and most science fiction is written either specifically for youngsters or turns out to be on their level despite the poor authors' diligent attempts to write adult fiction. Herzberg seems to have recognized this fact, judging by his emphasis on science fiction for high school students. But I don't think that the general literary world will pay much attention to science fiction until some of it is written that is worth serious attention by persons with grownup tastes. ' ' I don't think of sex fiction when someone says "French novels". This may be either my innocence or a localized connotation of the term in Newarkland. In either event, I would suspect that Versins knows more about the number of French examples of science fiction than Sam Moskowitz. Larean: I'll stick to my opinion that there should be several worldcons annually, after my observations at the Discon. I saw little or none of the mixing of fans from specialized fields of interest in Washington. I didn't see any fans who sat in a corner quietly nor any fans from other countries except for the few Canadians who continue to cling to the delusion that they aren't part of the United States. The points raised by others about the desirability of one big convention in a big city over the Labor Day weekend were hardly justified by the situation at the Discon. Several conventions were going simultaneously at this allegedly unpopular time for conventions and fans without reservations were being shipped off to other hotels for lack of rooms as if it had been a suburban motel with limited capacity. ' ' The game of changing one word to another a letter at a time used to fill kids' puzzle books that I got from the dime stores when I was very small. The fact that adults are now interested must have some kind of significance in these modern times. I never got stuck on any but the one that looked so easy: north to south. It can be done but it takes a lot of intermediate steps. The Persian Slipper: I hope that some of these movie students get so interested in short, silent, scantily-titled films that they later produce them commercially. These conditions make it virtually certain that there will be motion in the motion pictures, an important factor that has been rendered almost extinct by reliance on dialog and background music. Bete Noire: I also dream more when fevered, and have in fact abandoned the use of a thermometer when sick because of the accuracy of this guide. More important, the only occasions when my dreams are interesting are when they're induced by a high internal temperature. If I dream while I'm well, I have only the most dreary, unimaginative dreams. Last night I woke and remembered a dream: it had consisted of dropping my buckeye, picking it up, and putting it back into my pocket. (Come to think of it, this sounds stranger than it really is. A buckeye is quite popular locally as a talisman against rheumatism. I abandoned that superstition a few years ago, broke two hips, and have resumed the ritual on the grounds that it might have wider usefulness than the ancients believed.) Celephais: Whenever I see something like this expla-



nation of railway terminology, I wonder if it's been done out of memory or from much labored research. Knowing Bill Evans, I suspect that the former system was in use here. I also wonder if the omission of commas from large figures is the result of some new trend in typography that I haven't encountered. '' The travelog contains more useful information about how to get along in Europe than I've found in the Fodor guides that I've been looking through in case of a trip of my own. But I could wish for more details about the specifically fannish aspects of this particular trip. For instance, what has Doug Webster been doing, what is he like now, and what terrible thing impelled him to get married? I have begun to wonder if I shall continue to be lucky in love, as a result of the decimation of the ranks of bachelordom in fandom past and present. Bill Danner tells me that Norm Stanley has just gotten himself married. Is nobody safe? '' I've found a fairly good proportion of friendly and helpful employes in New York City places that I've patronized. It's possible that I'd feel differently if I spent more time in the fancy expensive places where it is customary to cause the customer to remember that he's there for mercenary reasons. Alif: People who say things during movies are among my favorite peeves. So are Gilbert and Sullivan fans who try to sing the patter songs rapidly; in these, good, clear diction and a moderate rate of speed can provide the illusion of velocity and greater enjoyment. Ankus: The telephone people will undoubtedly remove the letters from dials in a few more years, as soon as they're ready to complete the conversion to digital dialing. Then the mnemonic devices will be of little use, unless you go around painting letters on the dial of every telephone you use. All-digit telephone dialing is harder on the memory, just as zip codes are a nuisance, but the people who complain about these figures haven't provided any useful alternatives to solve the problems. The Lovecraftsman: Don't forget to send a copy of this to Derleth, another to Wetzel, and save a few for future bibliographers. I can just imagine the consternation in HPL circles, over the proper disposition of a piece of Lovecraftiana that may not be completely accurate in every last detail. Bobolings: Are you sure that conventions aren't affecting local fandom these years? I know nothing about the situation in Pittsburgh. But I read somewhere that Chicago's fan group is no longer associated with the University of Chicago, and most of the active Seattle fans have either broken away from or softpedaled the Nameless Ones. I have hope that Washington fandom will not be afflicted by convention trauma for much the same reason that it put on such a fine convention: the predominance of intelligent, good-natured and congenial fans around Washington. '' The speleologists frequently put on a national convention in a city where there are no active members of that particular hobby. Hagerstown became the site of a convention a dozen years ago because a couple of members driving through the East got too drunk to go any further, spent the night here while sobering up, inspected the hotel before checking out, and found it suitable for their purposes. That way, there's no personal trouble in a host con committee and the more capable persons within driving distance of the chosen city can make the arrangements. SaFari: It's the occasional publication like this that makes me stay in FAPA. I hope that Earl doesn't succumb to the mailing comment mania and continues to give us some items like this that require genuine thought and writing ability. Postmailings: I never leave enough space for them. I was glad to meet you, too, Chuck Hansen, and also happy to receive this particular con report because there haven't been many personalized con reports so far on the Discon except those from the committee who saw it from the inside out. Apparently all the con reporters spent most of their time attending the formal program this time. I owe Al Lewis a letter, so maybe there'll be space in that for comments on A Fanzine for Now.



## My Favorite Martin

For the better part of two years, this and that FAPA member has asked why I didn't circulate a petition to save the membership of Ed Martin, if I felt so strongly about his ejection. I tried to explain an issue or two ago. But the inability of Johnny to read seems to have infected the FAPA membership, none of whom gives any evidence of having understood what I said. In brief, although I know that it's futile to repeat myself, I didn't circulate a petition because I had the impression that the officers had made a mistake and that they would not only admit the mistake but also rectify the error. I know more about the nature of fans today than I did a couple of years ago.

However, I've just learned something else. Glancing through the constitution in this latest Fantasy Amateur, I have discovered that it would have been impossible for me or for anyone else to get Martin back into the organization with either 12 signatures or 22 signatures, the quantities that have been variously suggested. Let's look at the constitutional passages that refer to such 12-man and 22-man actions:

"On endorsement by 22 other members, a member's lack of renewal credentials shall be waived on a particular occasion. ... On endorsement of 12 other members, a member will be granted an extension of one mailing to fulfill renewal credentials on a particular occasion." The only other relevant item in the constitution that would refer to Martin's own recourse says: "If a member fails to have renewal credentials, due to section 5.56, an error of an officer, or postal delays beyond what might be reasonably and cautiously expected, he shall, if he offers dues in time, have an additional quarter in which to make up his credential deficiency."

I am not Johnny and I read the constitution to say that Martin could not have been reinstated by these measures. There was no error of an officer involved; he was ejected because an officer overrode the constitution. He had his renewal credentials. Postal delays did not enter into the situation at any time. If Martin had been restored to membership by any of these three means, I would have screamed as loudly about unconstitutional actions as I am screaming and shall continue to scream.

The only means for restoration of Martin would have required invocation of the special rules section of the constitution, that would require 33 signatures, or action of the president who "has whatever power is necessary to deal with situations not otherwise covered by this constitution." I find nothing else in the constitution that deals with a ruling that a retelling is a reprint.

Someone or other once claimed that he'd been listening to Chopin's A major prelude for fifty years and still found something new in it on every hearing. I always believed that this was a slight exaggeration about a brief, simple, and not particularly inspired piece of music. But I find a parallel in fandom, in the form of the Martin case. Now one member refers to a Martin cover as the case in dispute. Will we ever know everything about the case?

I feel that every waiting lister who was dropped for failure to comply with that former acknowledgment interpretation was dropped illegally and unfairly. I would be willing to help with any movement to get all of them back where they belong. But I'll give that full time and attention only after I get tired of complaining about the treatment that Martin got. This should be in 2448 or thereabouts. It's hard to be sure, because I don't know the details about the longevity of coming re-incarnations and whether my feelings about the Martin case will start to simmer down after only a half-dozen transmogrifications.



## A Year of Fortytude

FAPA mailings arrive at the wrong seasons. It is impossible to obtain full effectiveness in an article designed to spoil members' enjoyment of Christmas, because it will be read six weeks before or after that holiday. Convention reports published in FAPA magazines arrive at the very moment that you've read four conreports in the past four fanzine issues, and you're getting tired of the repetitious parts. And now I'm trying to year-summarize at a time in early December when I don't even know if the year will end on schedule. I've read no annual summaries as yet to put me in the proper mood and you'll read this perhaps on the first February day when spring seems to be in the air and you'll have trouble remembering what last year was like, after all these elapsed weeks.

But I don't dare to write this on New Year's Eve, when I must impose on the kindness of Dick Eney to do the Gestetnering and the dubious attitude of the postal workers to get it across the continent for bundling. So I face not only the guaranteed obsolescence of the subject at time of receipt but also the possibility that the most important things of 1963 will occur during the portion of it that is not yet out of time's factory. The only consolation is that this makes Horizons seem just as complex a product as a newsstand magazine that goes to the printer weeks ahead of publication date.

The year, tentatively, is ending pretty much as it started in one local respect. Hagerstown has been afflicted in recent winters with starlings, whose numbers have increased with alarming acceleration. At the start of 1963, a committee of businessmen was seeking a method of ending the problem that had created a white Christmas in the downtown section without assistance from clouds. The starlings move into the business district around the end of the year, when intense cold arrives, and roost nightly around the ledges and cornices that are so plentiful on the turn-of-century stores and office buildings. You can't hear a traffic cop's whistle because of their discussions, and the fallout problem was ruining nighttime shopping. The committee tried last winter every remedy in the book: imitation owls in roosting areas, recordings of starling distress signals at high amplification, application of chemicals to the ledges, sunset guns with blank cartridges, and electrification. Only the last method had any apparent benefit and it was impractical because of expense throughout the downtown. Gunshots simply increased the dirt on sidewalks abruptly, the recorded bird calls had the same effect on the starlings as fire engine sirens have on small boys, and the owl-androids when inspected looked very much as if some starlings are miscegenists at heart. Regretfully, the committee could only trap the birds. It caused much public resentment and many predictions that the crops would be destroyed the following season by red-banded leafhoppers through the overweighting of the balance of nature. But the trapping proceeded with success beyond all expectations. The imprisoned starlings were destroyed in such quantities as made the extermination of the passenger pigeon seem a mild pogrom. The trapping process was just making obvious effects on the quantities of downtown starlings when the weather began to moderate. The program was discontinued, on the grounds that there weren't enough surviving starlings to breed true. The summer was too dry for any insect life to thrive and Washington County's farmers didn't learn what their Irish ancestors experienced during the notorious potato famine. The starling committee held one meeting early in the fall in an effort to dispose of the small sum remaining in the starling war chest. The members decided to hold it for possible use if some other form of wild life should some day get



out of control and require a similar extermination. Some weeks later, late in November, dusk strollers in the downtown section heard a familiar twittering and blanched, assuming that the ghosts of millions of gassed starlings had consulted with Banquo and had acquired his ability to torment the guilty. But it didn't take long to discover that these were real starlings, with very real bodily functions, roosting much earlier in the season than ever before in the city, before there had been a real cold spell. And by now the starlings are upon us in quantities previously unimagined, outside Alfred Hitchcock movies, and they seem thickest in the areas where the traps were located last winter. All that can be derived as a moral from this unhappy situation is that the deathwish is really fierce in winged creatures.

But there have been some different things for me this year, despite the popularly held belief that it is impossible to determine one year from the next in Hagerstown. Completion of a calendar year is a trifle more significant to me than to most persons because my birthday is less than two weeks distant from the end of the year. This means that my personal year and the year of the remainder of the universe arrive in sufficient proximity for me to look back on both years almost as one. Thus, with only a trifle of overlap, I can regard 1963 as the year in which I completed my fourth decade of existence. (I'm still a few days shy of entering my fifth decade, but if I don't make it, it's improbable that whoever tidies up after me will know what to do with these stencils, so you'll not see this interrupted essay.) The year now ending is also the year in which I attained and passed the 50 per cent figure, with regard to the ratio of Herald-Mail Company employment to my entire life. You can't imagine how sick at the stomach I get every time this fact occurs to me. It has been a strange year from the financial standpoint. I broke better than even, despite experiencing a series of expenses that aren't likely to recur for a while, all of them quite hard on the purse. There was the broken acetabulum near the start of the year. It prevented me from wasting money on records and books for six weeks but left me with a whopping convalescent home bill. When the refrigerator dropped dead, I had to buy a replacement for that. I virtually completed paying for the car during the year. Yes, I know that it would be more sensible to take money from the bank and pay cash for the car to avoid the time payment interest charges. But the finance plan has a six per cent rate, the money in bank is earning four per cent, and I calculated that the difference would be well wasted, if facing a monthly instalment persuaded me not to make a few unnecessary purchases. This was the year I converted to the declaration of estimated tax and quarterly payments thereon, to cover federal income obligations arising from freelancing and investments and not covered by withholding procedures. The quarterly payment system is not as much of a strain as the annual spring divvying up used to be, but in the conversion year, I found myself paying virtually two full years' taxes. This has also been the year in which insurance on the house comes due. It's billed on a three-year basis, and my moment of truth will arrive some time before December 31: do I pay for three years' premium and tacitly admit that I'm staying here indefinitely, or do I give the first firm indication of a change in my way of living by insistence on conversion of the policy to a one-year basis?

On the more cheerful side, I distinguished myself in several ways during the year. I got my first public office, for instance. I became a trustee for the poor of Washington County. This is a non-salaried post but one with a long tradition and it involves a swearing of an oath of frightening scope. So far, my duties have largely been confined to spending a morning in a magistrate's office while he hunted for the oath



that had somehow been mislaid. I don't face too strenuous a term of office, and have not, for that matter, been able to determine yet how long the term of office endures. That oath sounded powerful enough to last for quite a while, though. The trustees for the poor of Washington County are charged by state law with overseeing the operation of the poorhouse, supervising its financial records, ascertaining that the inmates receive kindly care, and carrying out any other duties involved in the institution. Some dozen years ago, the county poorhouse was closed and its occupants were boarded at rest homes, when it became obvious that this was safer and more economical than maintaining the old firetrap. However, the Maryland state legislature has not yet seen fit in its wisdom to repeal the law regarding the poorhouse and its operation. So every so often, the county commissioners are forced by law to appoint trustees of the poor. Normally these consist of the three non-office holders who are geographically closest to the commissioner who happens to remember the obligation. There is still something more than a thousand dollars in the fund for operation of the extinct poorhouse, and nobody knows quite what to do with it. I think that it should be spent to start the construction of a new poorhouse, another member of the board thinks we should use it to inspect Florida's poorhouses so we may be best qualified for our office, and this deadlock can't be broken until the third member of the board swears in, a formality that he keeps putting off. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that they've lost the oath again.

Another distinction is that I am the first known white man to get a refund from Blue Shield. Part of my accident expenses were covered by Blue Cross and Blue Shield insurance, paid by the company. While I was in the hospital, the company switched to another accident insurance plan and Blue Shield took it out on me, apparently. It paid only \$35 of the bill that my surgeon submitted for his ministrations to my acetabulum. I descended upon the personnel director of the newspaper company asking for intercession. He tried but soon told me that it was useless because the Blues blamed him for defecting, too. I switched my attention to the local office of the Blue Shield plan. The manager first asserted that I don't possess an acetabulum and that there wasn't anything in the books to put even a \$35 valuation on such a thing. I continued to telephone him twice daily and to visit him twice weekly, urging him to consult the Baltimore office. He finally surrendered to the extent of taking up the problem at some kind of world convention of medical insurance authorities that he was scheduled to attend. When he got back into town, he told me that it was totally useless. I sadly proceeded, taking along my acetabulum, to the doctor's office and paid the difference between \$35 and the bill. Dr. Sprecher's secretary must have seen from my expression how fond I was of that money, for she promised to scold the public relations representative of Blue Shield who goes around visiting doctors, on her next trip to Hagerstown. Months later, I got an exciting telephone call from the secretary. She'd told the woman, and shortly thereafter a check and letter had arrived at Dr. Sprecher's office, explaining that some kind of mistake had been made in handling the claim, payment in full for which was enclosed. Dr. Sprecher himself then got on the line to congratulate me. He had felt that I was an utter fool, for breaking a hip in two out of three years, but now I had a distinction that hardly any doctor's patient could claim.

I also got an article published in the Congressional Record in 1963. But this is a generally embarrassing situation. The article was a news story that the publicity chairman for a local organization had written. It was well-enough done that I didn't need to make any changes when I typed his handwritten manuscript. The composing room won't set



anything but typed copy. Somewhere along the line, someone put my byline onto the story, assuming that I had finally turned in a good piece of writing. The office of Maryland's sixth district congressman needed something on integration just then, saw this article that dealt with job opportunities for Hagerstown Negroes, and the representative had it inserted into the congress fanzine, with my byline continuing to tag along. The man who wrote it hasn't spoken to me or given me any stories since.

The biggest news story of the year, the assassination of the president, didn't affect my duties too much, although it made the people on the afternoon paper move pretty fast for a while. I regret to say that my reaction to the first news of the shooting was not that of grief nor worry about the future of the nation but rather an irrational terror that the assassin might have been a fan. I've read so many lurid narrations about fan life in Texas a few years back that those long gaffiated individuals have assumed larger than lifesize proportions in my thoughts. Ever since the night Ted Pauls' name came over the AP teletype as the youth who was chased by a poltergeist, I've realized that any fan can break into the news at any time. Some of those Texas fans seem to have been quite eccentric and on that gray early Friday afternoon, I could not persuade myself that there was only an infinitesimally small chance that the killer would turn out to have a fan background. I wasn't even calmed when the identity and something of the background of Oswald were revealed. I know fans' fondness for using pennames and concealing their personal lives. If Oswald had had even the slightest connection with fandom, our hobby would have been exposed mercilessly to an unbearable glare of national publicity and I feel quite sure that fanac wouldn't have been much fun for a long while to come. Weeks later, I'm still possessed of the feeling that this was a narrow escape and that eventually someone known to fandom will do something awful to cause a general mess for all of us.

On a happier note, I came close during 1963 to completing the sampling of every major experience that a fan can taste. I removed attendance at a worldcon from the list of delights of fandom yet unfamiliar to my palate. I got on the waiting list of an ayjay group, another experience that I'd missed because FAPA's roster wasn't filled when I joined and I was charter member for both VAPA and IPSO. The waiting list to which I now belong is the property of one of the smallest ayjay groups, one that has never yet had a vacancy, and I'll probably enjoy the wl status for an interminable period. I may also have become a Neffer for the first time. It is true that I belonged to the NFFF long ago, but that was before anyone called them Neffers. If my application isn't accepted, I still will salvage the experience of being the first NFFF reject in FAPA. A combination of circumstances caused me to seek membership. I was getting so many publications intended only for NFFF members that I felt I was leading their publishers into some kind of wrongdoing. The NFFF members can order some interesting fannish tapes that I would like to add to my archives. Several previously unknown NFFF members impressed me at the Discon as among the most sensible and nicest persons at the Discon, altering somewhat my estimate of the organization. And I've grown increasingly impatient with inner circle fandom's provincialities and prejudices; it might do me good to be in contact with some fans who have a different attitude toward things, for occasional contrast to my normal fannish environment. I also have begun to emit large gobs of fan history manuscript. Some of it might be in print by the time this mailing goes out. I keep telling myself that I shall celebrate my next New Year's Eve by writing the final page of this manuscript's magazine version. Don't overestimate my reputation for



truthfulness when speaking to my favorite fan.

One of the major regrets of the year is my failure to do anything memorable during my three weeks of vacation. I stayed home the first week because I didn't feel up to standard, and this is an alarming condition to anyone who knows my general health standards. I forget why I did not go forth into the great wide world during the second week. The third week was put off week after week because of the lack of an adequate staff at the office. I finally took it in mid-December, and the weather was too threatening to impel me to leave town. If I find myself going down for the third time, I want it to be in Hagerstown, for the prospect of recuperating from a broken hip far away from friends and the house are not enticing. The stay-at-home vacation periods did help me to finish the year in the black. But this was a dangerous way to vacation. If I'd become suddenly incapacitated while in the house during those three weeks, it might have been days before help arrived. Neighbors who failed to see me puttering about the block would assume that I'd gone away somewhere. Maybe the accumulation of mail or milk would impel a rescue after only 48 hours of neglect, but I felt it wise to spend as much time as possible during those three weeks mingling with the local natives and otherwise making myself conspicuous. Perhaps I can overcompensate for this vacation fumbling in 1964 by going to Europe. This was my original intention, at least, but already there are complications. The time I'd tentatively picked in October is no longer suitable because the World Series will begin a week later than normal, and I do not intend to spend a week or ten days in Europe with half of my attention devoted to wondering who's on first. And I can't go in the spring before the tourist rush because the county has changed its bookkeeping to a fiscal year basis, and I'll be needed for budget hearings just before the start of summer. Besides, there is another way to spend a lot of money in 1964. I need new audio equipment the worst possible way, and it is becoming increasingly evident that I'd better buy it as soon as possible. My powerful little ten-watter has developed an enormous hum that drowns out the subtler details of music. It's useless to spend money on repairs, for trouble will immediately burst loose elsewhere. The FM tuner has never recovered from the indignity of running without rest for several weeks or months during my first broken hip (someone looking after the house wanted some music, turned on the tuner without turning on the amplifier, heard nothing, concluded it was no good, and just didn't bother to turn it off). It cuts on and off at a vibration no stronger than that set up by a lady driver parking in front of the house. The wonderful world of stereo has not only driven out of the lp catalogs the best versions of most music, it has also caused most component manufacturers to stop providing any equalization facilities capable of handling the recordings made during the first 55 years of this century. McIntosh, Marantz, and Harman-Kardon are apparently the only firms that still admit that a collector might want to play discs made before the current curve went into use, that some recording firms tamper with this curve, and that the recording industry might change that curve at any time. If I don't buy a pre-amp in a hurry, I might have trouble locating one with versatility. Of course, there is the fiendish uncertainty of the future of stereo. It obviously has not taken on with the public, I have no desire at all for stereophonic equipment, but the industry just might get impatient with the public's refusal to play along with their bauble, and halt the manufacture of monophonic recordings. Unless something unexpected occurs, I'll probably end up with monaural Marantz equipment, grudgingly purchasing a second of everything if the profiteering industry forces my hand.

Most of the months of 1963 are distinct in memory for one reason or



more. January naturally is sacred to the fracture and the bump on the head, and that week in which I did almost nothing but sleep, eat and think, a more alien way of life for me than a trip to Mars or solitary confinement might be to another person. February was mainly suspense over the question of whether 423 Summit Avenue continued to exist. I didn't have people look after the house as thoroughly this accident, because of the chaos they'd done on the previous occasion. So until I got home I kept wondering if the place had burned down or if a blown fuse had cut off the furnace resulting in burst waterpipes, or if the children nextdoor had achieved their ambition to remove all the bricks from the south wall. It was comforting to find it unscathed and even better to learn that the kids had moved away. In March, I made one of the major decisions of the year. I took a close and thoughtful look at my clothing, found almost everything in an advanced degree of decomposition and realized that I'd better start to buy some things. My hatred of new clothing kept me from making a purchase oftener than monthly, but by now I have at least two of everything except winter hat and pair of shoes. It's been a long while since I've been so able to put on a clean shirt without a careful examination of all candidates for the process and a review of the weather and my obligations for the day ahead, to determine if I can wear this one with the hole in the sleeve by keeping my sleeves rolled up or if I'll be wearing the suit coat whose arms are too long, thereby concealing the frayed condition of the cuffs. In August, I found that I had done something that would horrify my few remaining relatives. I have succeeded in forgetting the exact dates of death of both my father and mother, other than the fact that both died in August. This was deliberate on my part. I saw no point in making myself miserable with memories on those two days each year. Maybe fans will understand but I'm afraid that relatives won't and I'm sure they'll discover some day what I've done. I'm already in enough trouble because I do not believe in visiting the graves of the dead, however dear they were. In any event, there is a space for me in that plot and I'll be beside them permanently sooner or later, and I hope that anyone whom I may leave behind will not twist the knife in the wound by coming to look at my grave.

Subsidiary hobbies were neglected during 1963, because of fannish commitments, the work load, and the time required to catch up from the accident. I'd hate to count up the number of photographs I took and prints I made for my own pleasure, the total would be so puny. So it's just as well that that slide projector I ordered at the end of 1962 had been sold out before my money arrived; I would have had little new to put into it. I did succeed in starting my first systematic project with the little movie camera, an effort to tell the whole story of life in Hagerstown by scenes from just one of its streets. I got only 100 feet shot but it's a start. And I've ordered a set of filters, chemicals and paper wherewith I shall make my first color prints. I've had pretty good luck developing color film, but this is a pointless darkroom activity because the professionals can do it just as well at little or no more expense. But I'm rarely satisfied with the color balance in color prints and success in this occupation will mean something. I didn't do two photographic things that I'd intended during the year: start a collection of 8 mm prints of silent movies and buy another lens or two for the Contax. Maybe I'll succeed in this--to you--or next--to me--year.

Record-buying went on apace. I still am about five years behind the current releases in purchasing modern lp's, but it won't take long to get closer once my attention turns to the two or three unproductive years following the introduction of stereo recordings. Virtually nothing worth the money appeared, as manufacturers seemed more eager to discontinue the worthwhile older records than to release anything of equal musical value.



The 78 rpm collection grew quite a bit, even though I restricted myself to sources where I never had to pay more than a quarter apiece, and got them for a nickel or a dime most of the time. The bulkiest purchases and biggest bargains in this respect were the old Marcel Joumet set of Faust, which hasn't been lp'ed as yet to my knowledge, and the first recording of Pirates of Penzance. I also unearthed a splendid copy of the eighth volume of the Bach Society's HMV discs, three of the Mozart symphonies done by Sir Thomas Beecham before he'd grown eccentric, and a whole batch of quite hard-to-find singles, like the Nordica Liebestod, Samuel Barber singing his since disowned Dover Beach, and the only commercial recording of excerpts from Richard Hageman's Caponsacchi. But storage continued to act as a growing problem for the breakable records. I have plenty of space but a shortage of empty albums suitable for storing these orphans. I believe that I have figured out a way to salvage heavy pasteboard boxes from the office, insert stiff cardboard inserts, and use those pending the time when I can use good audio equipment to put the contents of these records onto tape, then store the records away more or less permanently.

As for reading, there were several accomplishments in the year. I read a good many prozines for the first time in any year in the past dozen. This experience was valuable, for it showed me that it is a total waste of time to read prozines, and I won't need to bother about them until I hear reports of extreme improvement in quality. I broke myself during the year of the habit of reading modern novels. There is no harm in reading them, I suppose, but with spare time in short supply, it seems more sensible to turn to informative reading or to older novels whose worth has been attested by competent judges. I succeeded in completing the reading of two large sets of books that I'd acquired a year or two earlier, confounding people who accused me of buying books that I'd never read. These were Ibsen and Dickens. The Ibsen set, acquired as a stupendous bargain, is one book short, and if anyone should run across the volume containing When We Dead Awaken and Little Eyolf with the Archer introduction, please pick it up for me. I believe that I've mentioned the Dickens set previously in Horizons. I have finished reading straight through it, even the volumes containing novels I already owned and had read in other editions. I believe that I wanted to make sure I didn't miss something that might have been cut from my older copies, and besides, most of Dickens is worthy of reading repeatedly. There was one real surprise when I found some luridly pornographic sketches in one of these books. I don't know if they were the creation of the previous owner of the set or the rescued men at the union mission store where I bought them. But I'm quite sure that I would have been considered the artist, if someone visiting my home had leafed through that particular book before I read it. The only set acquired in the year, I believe, is a cheap and shaky edition of George Eliot. I have the Modern Library Giant collection of novels but this set contains Middlemarch, missing from that omnibus, and some short stories and poems that are not normally found in separate editions.

Unfortunately, I had next to no opportunity to add personally to the world's literature. Lack of spare time cost me quite a bit of income in the form of articles and news dispatches that didn't get written. I managed to sketch outlines of several articles that have reposed undisturbed in a desk drawer ever since they came out of the typewriter. The management at the office wants me to do the kind of work that a city editor normally does: see to it that the local news is covered and that the stories are written properly by the reporters. So far I've been unable to evade writing more myself than most of the other reporters, because of the frequency with which reporters quit and get fired. If the coming

year should produce a stabilized staff, maybe I can escape writing duties at work. That would make me feel much more like writing freelance and for fandom. There is nothing to discourage a person from sitting down at the typewriter when he gets home, like the necessity to create four or five thousand words of prose for the newspaper a few hours earlier in the day. But there is no reason to count on such a merry turn of events. Already as the year is nearing its arrival, I know that one girl on the staff is too pregnant to stay on the job more than a few more weeks, another says that she won't continue to work longer than the end of summer, because after that her little girl will enter school and hours would conflict too badly, and there is a persistent rumor that the oldest reporter will retire momentarily, plus the uncertainty about the future of a parttime reporter when he graduates from college in June and needs fulltime work.

Life in Hagerstown continued to change in 1963. There is a curious duality in the changes that occur in this city. It grows constantly larger, in line with the population growth that is running wild in the nation, a growth that causes it to continue to change from small town to medium-size city status. Simultaneously, the employment picture can't keep up with the mobs of kids reaching job age and the longer life expectancy of older persons. So you see whole new suburbs growing up almost from spring to summer, yet there are endless quantities of empty storerooms and idle factories all over the city. Parts of the town are shabbier than ever and the newest structures look like something that slipped from the future into the present. The traffic jams are worse than ever in the city and just outside it there are highways so super that one of them has a bridge over a trickle of water so complicated that the winning bid was a bit more than a half-million dollars. Mainly I regret the changes in the western part of town, where I lived from the time I was 12 until a half-dozen years ago. I walked between home and work most of the time, usually varied my route, and learned to know almost every building and occupant over that square mile of the town. But they tore down one group of houses and stores to erect overpasses for the railroad tracks, then another batch of properties were destroyed so they could build a new through street that would encourage traffic to use the new overpasses, and finally the State Roads Commission reconstructed the streets that Route 40 follows through that section, amputating one hill and extending two streets. Now that part of town is no longer the comfortable, relaxed section that it used to be, where people were neither wealthy nor destitute, not prudes but certainly not crooks, but pretty close to being extremely good people to be around. The older folks either died from inability to adapt to the changes or moved into low-rent municipal housing projects in other parts of town. The kids seem to have gone to the dogs, for they walk and stand in massive groups now, instead of wandering around in twos and threes as they used to do. The city school system used to be proud of the fact that there were no fences around schools or playgrounds to impart a sense of being caged to the children, but traffic goes so fast on that rebuilt Route 40 that they've had to enclose Winter Street School like a miniature concentration camp with only tiny carefully guarded outlets where the kids are permitted to emerge at moments when it seems unlikely that the oncoming vehicles will veer out of control onto the sidewalks. Gone is the old weatherboard house where at any hour of day or night you always saw a lovely, barefoot little blonde girl sweeping the sidewalk; still existing is the house where an old man used to sit endlessly reading with a titanic pile of magazines and newspapers hemming him in on all sides but the man and the literature are gone to join Nineveh and Tyre; the vacant lots where I liked to walk through weeds are sterile parking



areas for churches and taverns. I no longer get a Christmas card from Miss Lizzie, the maiden lady of imposing age who lived two houses down the street and was celebrated as the only resident of the neighborhood who suffered from mice in the refrigerator.

The Christmas card season is always a painful one for me. It is possible to purchase 30-day fishing licenses here for the convenience of temporary visitors to this area. I see no reason why we should not experiment with 30-day marriage licenses. They would put some variety into the bachelor's life without ruining it altogether, and I am quite sure that I would take advantage of this arrangement between Thanksgiving and Christmas, when the Christmas cards must be prepared, gifts must be purchased and wrapped, and famished mobs stand between me and the places where I normally enjoy quiet, unhurried meals. This is the time of any year when a wife really seems like a good investment, and in 1963 the situation was unchanged. The Christmas card decisions are hard on a person who normally has quite a lot of difficulty in deciding about unimportant things. Which year is suitable for stopping the cards to the people who used to work with me but have seen the light? I can pretend to have lost track of those who have moved away but it is not so easy to decide each individual case of whether this linotyper or that switchboard girl would like to break off the card exchange with the first or second Christmas following work separation. I am sure that I needn't expound on the lamentable amount of work that goes into verifying the addresses of fans for Christmas card purposes. It's never safe to assume they've all moved during the past year, and there's one fan on my list who has received a card at the same address for three straight Christmases. I might have the fan history completed by now, if I could have had a wife during each of the past three Advents to help with such matters.

My primitive and retrogressive adoration for baseball remained undiluted during the year now concluding. I felt a slight waving of interest in football during the autumn, partly because I didn't get to see any games live and missed quite a few important ones on television. I can't reconcile myself to T-formation football, anyway. The direct pass from center is infinitely better from the spectator standpoint. But any minor leakage of football enthusiasm has been sopped up completely by an increased adulation of baseball. Among the more alarming manifestations of this situation was my purchasing during 1963 all the back issue baseball record books and associated publications that I encountered in the junk shops. There was a time when I could content myself with the current volumes of records and prognostications. I hope that this is not a hint that I shall become a baseball faan before long, for there are such creatures, whom I consider misguided: they can't enjoy watching a baseball game because it takes up time that they would rather spend in research into old newspapers to verify won-lost totals or in incomprehensible searches through higher mathematics for the elusive golden fleece of the baseball hobby, the equation that will take all factors into consideration in correct proportion and show without reservation the exact usefulness of a man to his club as a batter or pitcher.

Small thumps and groans from this house cause me to suspect that it may go some day the way of the old house in "Little Dorrit", but I was gratified to note that the building behaved outwardly well during 1963. Maybe it was grateful for the coat of paint that I provided it with the previous year, although it has been uncooperative as a result of my philanthropy, in the sense that it has refused to open most of its windows since the painters left. I still haven't painted the spot on



the kitchen wall left bare three years ago by the installation of a smaller thermostat. And when Ted Sturgeon told how he failed to earn money from his writing occasionally because of his inability to sit down and write business letters, I recalled sadly the fact that I could possess some extra dollars each winter, if I could talk myself into spending the hour of time and few dimes of cash required to put some weatherstripping around the front and back doors where the cold air finds hospitality from November through March. Another failure during 1963 was that I didn't plant the thorny shrubbery that I had intended to put between my land and the apartment building next door. When the kids moved away the matter seemed less pressing. Then I was delighted to discover that there is much poison ivy between the two back yards and I have hope that this will spread far enough toward the front of the property line to save me the trouble of setting out shrubs. A neighbor who decided to cut a couple of my roses told me about the poison ivy.

My decision to purchase one of those impractical Detroit automobiles in 1962 caused no sadness for me during 1963. The Oldsmobile acted better than might be expected when you remember that it's run by an individual who is so ignorant of its workings that he hasn't yet learned the trick of releasing the latch that permits raising the hood. The cold weather starting trouble that it has possessed from the start remains a nuisance that eventually I'll have to have attended to but it always starts eventually, after coughing and choking hard enough to arouse the sympathies of the neighborhood. I almost had an accident with it in the fall when a woman driver hooked my bumper while I was standing motionless in one lane of traffic, letting the vehicle in front of me park. We both pulled over to the side to see what damage had been done, she inspected her vehicle more rapidly than I did, and drove off hastily before I was sure that I wasn't gouged. I got her license number and thought of reporting the incident to police, then remembered that I am in disgrace at city hall because of a series of articles on speeding in Hagerstown and so I didn't tattle, after which I spent an uncomfortable week wondering if the other driver would have a change of heart and would tell about the incident and the police would leap upon the opportunity to charge me with failure to report an accident.

It was my first full year as city editor. I still don't know how the management feels about my performance of the job but I haven't lost it, and there were several local persons who had warned me flatly that I would, remembering how the present management had demoted one general manager, one comptroller, and one advertising director. I had the doubtful thrill of learning that high school students in a poll had voted my weekly column one of their three favorite features in the paper. My oddly assorted companions in this distinction are the sports editor's column and Drew Pearson. At least I can feel superior to Art Buchwald and Eric Sevareid. I received such journalistic honors during the year as 759 advertisements urging me to purchase this or that stenographic aid for my secretary, eight anonymous letters, only two of which scared me, five review copies of books, only one of which was worth preserving and freedom from filling out timecards as a result of exaltation to the status of a salaried employe.

So I'm ending the year as I began it as far as friendship goes: no person in Hagerstown with whom I'm so buddybuddy that I must see him or her daily, but the same number of local residents with whom I'm not on speaking terms, one. If I can retain that status for another year, and simultaneously get that bare spot painted and do something memorable during vacation weeks in 1964, I'll feel I've accomplished more in the coming year than I did in the one just past.

## Fanniversary

Just the other week, I realized too late that a couple of anniversaries are gone beyond recall, without celebration or even the dignity of having been remembered by the one person likely to pay heed to them. This past summer marked the 30th anniversary of my discovery of the prozines and the 25th anniversary of my activity in fanzine fandom occurred at almost the same time. I don't intend to repeat in belated commemoration the things I've told about the two occasions. But I'd hate to let pass with no notice at all two anniversaries that are unlikely to recur, and I think there are a few things that can be written without repetition.

There was one thing about my discovery of the science fiction magazines that I've seen described in nobody else's tale of how he read his first prozine. From time to time over the years, I've had a curious sensation when something very important occurred involving me, or when I first learned of some vital happening that was destined to have a great effect on the lives of all of us. I don't mean by this the much-argued *deja vu* phenomenon, that sensation that you've been through this particular experience before and can even guess what the other fellow will say next. That experience seems to come indiscriminately and as often as not concerns trivial and routine happenings. My sensation is rather that this major experience is something new and unexpected, but the instant that it occurs, I have the sensation that I am regarding it with a dispassionate objectivity produced by years of thought about the matter, which has been drained of prejudicial and emotional connotations by the long familiarity with it. This impression can occasionally tell me that an occurrence is significant even if it doesn't seem so at the time. I am positive that I am not imagining things when I believe that I had this feeling the first time I saw a copy of *Wonder Stories* on a newsstand. I had never seen a science fiction magazine, I didn't know that science fiction stories had been written by anyone except Jules Verne and the creator of Buck Rogers, and I don't believe that at this time I had ever heard or read the term "science fiction". But even before I touched the magazine, I understood that this was something that destiny had in store for me, I could guess what sort of stories were inside that Paul cover and when I read the stories I didn't fret about the things that my ten-year-old mind couldn't comprehend. I understood that I'd re-read this issue later when I was more fit for comprehension. If there is some sort of shortcircuit in the mind that permits the brain to penetrate for a fraction of a second a short distance into the future and get a preview that it interprets as *deja vu*, I see no reason why a massive amount of thought and emotion involving a big factor in one's life couldn't make its weight felt, the first time that the individual enters into the long course of association with that object or experience.

One matter that few fans seem to remember or relate is how long it takes them to change from a passive to a reacting reader of science fiction. I think that it was only a six-month procedure in my case. I don't have the memory of feeling irritated by any stories or particularly enthusiastic about one of them in that first issue. But I know that by the first 1934 issues of *Astounding*, I was violent in my likes and dislikes. I was confident that nobody could possibly write a story about anything that would possess the cosmic significance and pathos of Wandrei's "Colossus" and I was equally scornful of any readers who ventured to find anything good to say about the writing of Nat Schachner.



It's hard to determine why I disliked his fiction. Later I came to read his stories with some enjoyment, but the name of the writer had acquired connotations of boredom and ploddingness so persistent that I couldn't be entirely comfortable with anything he wrote. Schachner was a completely capable author who was at home in a variety of styles and refused to fall into a rut of writing one particular type of story. I may have been in a bad humor the first time I tackled one of his stories or the ugly name might have stirred up the antipathy. Another matter that is rarely considered in fanzines is what causes the reader to become a letterhack? I believe that I read the letter sections all along, and I must have thought about writing to the editor from time to time. But what in my case and in a thousand other instances provoked that idle thought to turn into action with pen, paper, and postage stamp? I had nobody whom I wanted to impress with my ability to break into print in the back of the magazine, there was no acquaintance who had become an ideal to imitate because he'd proved it could be done, I don't remember that I had reacted unusually to the issue of Astounding about which I wrote that first letter in 1936, and nothing in my daily life had altered to provide the spur to letterhacking. It must be a combination of circumstances in the majority of cases that causes the silent reader to become a loudmouthed letterhack: perhaps the conjunction simultaneously of three idle hours, someone's remark about the high caliber of the essay assigned as homework the other day in school, complete accessibility of all letter-writing tools and supplies, and someone's offer to take the newly written down to the mailbox right away. I know that we sometimes picture the letterhack as entering that career two minutes after finishing his first prozine issue or during a fit of blind rage over the terrible quality of a novelette in the current issue of his favorite magazine. But look back over the letter columns during the years when people bragged that this was their first letter to the editor, and you'll usually find no expressed motive for that letter, except perhaps an incoherent remark that "I felt that I simply had to sit down and tell you what I think of your magazine...."

On the other hand, not many fans seem to have made the transition that I accomplished, from a child who disliked any non-realistic stories, to a kid who specialized in adventures in the future. I gather that the great majority of fans loved fairy tales, Oz books, Burroughs, comic strips about the future, and any other feats of imagination, as far back as memory penetrates. This wasn't so in my case at all. When I learned to read, my choice of literature depended on how closely I could identify with the characters in fiction. If they resided in California or if the hero were appreciably older than my small self, I rarely finished the story. I believe that a four-year age superiority was all I could forgive in a hero, although I apparently made an exception when he grew up in the course of a novel. Thus, I almost memorized "Tom Sawyer" but couldn't find as much delight in "Huckleberry Finn" because I had had no Negro companion and had never floated down a river. It seems impossible today to think of Horatio Alger stories as more than a symbol, but I can assure you that they had one loyal follower in Hagerstown. Apparently the normality of the people who inhabited them and the fact that the youthful heroes almost always entered the story residing in a small town or on a farm compensated for the fact that the scene frequently shifted to New York City. Significantly, the only specific passage that I can recall from an Alger novel was one that nearly ruined a book for me. On one of the first pages, the youth got involved in an argument about Aaron Burr, a personage too unknown to let me go on in fully trusting manner. Who remembers today the boys' books like the Joe Strong and Tim Tyler

series. To the best of my knowledge, they appeared only in cheap editions, never achieving the distinction of the 50¢ line of Grosset & Dunlap and Cupples & Leon. I've never seen any of them in second-hand book stores, pretty good indication that my copies survived repeated readings only because I was prissy about handling books and saved them from falling apart on first reading. Joe Strong could conceivably have helped me to survive childhood. I was a scrawny kid, subject to monumental onslaughts of bronchitis every winter. Joe Strong was a farm kid who ran away to join a circus. One of his first feats was submerging for long periods of time. The author claimed that he established a world's record of slightly more than four minutes under water without any source of air. The book gave such explicit details of how Joe acquired this lung power that I tried the same system of holding one's breath indefinitely. I couldn't swim, an aunt was pestering my parents to force me to learn, and I may have had a half-coherent belief that I would sink the moment I started my first lesson, so I'd better prepare for holding my breath a long while during the rescue operation. I never managed to hold my breath for much longer than 90 seconds, despite months of training and frequent frights on the part of persons who suddenly noticed the hue of my skin and the extent to which my eyeballs were emerging from my skull. But the doctor remarked after a while that my lungs were showing remarkable development, in view of the caved-in state of my chest, and I soon began to get through winters without bronchitis. But all this is veering unbelievably from the original purpose: to say that I can't imagine what could have caused me suddenly to like fiction about adults in surroundings completely alien to anyone's experience. I can't prove that something associated with the completion of puberty didn't inspire me to write the first letter to Astounding in 1936, but I don't think I went through any bodily crisis in 1933.

If I didn't react strongly to the stories at first, I did most definitely feel strongly about the art work of Frank R. Paul. His recent death hasn't caused the extensive essay that someone should write about him. It is popular today to laugh at him or to show him a kind of mock respect such as one displays for a 4-H club member. Paul as a person was well-liked by fans and his appearances at cons were major successes. So it would be instructive to learn why fans showed him this dual-faced attitude. I was hooked completely on Paul as an artist the first time I saw that 1933 Wonder Stories and my admiration for his ability has remained unshaken while my opinions of other artists has altered irrevocably. I feel quite certain that Paul will some day be famous as a primitive and that it will no more occur to his admirers to complain about the way he drew people than we criticize today Holbein or Hogarth because their men and women aren't as plump as Rubens' or as enigmatic as Rembrandt's. I lost in 1963 two last chances: to meet Paul and to see a baseball game in the Polo Grounds. It would have been good if I could think back on a half-hour's conversation with an early hero in the case of Paul, now that I can do this with E. E. Smith. It was a strange feeling, to find on my desk at the office Hugo Gernsback's '63 Christmas card booklet with a picture of Paul and reproductions of ten of his drawings on the final page. Gernsback sounds like a real human in what he writes there about Paul, in sharp contrast to the ex cathedra prose we normally find from the publisher: "He collaborated with me for 49 years on nearly 1,000 of the most intricate, imaginative illustrations. Paul had an uncanny gift of reading my mind and translating my most abstruse ideas into masterpieces of art. This page shows only a few. ' His passing represents an irreplaceable loss in the field of popular-scientific illustrations. I personally miss Paul more than I care to admit." The drawings



go back as far as 1915. I have no idea what most of them are intended to represent, but I think that I prefer them this way, without the pedantic explanation of the significance of each fin and window that Hugo used to direct somewhere in the magazine to the readers.

Lately I've been trying to remember my reactions to my first months of real activity in fanzine fandom, those last months of 1938. It's very hard to do. It's easy enough to remember isolated instances that stick in the memory for no reason. There was the afternoon or evening I was walking a block away from my home, trying desperately to think of something to put into an empty page of the first or second issue of Spaceways and as I narrowly escaped striding over the edge of a steep embankment to a corn patch, it occurred to me that I could think up five hundred words of gossip, speculation and trivia like a Hollywood movie chatter column. Why does this remain so vivid when I have no remembrance of making the other decisions on those first issues? Then there were the most emotion-laden moments of every day in that late summer of 1938 when it was time for the mailman to come. I probably acted more like a fan each morning during that vacation season than at any later occasion. I could do nothing but pace nervously to and from the door, looking for the form coming up the street in the uniform, leaping to the window if I caught the sound of footsteps on the sidewalk before the normal time the mail arrived, experiencing an agony of suspense if I first spotted the mailman on the other side of the street, and could not determine for a moment if he had crossed only temporarily to visit one house and would return to my side, or if he had finished delivering on my side and had left no mail today. This extreme anxiety lasted only a few months, when I was first getting replies to the letters I had written to pros and fans of such notoriety that I felt I was somehow doing wrong, to impose on them long enough to read a letter from me. A quarter-century later, I regret to say, I have fallen into a vicious habit that would have been unimaginable in the first days of active fanhood. During these recent busy months I've rarely opened the morning mail until it's almost time to go to bed the following morning and on particularly hectic occasions I've delayed the reading of a long letter for three or four days. Maybe this isn't as close to gafia as it sounds: it might signify that my love of letters is as great as ever and I instinctively delay the reading process until I locate enough spare time to make it the leisurely process that letter-reading should be.

And the fanzines of 1938 that I not only read in the first hour after arrival but also re-read daily for quite a while. I even used to send off for back issues of fanzines that had some history. My inability to purchase a copy of the first issue or two of Imagination! rankles after all these years.

One attribute of my former self that I envy sincerely was my diligence in filing, cataloguing, and generally keeping things straight. I still have on the attic the first few pasteboard boxes that I filled with correspondence, all neatly arranged by name of sender. I used to keep a carbon copy of everything I wrote for a fanzine in a looseleaf folder. This folio of horrors continues to exist and some day I want to fill an entire issue of Horizons with the most idiotic, badly written, wrong, and unbearable extracts from it that I can locate. This might help to prove that I'm sincere when I tell a neofan that his first issue is good in contrast with the first writing attempts of some fans in my experience.

My first correspondents possess eternal youth in my thoughts, and I probably wouldn't believe in their identity, should a 40ish individual or two knock on my door and give the names of those longlost pencilpals. I lost track of almost all of them at about the same time: when I was launching Spaceways. They couldn't sympathize with the new interest of

my altered self. There was Peter Quinn of West Palm Beach, Fla., who ended up by contracting tuberculosis just as he reached his majority, and on a doctor's advice bought a farm at some dizzy Colorado height and was making a successful living there, the last I heard of him. Don Robertson was a San Diego youth who thought of nothing but entering the Naval Academy, thought he had achieved his goal, and got rejected because of some obscure matter involving one tooth. I'm sure he turned into a hum immediately. Gerrett Eggink lived somewhere in New Mexico or Arizona, and terrified me with his statement that there was a thunderstorm every afternoon at his village. At that time, I was having great difficulty listening to baseball games over AM stations 75 miles distant during the daylight and I felt sick at the thought that some people had to live where static would ruin reception of baseball not just twice a week but every day. George Ayles-Waters was a Britisher to whom I never felt quite comfortable in my letters, because of that hyphen in his name. He never mentioned personal circumstances but I got the idea that he was a masquerading member of the nobility, a hypothesis that was unaccountably strengthened when he sent me a Roman coin that someone had dug up near his home. I don't know why I associated the spot where an occupying soldier had suffered a hole in his tunic with the upper upper modern Britons. Correspondence with science fiction readers like these lasted two years, from 1936 to 1938, a sort of twilight zone in my transition into fan during which I was unknown to general fandom but was ardently collecting back issues of prozines, poring over an occasional sample copy of fanzine that came because the editor had been trying to find subscribers among prozine letterhacks, and dreaming of the day when I would be a great science fiction writer. Here again I seem to have differed from most fans, because I never got my projected stories sufficiently out of my imagination to put even the start of them down onto paper. I don't believe that I tried to write any science fiction until I began to submit stuff to the fanzines, but I certainly turned out a lot of it mentally. These mental stories were quite vivid at the start and finish but I had trouble discovering what was between those extremes.

Somewhere I expressed the belief that fandom hadn't helped me with my newspaper work but that my newspaper experience had helped me in fandom. That meant any improvement that I managed to put into the quality of my fannish writing and my general skill at getting along in fandom seem to have become evident soon after I went to work for the newspaper. But I shouldn't forget one special way in which fandom helped. It was the thing that caused me to teach myself to type. In 1938, I realized that to graduate from corresponding and collecting fandom to fanzine fandom, some ability at the typewriter was advisable. Whatever fate persuaded me to borrow a library book on touch typing has received frequent mental burnt offerings from me ever since. I cannot comprehend why so many fans to this day plod along with improvised typing systems when it is not at all difficult to learn the touch typing method. I may have had a bit more finger control than most fans, through my piano playing, but I didn't have a teacher or anyone in the house to show me when I did something wrong in the learning process; even so, I was touch typing faster than I had peck typed after two weeks. Without ability to type rapidly and to copy material accurately by keeping eyes on the material to be copied, I might not have acquired my first job, with the railroad, and I certainly would have made a less prepossessing figure as a cub reporter, if possible. Without the impetus of fandom, I might have gone to business college to get typing instruction eventually, and the allied shorthand and bookkeeping that I would almost certainly have taken in such an institution could have given me a dreary occupation. (Later, I



decided to teach myself shorthand, in the same manner as I had learned to type the proper way. My selfesteem receded perceptibly when this new study project fell flat on its hentracked face. This was before the time when you could buy lp records to provide dictation at accelerating speeds. I found it impossible to pick up writing speed in shorthand by copying stuff out of instruction manuals. Parents or friends would have been willing to dictate at a comfortable speed, no doubt, but I was so proud that I'd taught myself typing that I disdained such unneeded help. I gave up, probably about two weeks before I would have had enough practice to get some use out of the study. Even now I occasionally use a few of the more common shorthand symbols to speed up note-taking on the job. But I wouldn't risk an all-shorthand transcript of even an extremely slow talk, because difficulties of reading back could be disastrous to a journalist.)

A popular heresy widely held today is that all fanzines of Spaceways' era contained material about science fiction and fantasy, except for a few FAPA mavericks. The holders of this belief have one thing in common: they weren't around in those days. I had been quite impressed almost from the first by the manner in which many fanzines contained partly or entirely material that dealt not with science fiction but with today's world, its politics, people and problems. The Futurians circulated little but this type of fanzine among their general distributions. British fans were pioneers in this sense, although the great British fanzines like Satellite and Fantast did not flourish until a bit after the start of Spaceways. Imagination! itself ran a great deal of material that we would call new trend and faanish today. The emphasis in Spaceways on sercon material was dowe through my choice, not through my ignorance. I don't regret that choice today, but I don't think that I would care to see fanzines as fundamentalist in their choice of material as a few fans constantly urge. Nobody to my knowledge has pointed out the consequences, if all fanzines really did suddenly publish nothing but material on science fiction stories, their authors, editors, and origins. General, mundane literary criticism is in bad repute just now because of the way it has collapsed into reviews of reviews. Science fiction fanzines would inevitably go the same way, if they all followed the straight and narrow. There are just so many science fiction writers important enough to write biographies of, so many series of stories literate enough to be worth synopses, so many prozine editors healthy enough to write their memoirs, and so many relevant things that can be said about 98% of the crap appearing in the prozines and in fantasy paperbacks today. After three months or so, the material in fanzines would exhaust all these possibilities, if every publication today had Spaceways' old policy. Some of the editors might be obstinate enough at this point to start all over again on the possible topics, but the majority would inevitably turn to essays discussing the topics as treated in the fanzines of the past three months, those rebuttals would be answered before the year was out, and almost immediately, fanzines would be even more removed from their source material than they are today.

Someday I want to make a simple experiment. It will consist of comparing the mailing list of the first issue of Spaceways with almost any representative list of fans published ten or fifteen years ago. I believe the test will bear out my belief that the survival rate for fans of 1938 is greater than for fans of 1948 or 1953. It is remarkable how many individuals in the old Spaceways circle are either semi-active in fandom today or at the worst can still be located and will reply to a letter directed to them. But look at the names of fans who were active in the early 1950's and you'll shudder at the monumental nature of the task of running down the whereabouts of most of them. There are two possible ex-

planations. The earlier fans could have been constructed of stronger, weather-resistant elements induced by weathering the depression years and the war that followed. Fandom may have made more sense to those who had personally seen how nasty the world can be. Or it may simply be that there is a tendency for the typical fan to experience a sort of hobbying change of life, during which he loses interest in his avocation only to regain it in milder form when the transitional period ends. A lot of fans given up as lost at sea have come safely back into port during just the past five years. The frightening possibility arises that the fabled creatures of Sixth and Seventh Fandom will begin to walk and to publish among us again, before many more years elapse.

My methodical nature gave up the unequal struggle and succumbed to the necessity of carrying on a hobby while earning a living and worrying over the war and having too little space at home for proper filing. But it's a great pity that I couldn't have managed somehow to keep my prozine collections complete from the start of my reading years, that I didn't continue that card index of the contents of the prozines, that I never carried out my firm intention to adapt to fandom a sort of Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature that would have made it possible to locate anything in a fanzine when wanted. By now I'd have a really imposing set of files, quite good enough to form an adequate start for a major library's science fiction wing. Worse, every month that passes reduces by a significant margin the slight chance that I'll ever get things back into order again. They've been piling up disorderly for two decades, for even longer years in certain areas. If I started to file new arrivals nicely and to work on the backlog, I would be at least 60 before I caught up, assuming that I reduced the confusion as inexorably as it burgeoned. And truthfully, I'm not sure that I would be happier if all my fan and pro stuff were instantly available and I could find any wanted item in a twinkling. Under such circumstances, I would find it easier to win arguments and to write articles for fanzines. But where would I find a replacement for the delight that now comes when I dig into the mess on the attic for this or that reason? I never find what I'm hunting for, of course, but I do run across items whose existence I'd forgotten and others that I had assumed were destroyed long ago, and the thrill of the unexpected is heady enough to make me uncertain that the library-like neatness could offer an equivalent. There could be a parallel here with the way man is forced to move along in the flow of time, without opportunity to get back for a second experience of previous experience, and with nothing more reliable surviving from what is behind him except imperfect memories, whatever has been constructed and has not yet crumbled, and such associations as written words can spur. Would we be any better off if we did have the opportunity to return at will into an unalterable past? I would like very much to poke around into the past of other persons, seeing all the things that I had missed the first time through. But I am not certain that it would be well to have my own past experiences available for re-experiencing, any more than I would be happy to know that I could lay my hand on any given letter or fanzine without hesitation. I think I've been no worse off than most persons as far as unhappiness goes. But it's hard to think of even a happy experience that wouldn't be spoiled if I relived it with the knowledge of what happened later to at least one of the persons involved.

Time travel will be invented, no doubt. But it's significant that we don't see time travelers. They may have better sense than to come into the real past. I'm not sorry about the experiences whose anniversaries I forgot to mark. But if I get a chance for a fresh start, I want to do things differently, just to see what will happen.



## Vas You Dere?

This issue of Horizons has somehow ended up as a nostalgia publication, looking back on a year, a fannish career, and now on a sick form of entertainment. But there has been considerable interest in fanzines regarding the great days of radio. A Washington station celebrated its 40th anniversary this summer by a series of rebroadcasts of program excerpts from the great days of the networks. I got most of these on tape, and hope to devote a lot of space to them soon. But I haven't done enough homework yet in the form of repetition of those tapes at frequent enough intervals. This time, I'll stick to some instant nostalgia that should be available to almost anyone. It's a 12-inch lp produced as a boxtop premium for purchasers of Ralston. I imagine that most of you have seen it advertised. If you have any curiosity or memories regarding early radio, I think that the dollar that the disc costs would be a good investment. The sound is good, so good in some instances that the source is probably commercial recordings rather than air checks. But this makes little difference for nostalgia purposes.

Kate Smith, for instance, has recorded a great deal in the past, but I haven't been among the purchasers of her discs. In view of the limitations of the fidelity of the old AM radios, and the distance of the nearest network stations during the radio heyday from Hagerstown, it isn't surprising that this was the first time that I had really heard Kate sing "When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain" as I might have heard her in a personal appearance. There is none of the greater-than-life-size effect of Kate Smith on a movie sound track and none of the obscuring background noise of a radio station in Washington or Philadelphia. I'm surprised that I can enjoy so much this voice today. I didn't like it too much when I was a kid, although this could have been partly the result of my frequent thought about what would happen if Kate should slip and fall atop an individual of my size. Once I read a publicity story to the effect that Kate had never sung a note off-pitch in her entire career. The writer must not have listened to this particular performance, in which some of the low notes are highly suspicious. But I think that I would rather hear Kate Smith sing popular songs than any notorious folk singer in folk ballads. The intent of Kate and the folk singer are much the same, I imagine: to make money by reaching people in the most direct, unsubtle music and delivery. Kate had a voice that sounds as if it came from a genuinely good person, and if it fails to stir up the hormones, it does its limited work neatly and efficiently.

Of course, I've heard Al Jolson sing via recordings repeatedly in recent years. But I doubt that I'd really listened to his voice on any of these occasions. I did, attentively, to the sample of this record. For the first time, I realized that Al had a fairly good voice in a potential sense. Its basic qualities come and go as he sings, usually emerging and disappearing at the rate of two or three cycles to each eight bars. Presumably this was intentional on Al's part, because he sounds for a note or two at a time as if he would have been a quite acceptable light opera baritone with consistent production of this type. I'll never be a Jolson fan, for he typified too much the one besetting fault of the old radio music. Too much of it sounded as if it were intended solely for a minute portion of the population, the men and women who were hovering between youth and middle age, went regularly to night clubs although they couldn't afford to patronize the best ones, had a moderately unhappy marriage that occurred after one big pre-marital adventure, and occasionally tried to sing to their own ukulele accompaniment.



But at least two sections of this record are devoted to performers who transcended the pattern while retaining affinities with it. Eddie Cantor never let his listeners forget that he might be parodying himself when he sang one of those heart-jerkers in that oddly sexless voice. I would guess that analysis would show the Cantor tones to be almost totally devoid of overtones. I couldn't think what some of the electronic musical compositions reminded me of, until I realized that these electronically generated pure tones had the same quality as what I used to love in "Dinah". And I admit to almost complete devotion to the personality of Jimmie Durante. This disc contains "I Can Do Without Broadway" in what television would have called a spectacular several decades later: he has a couple of other entertainers helping him. I don't mean to suggest that Durante's voice is not of the highest caliber, but I do like to imagine what kind of a career he might have made if he'd become a star of silent movies. I suspect that his face might have become as familiar as the entire figure was to Charlie Chaplin.

There isn't much doubt that a couple of other excerpts on this record come direct from off the air rather than from the surface of 78 rpm productions. W. C. Fields is heard in part of one of his celebrated temperance lectures. Curiously, one of his jokes falls almost completely flat on this excerpt, judging by its effect on the studio audience. It's the one in which he tries to explain that the middle ages got their name from the fact that everyone was drunk most of the time and had to be brought home nightly in the middle of two other persons. Will Rogers is represented by a typical series of rambling aphorisms about politicians and people. Several of his remarks are quite daring for the time and medium, but reception was so unreliable in those years that most listeners probably gave him the benefit of the doubt. I should warn prospective listeners that the sound quality of these two voices is quite poor; the general level of the genuine excerpts from that Washington station was remarkably clear, aside from occasional swishes that may have come from time-warped discs.

Some of the items on the Ralston record are dead air to me. There is a sample of Kay Kyser's College of Musical Knowledge that may interest those who grew up at just the right time. As an example of what the narrator claims is genuine jazz, we have Bing Crosby singing in a semi-scat manner. I cannot bear Bing Crosby whether by sight or by sound, so I'll not demonstrate my bias by further remarks.

Yes, there is a narrator. When lp records invariably come in cardboard jackets that almost always contain some sort of program notes, it is unclear why such productions should waste grooves on explanatory material more suited to use as liner notes. Fortunately, the villain in this case has a bearable voice, he doesn't chatter too long between the meat of the matter, and it isn't necessary to change your volume control before and after he talks. There are no visible bands between the excerpts, so you must risk damaging a groove or play the entire side, if you want to hear something other than the first excerpt.

In the event that anyone out there knows of similar commercially available discs, I'd like to learn details about them. The record review magazines give no indication that such discs exist and I can find nothing listed in the Schwann catalog, but there are many semi-pro discs that don't get nationwide distribution. I should think that lp's devoted to the most famous programs and personalities of the past would sell very well: imagine a full hour of Amos 'n' Andy or Vic and Sade, a complete Town Hall Tonight!, one week's sequence of Jack Armstrong, and similar treasures available for replaying at pleasure! Out of sheer gratitude for this production, I'm going to eat Ralston, no matter how hard it may be to keep down.